

Social Work Committee  
22 April 1998

**Irvine, 22 April 1998** - At a Meeting of the Social Work Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

Margaret Munn, Elliot Gray, Jack Carson, James Clements, John Donn, David Gallagher, Jane Gorman, Joseph McKinney, Elizabeth McLardy, Robert Reilly and Samuel Taylor.

**In Attendance**

The Director of Social Work; I Kelly, Welfare Rights Development Officer (Social Work); A Herbert, Head of Accountancy (Financial Services); M McCormack, Media Relations Officer; M Hewitt, Corporate Policy Officer and S Paxton, Administration Officer (Chief Executive) and M. Oates, Police Liaison Officer.

**Chair**

Mrs Munn in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

James Jennings and George Steven.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 11 March 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Kilbirnie: Montgomery Court Residential Establishment: Pilot Catering Scheme**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on the outcome of a Pilot Scheme which commenced on 19 January 1998 to re-organise the method of providing meals at Montgomery Court, Kilbirnie by having meals delivered to the Court from Garnock Academy as opposed to having them prepared on the premises by two full-time Cooks.

A Monitoring Group which had been established to assess the pilot found that the quality of food delivered to the Unit remained satisfactory but did express concern over a number of aspects of the arrangements including difficulties in meeting the needs of residents with special dietary requirements and the negative view of the pilot held by residents, staff and families of residents because the cooking facility had been removed from the premises. In the light of these and other concerns the pilot project had been terminated on 13th rather than 31st March 1998.

Although the financial implications of the pilot are still being assessed by the Director of Commercial Services, the anticipated savings have not been realised. Catering arrangements at Montgomery Court have therefore reverted to those in place prior to the start of the Pilot Project.

The Committee endorsed the action taken by the Director of Social Work in this connection.

### **3. Community Alarm Service: Update Report**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work regarding progress in the installation of Community Alarms for private and public sector clients following approval in October 1997 for the installation of 115 alarms in local authority housing and 94 in private sector housing, leaving a waiting list of 58.

As a result of a recent bid to Ayrshire and Arran Health Board however the Directorate has now secured funding to purchase an additional 78 alarms which will address the waiting list and provide an additional 20 alarms for emergency use. As at 31 March 1998, 252 alarms had been installed by the Mobile Care Attendant Team for public and private sector clients and by the end of April 1998 it is anticipated that the waiting list will be cleared. There are 54 new applicants currently being assessed.

The costs of providing the Social Work element of the service (£145,390) are contained in the current Social Work budget but given the increase in the number of clients, a review of the workload of the Mobile Team will be undertaken in the near future.

Noted.

### **4. Irvine: Opening of Eglinton Disability Resource Centre, Pavilion 9 and Care Point, Pavilion 4, Ayrshire Central Hospital**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on arrangements for the official opening at Ayrshire Central Hospital of the Eglinton Disability Resource Centre (Pavilion 9) which will increase facilities available to and maximise the independence of disabled persons, and the Care Point Frail Elderly Day Care Centre (Pavilion 4) which will assist elderly people who have significant physical disabilities.

The Centres will be opened at 11.30 a.m. on 24 April 1998 by the Leader of the Council and Mr William M Ritchie, Chairman of North Ayrshire and Arran NHS Trust. Guests invited to the official opening include representatives from the North Ayrshire Disability Forum, Council Members and Officers, Health Board and Health Trust staff and representatives from local firms and businesses who have contributed to the provision of facilities at the Centres. Open Days will also be held at the Centres after the formal opening to allow users, their carers, staff and organisations to visit the premises and obtain further information on the services offered.

The Committee approved the arrangements for the opening of the Centres.

### **5. Fostering Allowances 1998/99**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on proposed increases in fostering allowances, including adoption and related allowances in 1998/9.

Each year COSLA recommends to local authorities the weekly rates to be paid to foster parents in respect of children being looked after by local authorities and placed in foster care. The rates have also been used as a basis for the calculation of similar allowances such as custody allowances and payments under the Link Carer's Scheme.

The recommended COSLA rates for 1998/99 with effect from 1 April 1998 represent a 3% increase in the 1997/98 level and are in line with those prescribed by the National Foster Care Association. The additional costs of £35,000 are contained within the Social Work Directorate's budget for fostering allowances. The rates are as follows:-

<u>Age of Child</u>	<u>Recommended Rates</u>

0-4	£55.79
5-10	£69.23
11-15	£86.17
16-18	£111.58

The Director of Social Work has discretion to pay above the recommended COSLA rate in very exceptional circumstances and further alterations to the current Foster Care Allowances Scheme will be the subject of a separate report in due course.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve payment of the recommended COSLA rates for fostering allowances with effect from 1 April 1998; (b) that the fostering allowance rates be used as the basis for the calculation of similar allowances; and (c) that the revised rates be used as a basis for future revision of the Fostering Allowances Scheme.

## **6. Income Maximisation System**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on Home Care Review and Income Maximisation procedures.

Under current arrangements, Home Help Organisers carry out financial assessments of all clients and identify appropriate benefit entitlements and Welfare Rights staff also investigate further entitlements including Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Housing Benefit. As a result of improved procedures and information systems a greater number of clients have had claims submitted on their behalf when compared with 1997/98 when over £475,000 was added to the income of the most vulnerable people in North Ayrshire, in particular women aged over 75 years. Staff working with specific client groups will receive training on Income Maximisation throughout 1998.

The Committee agreed to continue and expand work on the Income Maximisation Initiative.

## **7. Home Care Review: Charging Policy**

Submitted interim report by the Director of Social Work confirming proposals to review the future provision of Home Care Services and making specific recommendations on the application of a revised charging policy as a first step in that review.

The Home Help Service is the principal provider of support at home to individuals, with some clients having low dependency needs and others having needs which are much greater. Increasing demand for this service cannot however be met from existing resources and in an attempt to ensure that domiciliary care services are able to respond effectively to the needs of the most vulnerable and highly dependent persons in the community, it has become necessary to review the Home Care Charging Policy.

Under the current Policy, inherited from Strathclyde Regional Council, the majority of clients pay less than £10 per week for the service whilst almost half pay nothing at all. Charges are based on an increasing scale based on income which is in excess of a "basic income threshold" of less than £113 per week for a single person and £128 per week for couples. Clients with an income in excess of £297.60 pay the maximum current charge of £27.10 per week.

The new proposals would address inequalities in the current arrangements which favour single people rather than couples. The "threshold income" would be revised to £90 per week for single persons and £140 a week for couples which is based on the Income Support level for 75 to 79 year olds with a 'buffer' to cover additional expenditure items. All Social Security pensions and

allowances with the exception of Disability Living Allowance, War Widows' Pensions and War Disability Pensions together with other income such as earnings, private pensions and payments from annuities would be taken into consideration when determining the level that a client should pay for the service. At the lower end of the assessed scale, above the income threshold, there will be two standard charges of £5 and £10. Thereafter the charges scale would be graduated to reflect increasing income levels. The maximum charge under the revised scheme would be £50 per week.

The Committee discussed the effects of the implementing of the revised Home Care Charging Policy and its impact on service users and agreed initially to establish a Member/Officer Working Group consisting of the Leader of the Council, Chair and Vice Chairs of the Social Work and Housing Committees to further examine the charging policy and report to the next meeting.

#### **8. Shopping Service: Pilot Project**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on proposals to establish a six month Pilot Shopping Service Project in the Irvine Area for 30 clients at a cost of around £1,000 in conjunction with the Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS).

A Shopping Service would not only be of great assistance to clients but it should also be self-financing if clients were charged around £1.60 which is significantly less than the £3.20 per week for the Home Help Shopping Service.

The WRVS would be responsible for the administration of the Project, the appointment of the Shopping Service Organiser and the recruitment and training of volunteers, who would require to have their own vehicle. The Social Work Directorate would assist in the assessment and training of volunteers and the Pilot Scheme would involve volunteers calling on the service users, collecting the shopping list and money, visiting a designated store and returning the shopping with receipt. Volunteers would also have contact officers within the Social Work Directorate should further assistance or advice be required.

The Committee agreed (a) to conclude arrangements with the WRVS to establish a Pilot Shopping Service for a six month period for 30 clients in the Irvine South area following the recruitment of volunteers; and (b) that the Director of Social Work submit a report to the Committee following completion of the Pilot Project.

#### **9. Advisory Committee on Inspection: Minutes**

Submitted report, being the Minutes of the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Inspection of 23 March 1998.

The Director of Social Work confirmed that the various recommendations would be actioned.

Noted.

#### **10. Community Care Implementation Unit: Visit to North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on a visit by the Community Care Implementation Unit (CCIU) to North Ayrshire on 4 and 5 February. This Group which is part of the Scottish Office, reports to the NHS Management Executive, the Social Work Services Group and the Environment Department, supports and encourages inter-agency collaboration on the implementation of care in the community and is currently visiting each area of Scotland to identify good practice and action to address areas of concern.

As well as commenting positively on community care practice in North Ayrshire, the Unit has highlighted a number of concerns which in their view required to be addressed including (a) the absence of formal Joint Planning Structures which had existed between the three Ayrshire authorities, Ayrshire and Arran Health Board and Scottish Homes; (b) the relative weakness of structures to consult community groups on community care policy and practice and to involve them as partners in

the development of policies; and (c) the low level of investment in Mental Health Services. The Council is currently addressing the issues highlighted during the visit and, is, amongst other things, (i) finalising interim arrangements which will retain an Officers Group at an all Ayrshire level to address strategic matters relating to the service development and resources dedicated to community care, (ii) inviting contributions on the Draft Consultative Community Care Plan from over 400 relevant organisations and individuals and arranging a series of local meetings in May 1998 and (iii) highlighting to the Scottish Office the low level of support to North Ayrshire from mental illness specific grant (MISG) relative to the national average.

The Committee agreed that the matters raised in the CCIU report be considered in the context of the forthcoming Community Care Plan 1998-2001.

#### **11. Symington: Provision of Respite Care within Hansel Village**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work updating arrangements which have been made with Hansel Village in Symington following the closure of Frogna House Respite Unit in Troon on 31 December 1997. Hansel Village is seeking to expand long-term residential provision for the learning disabled and has to date provided a service of high quality. They are currently refurbishing a unit dedicated to respite care and the Directorate has been able to negotiate three of the six places being established. The cost to the council amounts to £61,074 for a full year.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Director of Social Work to conclude a contract with Hansel Village, Symington for the provision of the three respite care places on a block contract basis.

#### **12. Criminal Justice Services Three Year Strategic Plan**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on the framework for the completion of the Criminal Justice Services Three Year Strategic Plan.

Criminal Justice Services are funded by the Scottish Office who have, in conjunction with the Association of Directors of Social Work agreed a framework for the completion of a three-year Social Work Criminal Justice Services Strategic Plan. The planning framework has been devised under five main headings viz. (a) the National Perspective, based on the National Planning Statement by the Scottish Office; (b) a statement by Councils explaining, amongst other things, how the Criminal Justice Services Strategic Plan interacts with other Plans such as the Children's Services Plan and the Community Care Plan; (c) Planning Assumptions/Outturn Projections including key trends and performance indicators; (d) Delivery Mechanisms including details on management and staffing levels and a statement on the Information Technology Strategy for Criminal Justice Services; and (e) Resource Implications including the level of resources needed to deliver the planned programme of work and the costing of new initiatives.

The latter three items will require to be updated annually as they relate to the grant claim. The Criminal Justice Services Three Year Strategic Plan is to be completed and submitted to the Scottish Office by December 1998.

The Committee agreed to approve (i) the framework for the Criminal Justice Services Three Year Strategic Plan; and (ii) the timescale for completion.

#### **13. Customer Comments Scheme**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on the Directorate's handling of Customer Comments from January to March 1998.

In this period 43 compliments and 44 complaints were received and all have been addressed within target timescales.

Noted.

#### **14. Conferences and Seminars**

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on invitations to attend numerous Conferences and Seminars.

Noted.

#### **15. Urgent Items**

The Chair agreed that the undernoted item be considered as a matter of urgency

##### **(a) Orange Badge Scheme**

The Director of Social Work advised that challenges had been mounted against Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Council's decisions to increase charges for the issue of Orange Badges. In terms of the Disabled Persons (Badges for Motor Vehicles) Regulations 1982 the maximum charge for the issue of an Orange Badge should not exceed £2. North Ayrshire Council currently makes a charge of £2 to disabled people for the issue of the badge and £3 is levied for the provision of the badge itself.

The Committee agreed (i) that the Director of Social Work pursue with the Scottish Office the position with regard to the charging for the Badges; and (ii) to retain the current charge in the meantime.

The meeting ended at 3.25 p.m.