

Support Services Committee
9 March 1999

Irvine, 9 March 1999 - At a meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 pm.

Present

David O'Neill, Alan Munro, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Elliot Gray, Margaret Highet, James Jennings and David Munn.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Assistant Chief Executives (Finance, Personnel and Development and Promotion), D Addison, Head of Revenue Service (Finance), B Gardner, Head of Educational Resources (Educational Services), J Paul, Head of Technical Services (Property Services), R Samson, Principal Estates Officer (Development and Promotion), M McCormick, Media Relations Officer and J Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Mr O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

George Steven and Richard Wilkinson.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 26 January 1999, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Collection Statements

Submitted statements by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the current collection levels in respect of Community Charge and Council Tax to 28th February 1999.

A total of £71,000 in January 1999 and £61,000 in February 1999 was collected in respect of Community Charge leaving outstanding recoverable debt of £16,032,000. A total of £861,000 has been collected to date during this financial year which is in line with the revised expectations.

A total of £3,309,000 in January 1999 and £2,904,000 in February 1999 was collected in respect of Council Tax, leaving outstanding recoverable debt of £7,137,000. In-roads have been made in the collection of the outstanding debt and the situation is currently stable.

Noted.

3. Treasury Management Strategy 1999/2000

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on a proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 1999/2000 which is a requirement of the Treasury Management Policy approved by the Council on 25th March 1997.

The Strategy details the expected activities of the Treasury function in the financial year 1999/2000 and has been constructed on the basis of advice from the Council's financial advisers in relation to the prospects for interest rates, etc. The Assistant Chief Executive (Finance), in connection with the Treasury Advisers, will monitor both the prevailing interest rates and the market forecasts to enable appropriate responses to be made to changes in long and short-term interest rates.

The Committee agreed to approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 1999/2000.

4. Non Domestic Rates: Discretionary Relief

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on a proposal for the extension for 1999/2000 of the discretionary relief scheme for non domestic rates in rural areas to include filling stations in island communities.

The Committee on 26th January 1999 agreed that 100% relief on Non Domestic Rates be given to village schools, village halls, car parks and public conveniences and that 50% relief be given for rural post offices not eligible for mandatory relief. Representations for inclusion in the scheme were subsequently received in respect of filling stations serving island communities given their limited customer base, the absence of passing trade and the direct impact of transport costs on the viability of businesses essential to the community. There is currently one filling station in Millport and 6 on Arran with a total Rateable Value of £21,150 and rates due of approximately £10,500. In the event that 100% relief is provided to these filling stations the loss of Revenue Support Grant will be approximately £2,600.

The Committee agreed to approve the extension of the non domestic rates discretionary relief scheme to filling stations in island communities on the basis of 100% relief.

5. Car Lease Scheme

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on proposals involving the phasing out of the existing Car Lease Scheme over a 3 year period to cover existing leases.

The Car Lease Scheme was adopted by the Council following its transfer from the former Strathclyde Regional Council and is currently used by 75 members of staff from various services. It is proposed that no further car leases be entered into and that on termination of each current lease an employee would be offered a car loan under the terms of the Council's Car Loan Scheme currently used by 227 members

of staff. The phasing out of the Car Lease Scheme will result in annual savings of £18,500. Discussions will require to be undertaken with the Trade Unions.

The Committee agreed to approve the phasing out of the Car Lease Scheme over a 3 year period to cover the existing leases.

6. Chief Executive's Corporate Activities Capital Expenditure Bids 1999/2000

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on a proposed programme of Capital Expenditure Bids to be submitted for consideration as part of the process of Capital Budget Planning for 1999/2000.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the submission of the Capital Expenditure Bid Proposals for 1999/2000 in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) that the proposed Capital Expenditure Bids be referred to the Corporate Strategy Committee for consideration.

7. Standing Restricted List of Contractors for Building and Related Works

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) seeking approval for additional contractors to be added to the current List of Contractors for Building and Related Works.

The Committee agreed that the additional contractors detailed in the report be included on the Council's list.

8. Reorganisation of Council Services: Structure Amendments

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the staffing structure amendments arising out of the reorganisation of Council Services in November 1998.

The Committee agreed to approve the revised staffing structures for APT&C Staff in the terms indicated in the report.

9. Educational Services: Revision of Structures

(a) Early Years Education and Childcare

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on proposed amendments to the staffing structure of the Early Years Education and Childcare Service.

Due to the recent expansion of nursery education; the introduction of the Early Intervention Programme; and developments arising out of the Childcare Strategy for Scotland the existing staffing structure is now considered to be inadequate. Proposals were outlined for a new staffing structure incorporating 2 additional posts

of Senior Adviser and Adviser. The annual costs of the 2 posts will be £80,553, to be met from within existing budgets. Consultations with the Trade Unions will be undertaken.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed new staffing structure in the terms indicated in the report.

(b) Community Education

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on proposals for organisational changes to Community Education within Educational Services.

The combined findings of the COSLA Task Group and the HMI Report on Community Education in North Ayrshire and communities 'Change Through Learning' indicate a number of steps which require to be taken by Community Education in North Ayrshire to enable the service to respond to various new initiatives. Details were given on proposed amendments to the existing Community Education Staffing Structure which would contribute to overall service improvements.

The Committee agreed to approve the revised staffing structure as detailed in the report.

10. NJC Circular: Millennium Holiday

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on a proposal to grant a one day holiday on 31st December 1999 to APT&C Staffs and Manual etc employees to celebrate the Millennium. Employees who are required to work on 31st December 1999 will be granted a substitute holiday which can be taken either immediately prior to 31st December or at any time during the annual leave year commencing 1st January 2000, subject to agreement. The discretionary half day holiday which the Council granted in previous years to staff in the main administrative centres will be subsumed in the additional holiday and no compensatory time will be given.

The Committee agreed to grant a one 1 day holiday on 31st December 1999 to APT&C Staffs and Manual etc employees, and to allow a substitute holiday where employees are required to work on 31st December 1999.

11. Social Services

(a) Staffing Report on the Disability Resource Centre

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on proposals for the revision of the staffing structure at the Disability Resource Centre within Social Services.

Recent improvements and developments in service delivery have led to the need for a review of the staffing structure at the Disability Resource Centre. Full details of the

present and proposed staffing structures were given in the report. The effect of the proposed staffing changes will result in additional costs of £3,584 per annum. Previous staffing changes at the Disability Resource Centre generated savings of £8,769 per annum which will result in an overall saving of £5,185 per annum. The Trade Unions will be consulted on the staffing proposals.

The Committee agreed to approve the revised staffing structure as detailed in the report.

(b) Irvine: Children's Unit at 24 Kilwinning Road

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on proposed amendments to the staffing structure at the Children's Unit, 24 Kilwinning Road, Irvine.

Details were given on the restructure proposals which involve the introduction of an additional 2 Senior Residential Worker posts and will bring the staffing structure into line with that of other units. The structure changes will result in additional staffing costs of £40,687 per annum for which provision has been made in the proposed base budget adjustment exercise for 1999/2000.

The Committee agreed, subject to the necessary financial provision being made, to approve the addition of 2 Senior Residential Worker posts to the staffing establishment as detailed in the report.

(c) Registration and Inspection of Day Care Services

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on proposed amendments to the staffing structure in relation to the registration and inspection of Day Care Services.

Due to an increase in workload which will require the Council to register and inspect approximately 31 additional Day Care Services, additional staff will be required to ensure adherence to National Standards. Details of the current and proposed staffing structures were given in the report. The staffing changes will result in additional costs of £102,232 per annum and although no budgetary provision has been made to date, a request for additional funding has been submitted under the proposed Base Budget Exercise. In the event that funding cannot be obtained, the revised staffing structure will not be implemented.

The Committee agreed, subject to the necessary financial provision being made, to approve the revised staffing structure as detailed in the report.

12. Employee Absence Statistics: Monitoring Report

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the rate of employee sickness absence in the North Ayrshire Council.

Noted.

13. Equal Opportunities (Recruitment): Monitoring Report

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) providing statistical information in relation to the monitoring of Equal Opportunities and Recruitment.

Noted.

14. Employment Tribunal: Monitoring Report

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the progress of outstanding Employment Tribunal cases involving North Ayrshire Council.

Noted.

15. Requests for Unpaid Leave of Absence

(a) Legal and Regulatory Services: Environment Section

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on an application by an Environmental Health Officer (Legal and Regulatory) for a period of unpaid leave between mid August 1999 and May 2000, to undertake ministry training in Texas.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the application for unpaid leave of absence for a period of 9 months; (b) that the post be filled on a temporary basis during the period of absence; and (c) that this approval will not set a precedent and that any further applications for unpaid leave will be considered on their individual merits.

(b) Development and Promotion: Planning Officer

Submitted report on an application from a Planning Officer within Development and Promotion for unpaid leave of absence for a period of 7 months to attend a Local Government Officials' Training Programme in Japan.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the application for unpaid leave of absence for a period of 7 months; and (b) that such approval will not set a precedent and that any future similar applications received will be considered on their individual merits.

16. Irvine: Offices 14 Eglinton Street: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of the property at 14 Eglinton Street, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) to proceed to market the property for sale.

17. Irvine: 4-8 Kiln Walk: Acquisition

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the acquisition of the property at 4-8 Kiln Walk, Irvine from the British Red Cross, previously agreed by the Chair as a matter of urgency.

The Committee agreed to homologate the decision of the Chair.

18. Irvine: Land at Meadowhead Industrial Estate: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of land at Meadowhead Industrial Estate, Irvine. The Chair, as a matter of urgency had previously authorised the Principal Estates Officer to enter into negotiations for the sale of the land with Messrs Bell Ingram, on behalf of their clients.

The Committee agreed (a) to homologate the previous decision of the Chair; and (b) to approve the disposal of the site on the basis of the provisional terms and conditions detailed in the report.

19. Irvine: Ayr Road: Southern Gailes

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on a proposal to appoint a selection panel to determine the preferred developer for the site at Southern Gailes, Ayr Road, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to remit with powers to a selection panel comprising Mr O'Neill, Mr Munro, Mr Clements and Mr Steven to consider the detailed financial and development submissions and to determine the preferred developer.

20. Stevenston: Glencairn Street: Ground at Former Glencairn Nursery: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of ground at the former Glencairn Nursery, Glencairn Street, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to authorise disposal on the basis of the provisionally agreed terms and to conclude the transaction.

21. Saltcoats: Ground at 94 Raise Street: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of ground at 94 Raise Street, Saltcoats.

The Committee agreed to authorise disposal on the basis of the provisionally agreed

terms and to conclude the transaction.

22. Dalry: Site at West End: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of the site at West End, Dalry, previously agreed by the Chair as a matter of urgency.

The Committee agreed to homologate the decision of the Chair.

23. Kilbirnie: Sites at Cochrane Street and Bankfaulds Avenue: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of sites at Cochrane Street and Bankfaulds Avenue, Kilbirnie previously agreed by the Chair as a matter of urgency.

The Committee agreed to homologate the decision of the Chair.

24. West Kilbride: Ground to Rear of 22 Main Street: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the disposal of ground to the rear of 22 Main Street, West Kilbride to the adjoining proprietor.

The Committee agreed to authorise disposal on the provisional terms outlined in the report.

25. West Kilbride: Public Hall: 1 Arthur Street: Lease

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the lease of ground at Arthur Street, West Kilbride to the West Kilbride Community Initiative Ltd.

The Committee agreed to authorise the lease of the ground on the terms and conditions outlined in the report.

26. Largs: 50-54 Nelson Street: Adjustment to Disposal Price

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on a proposal to adjust the disposal price of ground to be sold to Mr Jonathan Marshall, 106 Greenock Road, Largs.

An initial offer for the ground from Mr Marshall of £32,000, was based on the original information contained in the property particulars prepared by the Council. It has subsequently become apparent that the development potential of the site will be reduced by the existence of Scottish Power cables and a sewer in Allankirk Street

which will restrict the size of the proposed development.

The Committee, taking into account an offer of £8,000 by Mr J Narducci, agreed to authorise disposal of the ground to Mr Marshall at a reduced purchase price of £10,000 subject to the terms and conditions of the original offer.

27. Delegated Powers: Property Reports

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on property transactions approved in terms of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

Noted.

28. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed that the following item be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

29. Development and Promotion: Summary of Key Achievements (Estates): April 1996-March 1999

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the achievements of the Council's Estates Section between April 1996 and March 1999.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.45 pm.