

Cabinet
25 June 2013

Irvine, 25 June 2013 - At a Special Meeting of the Cabinet of North Ayrshire Council at 2.30 p.m. in Cunninghame House, Irvine .

Present

Willie Gibson, Alan Hill, Tony Gurney, Marie Burns, Anthea Dickson and Alex McLean

In Attendance

E. Murray, Chief Executive; L. Friel, Corporate Director, Y. Baulk, Head of Finance and Property and D. Tate, Senior Manager (Housing, Assets and Investments); C. Hatton, Corporate Director, K. Yeomans, Head of Development Planning, R. McCutcheon, Head of Environment and Related Services, J. McGuire, Team Leader (Economic Development) and S. Taylor, Planning Officer (Development and Environment); A. Fraser, Head of Democratic and Administration Services, K. Dyson, Communications Officer and M. Anderson, Committee Services Officer (Democratic and Administration Services) (Chief Executive's Service).

Chair

Councillor Gibson in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

John Bruce.

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Standing Order 16 and Section 5 of the Code of Conduct for Councillors.

2. Minutes

The accuracy of the Minutes of the previous Cabinet, held on 11 June 2013, was agreed and the Minutes signed in accordance with paragraph 7(1) of Schedule 7 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973.

3. Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which (i) set out a proposed North Ayrshire Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy, including a supporting action plan; (b) detailed investment in early intervention work on the part of the Council itself and NHS Ayrshire and Arran; and (iii) identified future priorities within the strategy.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the timescale for, and feasibility of, expanding the strategy to cover 8-18 year-olds;
- the scope for continuing to prioritise early years notwithstanding the extension of the strategy to cover a wider age range;
- the importance of good universal services; and
- the Council's ambitions in terms of a greater emphasis on prevention activity.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy 2013/17: Early Years, as set out at Appendix 1 to the report; and (b) note that further work is planned to expand the strategy to young people aged 8-18 years.

4. Provost's Hospitality Budget and Fundraising Activity

Submitted report by the Chief Executive which (i) provided information on the Provost's committed hospitality expenditure and forecasted expenditure for period 2013/14; and (ii) gave details of the Provost's fundraising activity from September 2012.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the level of support for the Viking Festival and Largs Town Twinning activity in the current financial year;
- future reporting on the Provost's budget in the interests of improved transparency; and
- whether officers, rather than the Cabinet, should grant approval for requests for funding.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the contents of the report; (b) that it be remitted to the Chief Executive to approve the requests for funding to date, as set out at Appendix 1; and (c) to receive an update in six months' time.

5. Council Plan, Performance Management Strategy and Single Outcome Agreement (SOA): 12/13 Q4 Progress Report

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on progress in terms of three Action Plans, namely (i) the Council Plan 2012/13, (ii) the Performance Management Strategy 2012/13, and (iii) the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) 2012/13.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- sickness absence levels for teaching staff, which continue to be significantly adrift of target;
- absence rates for teachers compared with overall rates for Council staff;
- management measures to address increased sickness absence levels within the Council;

- the background to the separate reporting of sickness absence levels for teaching and other Council staff and the rationale for differing targets according to staff group;
- whether the targets for new businesses and active volunteers should be reconsidered in the light of the current financial climate; and
- the process for setting next year's targets.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the progress made in implementing the three Action Plans for the Council Plan, Performance Management Strategy and Single Outcome Agreement; (b) note that the information contained in the report will form the basis of the Council's annual performance report; and (c) refer the report to the Scrutiny and Petitions Committee for its consideration.

6. Ad-Hoc Property Guardians: Former Dreghorn Primary School

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (i) provided information on on-site security issues in respect of the former Dreghorn Primary School; and (ii) recommended a pilot project to address this matter by placing 'property guardians' within the building via an Authorisation Agreement with Ad Hoc Property Guardians.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- whether guardians were likely to be individuals already on the waiting list for social housing; and
- the likely impact of heating costs on the level of savings which might be generated by the proposal.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) the proposal put forward by Ad Hoc Property Guardians to install between 5 and 7 guardians at the former Dreghorn Primary School; and (b) use this pilot project to assess its feasibility as a security solution for suitable unoccupied and unmarketable buildings.

7. Update On Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPS)

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (i) provided information on the progress being made in attracting Energy Company Obligation (ECO) and Home Energy Efficiency Programme for Scotland (HEEPS) funding; and (ii) recommended the appointment of providers to deliver projects.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the geographical areas covered by the projects set out in the appendix to the report;
- the need for an effective communications strategy to raise public awareness of the projects; and
- the availability of future funding for similar projects.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note progress being made in attracting ECO and HEEPS funding; (b) to note the contents of the HEEPS funding bids submitted to the Scottish Government; (c) to approve the appointment of British Gas as the ECO provider for projects 1, 2 and 3, as set out in the report; (d) to delegate Authority to the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) to appoint the appropriate delivery partner for projects 4 and 5; and (e) that an appropriate communications strategy be implemented in respect of the projects being undertaken.

8. Remedial Works to the Slipway at Arran Outdoor Education Centre

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (i) set out the background to previous remedial work to the slipway at Arran Outdoor Education Centre; and (ii) sought additional funding in order to accept a tender to progress works at the most favourable time of the year.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the cost of the proposed works compared with those for the Largs slipway project;
- whether adequate provision had been made within the tender for contingencies;
- the economic benefits associated with the slipway;
- the suitability of the current siting of the slipway; and
- the anticipated lifespan of the remedial works and the likelihood for further funding requirements.

The Head of Finance and Property undertook to advise Members of the level of contingency provision within the tender.

The Cabinet agreed to authorise an additional £33,261 of capital funding from uncommitted resources within the 2013/14 General Services Capital Programme, to ensure the medium- to long-term integrity of the slipway at Arran Outdoor Education Centre.

9. Brodick Pier Redevelopment

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which (i) advised that Brodick Pier, which is owned by Caledonian Maritime Assets Limited, is reaching the end of its serviceable life; and (ii) presented proposals for the Council's involvement in the £18m Brodick Pier redevelopment and a Brodick Pier Redevelopment Group.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on proposed passenger access arrangements.

The Cabinet agreed (a) to note the proposals of an £18m project to redevelop Brodick Pier; (b) that Council leads the Brodick Pier Redevelopment Group; and (c) that Councillor Bruce chair the Group.

10. Property Factors (Scotland) Act 2011

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which (i) referred to a property factoring arrangement for residents living in North Ayrshire Council (HRA) managed housing estates, which was approved by the Cabinet at its meeting on 11 June 2013; and (ii) proposed an administration/management charge to homeowners benefitting from the service, based on a rate of 10% of the value of the repair up to a maximum of £50 per homeowner.

The Cabinet agreed, subject to the outcome of consultation exercise to take place between July and October 2013, to approve the introduction of the administration/management charge set out at Sections 3.2-3.3 of the report.

11. Renewable Energy Investment Opportunities from the North Ayrshire Estate

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which (i) provided information on a Feasibility Study examining the opportunities for investment in renewable energy from the Council's land and building estate; and (ii) sought agreement to progress the outcome of the study and investments proposals, which offer the Council an opportunity to invest in its assets through a retrofit programme to secure affordable energy and power requirements, reduce the Council's carbon footprint, and move towards the targets set by the Scottish Government in the Renewables Action Plan 2009.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the following:-

- the potential involvement of the CPP in better utilising arboriculture arisings from maintenance works;
- the rationale for the selection of particular buildings for participation in the proposed scheme;
- whether the generating potential of buildings had been taken into account over and above their energy saving potential;
- the potential for siting wind turbines on school roofs;
- the return on Solar PV investment compared with that of wind turbines;
- the potential finance arrangements in the event of progressing to the siting Solar PV panels on suitable Council housing stock;
- the need to ensure that renewable energy provision is fully taken into account in respect new buildings;
- the current energy costs of PPP schools; and
- the retention of existing boilers as back-up in the event of any breakdown or downtime associated with biomass boilers and to cope with periods of peak demand.

The Planning Officer undertook to provide Members with information on the windspeed data collected from school and other buildings when assessing their suitability for the installation of wind turbines.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) progress the procurement of retrofit Biomass and Solar PV installations at suitable large buildings (with the exception of the sheltered housing complexes) within the Council Estate (as identified in Appendix 1 to the report), including the development of a business case for the creation of a biomass supply chain and wood fuel depot; (b) remit the biomass opportunities for the sheltered housing complexes at Dickson Court and Robert W. Service Court for consideration by the Housing Business Planning Group; (c) liaise at a national level with Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to address contractual implications associated with retrofit on PPP properties; (d) further explore the opportunities to install Solar PV on North Ayrshire Council housing stock through the Housing Business Planning Group; and (e) seek specialist advice to prepare tender documents for the procurement of Biomass and Solar PV installations.

12. Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which recommended approval of the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy, setting out a vision for the development of Ayrshire's woodlands over the 40 years and providing updated spatial guidance for future investment in woodland management and the creation of new woodland.

The Head of Development Planning undertook to provide Councillor McLean with further information on the types of woodland surrounding Largs.

The Cabinet agreed to approve the Ayrshire and Arran Forestry and Woodland Strategy set out at Appendix 1 to the report.

13. Step Change 2015 (Rest of Scotland)

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which (i) presented information on progress with the Scottish Government's Digital Future: Infrastructure Action Plan and, in particular, the Step Change 2015 (Rest of Scotland) Project; and (ii) sought approval for the Chief Executive to sign a Minute of Agreement confirming the Council's participation in the project.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the categories of broadband user to benefit from increased capacity.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) note the current position of the Step Change 2015 (Rest of Scotland) project; (b) note a financial contribution of £1.1m as agreed in the Cabinet report of 30 January 2013; (c) approve delegation to sign a Minute of Agreement with Scottish Ministers to the Chief Executive; (d) note that a paper will be brought to the August 2013 Cabinet regarding the investment by the Highland and Islands Enterprise covering Arran and Cumbrae [(a), (b) and (c) being dependent upon confirmation that Council's strategic priorities are met in the returned Invitation to Tender].

14. Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant Fund

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which (i) provided information on the availability of funding support from the Scottish Government to encourage regeneration from capital investment; (ii) gave a summary of the outcome of the appraisal of potential bids; (iii) proposed that the bids referred to in Section 2.5 of the report in relation to the Millport Marine Biological Station and Quarry Road, Irvine, be made to the Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant; and (iv) set out details of the project bids to be submitted by Irvine Bay Regeneration Company.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on the background to the Quarry Road, Irvine, proposal.

The Cabinet agreed to (a) approve the submission of bids by North Ayrshire Council for funding to support the delivery of proposals for the Millport Marine Biological Station and at Quarry Road, Irvine; and (b) confirm its support for bids led by the Irvine Bay Regeneration Company for Saltcoats Town Hall and Ardrossan Quayside offices.

15. Zero Waste Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment on Waste Prevention and Recycling

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which proposed the Council's participation in signing up to Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment on Waste Prevention and Recycling, a voluntary commitment for the resource management sector to demonstrate its support for Scotland's Zero Waste ambitions.

Members asked questions, and received clarification, on North Ayrshire's positive performance in terms of recycling rates, particularly given the negative correlation between deprivation and recycling.

The Cabinet agreed to sign up to Zero Waste Scotland's Resource Sector Commitment on Waste Prevention and Recycling.

16. Clyde Valley Residual Waste Project

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Development and Environment) which (i) provided information on the background to the procurement exercise being undertaken for long-term treatment facilities for residual waste; (ii) advised that the project will now be progressed by the Project Team, with the issue of an Invitation to Participate in Dialogue; and (ii) invited the Cabinet to note progress to date.

Noted.

17. Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board: Minutes of 13 May 2013

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Education and Skills) on the Minutes of the Education Attainment and Achievement Policy Board held on 13 May 2013.

Noted.

18. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed that the undernoted items be considered as a matter of urgency to allow the matter to be actioned prior to a 15 July 2013 deadline.

18.1 Exclusion of the Public and Press

The Cabinet resolved, in terms of Section 50(A)4 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the Meeting, the press and public for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 6 and 9 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

18.2 Icelandic Bank Investments

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) which sought delegated authority from the Cabinet in relation to the Council claim against Landsbanki hf.

The Cabinet agreed to delegate authority to the Chief Executive and the Corporate Director (Finance and Corporate Support) in terms of the recommendations of the report.

The meeting ended at 4.40 p.m.