

Property Services Standing Sub Committee  
10 November 2004

**Irvine, 10 November 2004** - At a meeting of the Property Services Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

John Bell, Stewart Dewar, Jane Gorman, Margaret McDougall, David O'Neill and Samuel Taylor.

**In Attendance**

I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive, T. Orr, Corporate Director; O. Clayton, Head of Housing; J. Currie, Head of Cleansing, Grounds Maintenance and Transport; R. Small, Head of Roads, C. Nelson, Head of Catering and Cleaning, I. Grice, Head of Building Services, J. Andrews, Principal Officer, Technical Services (Property Services); A. Osborne and A. Little, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers (Chief Executive's).

**Chair**

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Elizabeth McLardy, Nan Wallace and Richard Wilkinson.

**1. Performance Reports**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the Service Performance for the 6 months ended 30 September 2004.

The Local Government in Scotland Act 2003 has established Best Value as a statutory duty for local authorities. Members currently receive Annual Reviews of performance within Service Plans and Annual Reports in relation to Statutory Performance Indicators. Performance monitoring is also assisted by the half yearly performance reporting for the Standing Sub Committee.

Officers reported on the performance highs and lows for the six months ended 30 September 2004 and on the immediate priorities for Property Services as follows:-

**Building Services**

**Performance Highs**

- The Service has continued to sustain financial viability by working closely to agreed budgets and targets.
- The Service has demonstrated continuous improvement on statutory KPIs for the percentage response repairs completed on time.

- The proportion of repairs by appointment is increasing in response to customer needs.
- All employees have received their annual PDR and 10% of employees are involved in external training.
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (ROSPA) Gold Award was achieved following the Silver Award last year.
- Two employees attained Management Student of the Year Awards at Ayr College and Reid Kerr College
- Building Services' apprentices took part in the Modern Apprenticeship Community Challenge run by Scottish Enterprise and achieved second place

#### **Performance Lows**

- Sickness absence remains above target levels.
- The number of post completion customer call backs has failed to meet the target to due to difficulties in contacting tenants.

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- To continue to address the increased absenteeism by following the council's sickness absence policy and procedures and by looking at other initiatives for absence prevention.
- Continuous review of processes and procedures to maintain and increase operational efficiency.
- To feedback from participation in the Tenant's Conference.

#### **Catering Services**

##### **Performance Highs**

- Hungry for Success (H4S) initiative has been successfully implemented in all 53 primary mainstream schools and in 3 of the 4 special schools.
- Appointment of Nutrition Coordinator and Craft Trainer to direct and assist with implementation of H4S.
- H4S menus for primary school children have been revised in a new format, nutritionally analysed and issued to all schools. Starter packs issued to 2500 children in new Primary 1 to introduce them to school lunch experience.
- Customer questionnaire developed and issued to 26 primary school stakeholders with a favourably high return of 72%
- Delibars have been introduced to 2 secondary schools and 9 of the 10 secondary schools have healthier choice debranded vending facilities.
- Training in H4S for Catering Managers has been achieved through workshops, craft courses and a 2 day course tailored to our service and delivered by Ayr College.
- 16 Catering Managers have completed a certificated course in Therapeutic Diets at Ayr College.
- Operations staff completed and achieved Certificate in Training in Manual Handling.
- 55% of schools have been awarded commended level of The Scottish Healthy Choices Award.
- Financial procedures have been extensively revised for all Educational locations.

- The level of hospitality catering is 52% more than the phased income budget for the period.
- HACCP (Food Safety System) manual revised.
- Catering Risk Assessments developed and issued to every location.

#### **Performance Lows**

- Staff induction manual has not yet been developed
- Long term absence of Service Development Manager
- Sickness level is currently 6.2% for the year to date which is a 0.7% increase on previous figure of 5.55%

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- To develop Catering Induction and Training manual in line with that of Cleaning, to ensure standardised approach to training.
- To ensure induction is given and recorded on commencement of employment
- To develop training courses in line with objectives of H4S to ensure initiative is well resourced by trained staff.
- To address absenteeism by continuing to follow the Council's sickness absence policy in partnership with Occupational Health.
- To ensure Food Safety standards are achieved in every location through delivery of HACCP (Food Safety System) to unit based staff.
- Issue revised Financial Procedures incorporating self assessment resulting in continuous monitoring of unit based procedures.
- To endorse aims and objectives of Hungry for Success to stakeholders by utilising effective promotional materials.
- To engage with pupil councils, school board and parent teacher associations in promoting aims of Hungry For Success and to increase uptake of school meals.
- To produce Action/Communication plans resulting from Customer Questionnaire responses.
- To extend scope of BSI Management System Accreditation to the Catering Service.
- To complete Function Booklet and to update Catering Service on Navigate.
- Short/medium, long term plan for redeployment of Kerelaw staff due to closure of unit planned March 2005.

#### **Cemeteries Service**

##### **Performance Highs**

- The Champion of Champions Award for Kilwinning Cemetery War Memorial as part of the Royal British Legions annual scheme;
- Completion of the ICCM Best Value Assessment Process identifying targeted improvements towards achieving the Charter Mark;
- Just under 50% of the Cemeteries Section Staff trained to the ICCM Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme, industry specific training;
- Completion of Gardens of Remembrance for Babies in Kilbirnie, Ardrossan, Largs and Irvine;

- Further progress in the process for the Safety Inspection of Memorials with the Memorial Safety Squad now fully trained in all aspects of health & safety in memorial stabilisation works. This reduces the risk to the Council and members of the public; and
- Production of an Ayrshire Joint Authorities Leaflet on burial and cremation services for babies throughout Ayrshire.

#### **Performance Lows**

- Further delay in the extensions to Beith Cemetery, pending further investigation into effective drainage, and Kilmory Churchyard; and
- A deferral in the digital recording of cemetery plans and records pending further developments in software.

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- A greater emphasis on safety inspections of memorials in conjunction with public awareness and conservation issues;
- An examination of the fee structure for cemeteries demonstrating Best Value and the delivery of a more cost effective burial service;
- Attainment of the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved through administrative developments; and
- To further progress the number of memorials tested by reconfiguring the workforce.

#### **Cleaning Service**

##### **Performance Highs**

- Cleaning Service has extended the scope within revised standard ISO 9001:2000 to all locations within North Ayrshire, with exception of single-cleaner premises. The new standard has been issued to all sites.
- All Cleaning Supervisors have been trained to British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICS) standard to enable training to be cascaded to staff.
- Induction and training manual has been revised and has been issued to all Cleaning Supervisors for use at site level for all new employees.
- Mobile Supervisors have completed assessors qualification in SVQ Building Cleaning Level 2.
- Successfully bid for and awarded Police Building Cleaning contract.
- 6 Operations staff completed and achieved Certificate in Training in Manual Handling.
- Extension of Void House cleaning service.
- Area Performance Plans revised and reissued to Operations Team.
- Administration Team reconfigured to provide one to one support to Operations Team on a geographical basis.
- Employee handbook has been completed, to be issued at induction and to all current employees.

### **Performance Lows**

- The programme of Customer Calls has fallen behind target, however levels of satisfaction have increased.
- Ongoing issue on Arran with filling of vacancies due to pay differentials within private sector.
- High turnover of staff on mainland.
- Sickness absence level is above council average at 6%, there has been a slight decrease of 0.01%
- Site specific risk assessments not yet issued to cleaning sites.
- Process for nomination of SVQ candidates not structured.

### **Immediate Priorities**

- To ensure all sites are aware of responsibilities with regard to BSI audit.
- To ensure all relevant internal audits are completed timeously.
- To continue to address absenteeism by continuing to follow the Council's Sickness Absence Policy.
- Short, medium, long-term plan for redeployment of staff from Kerelaw.
- Redeployment of staff from Police locations in line with new contract.
- To ensure issue and completion of Risk Assessments for all 220 cleaning sites.
- To ensure training of BICS standard, for all relevant staff in cleaning of Difficult Properties and recording of same.
- To reissue cleaning uniform to all staff, relevant to their differing roles.
- To progress SVQs with Mobile Supervisors as assessors.

## **Grounds Maintenance Service**

### **Performance Highs**

- Continuous improvement of play area surfaces and equipment. 100% of all play areas now have safety surfacing.
- Development of open spaces which has lead to joint working with local groups, outside agencies, elected members in line with the development of the Community Plan;
- Participation with other local authorities to look at benchmarking for grounds maintenance;
- Participation in Play Strategy in conjunction with Community Learning and Development
- The Corporate Consultation document identified a high level of customer satisfaction with parks and open spaces
- Reduction in sickness levels

### **Performance Lows**

- Public desire for even more commitment within parks and open spaces
- Public perception of grounds maintenance role in respect of issues such as anti-social behaviour eg No Ball Games, satellite dishes affected by trees, and public open spaces;

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Discussion with Trade Unions to look at quality of work carried out in grounds maintenance;
- To continue with development of Open Space Strategy;
- To look at appropriate indicators for use in grounds maintenance;
- To continue to reduce sickness levels.
- To improve communication links between management team and operational workforce which would assist in greater awareness and faster response times;
- Develop a policy in relation to tree management strategy;
- Discussion with Trade Unions to find alternative to existing Bonus Scheme - now nearing fruition

### **Housing Services**

#### **Performance Highs**

- First Tenant Participation Conference held in April 2004, at which draft Tenant Participation Strategy launched
- Housing Service Standards consulted on and launched for implementation from 1st October 2004. The standards describe clearly what levels of service tenants can expect.
- Now second only to Scotland's best performing local authority in terms of time taken to re-let void properties
- Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team have succeeded in taking cases to court for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs), and Interim ASBOs
- Community Wardens now operating in three areas, and a fourth being established, with funding from the Scottish Executive
- Housing took the lead role introducing the new income management system, PARIS, for the council. This allows improved analyses and control in relation to income management.
- 15% reduction in the monetary value of rent arrears within the last 6 months
- Direct Debit introduced to further expand the range of methods of payment available to all our tenants
- 20% of Housing Services staff are undertaking further education
- Homelessness  
Continued to provide support, advice and assistance to homeless and potentially homeless applicants.  
Developed homeless prevention project for young people. Of 88 referrals 77 received assistance and were able to return to the family home.
- Supporting People  
Over the first 6 months 3,680 people received a Supporting People service, helping vulnerable people to live independently
- Development  
Working in partnership with Communities Scotland and Housing Associations, 40 properties have been completed and there has been an expenditure of over £2.5m.  
Total investment programme for 2004/05 has increased significantly to £5.323m, as compared to £3.4m in 2003/04
- Established Rent Deposit Scheme - which assists in alleviating homelessness



and the risk of homelessness, by helping access accommodation in the private sector for those who cannot raise a deposit.

### **Performance Lows**

- Slow progress in producing Fuel Poverty Strategy
- Rent Arrears - although we continue to see a reduction in arrears levels (now standing at 10.7% of net rent due, compared to 14.9% in 2002/03) we are still well above the peer group average.
- Closure of Bed & Breakfast establishments has meant inability to meet statutory obligation to provide temporary accommodation.

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Local Housing Strategy - revised version of draft now in production, following comments made by Communities Scotland.
- Tenant Participation - new staff team will take up post in November 2004. They will coordinate liaison with tenants and residents groups, and assist in ensuring all Housing Services staff are aware of relevant tenant participation issues.
- Fuel Poverty Strategy - work to be undertaken to produce this.
- Complete multi agency review of Adaptations Service.
- Equal Opportunities Working Group - to undertake relevant consultation and research, and implement any necessary actions.
- Supporting People - review services, in response to recent announcement of cut in budget from Government for future financial years.
- Monitor and evaluate housing service standards.
- Develop homelessness service to focus on prevention.
- Take forward Anti Social Behaviour Strategy including:
  - Establish home safety project
  - Develop information sharing pilot
  - Consolidate mediation service
  - Expand the investigation team to include all tenures

### **Janitorial Service**

#### **Performance Highs**

- SVQ in Caretaking at Level 2 has now been sourced.
- Basic induction booklet has been developed for Janitors.
- 6 Operations staff have completed and achieved Certificate in Training in Manual Handling
- Employee handbook has been completed, to be issued during Induction and to all current employees
- Reintroduction of JCC 3rd tier with this service group.
- Invitation extended to C & C service to participate in Educational Health & Safety Advisory Group.
- Very low staff turnover.
- In conjunction with award of cleaning contract for building cleaning of Police stations, 1.5 Janitorial posts have been established in North Ayrshire.
- Area Performance Plans revised and reissued to Operations Team.
- Administration Team reconfigured to provide one to one support to Operations Team on a geographical basis.

### **Performance Lows**

- The programme of Customer Call visits has fallen behind target.
- Association of Police Officers in Scotland (ACPOS) policy of non-attendance in response to alarm calls by Police .
- Number of Aggression and Violence incidents are still too high.
- Janitorial Risk Assessments not yet completed.
- Difficulty in achieving level of Janitorial cover required by various groups/services during school holidays.
- Service Procedures Manual not yet developed.
- Slight increase in absence level of 0.97%, in comparison to previous year.

### **Immediate Priorities**

- To investigate SVQ demand with Janitors through PDR process.
- To ensure Janitors all using correct reporting procedure for Aggression and Violence.
- To progress alternative banking arrangements in conjunction with Educational Services.
- To continue to address absenteeism in line with Sickness Absence Policy.
- To invite stakeholder participation in ensuring more effective schools cover during holidays.
- To progress Risk Assessments.

### **Other Cleaning and Public Conveniences Services**

#### **Performance Highs**

- Renegotiated contract with JC Decaux resulting in demolition of 2 unattended conventional units and further provision of 3 Universal Superloos capable of accommodating disabled users;
- Increase in litter bin and dog bin provision (1,394 litter bins; and 312 dog bins);
- Continued emphasis on tackling litter and graffiti - provision of 2 "Littermasters" for delittering work;
- Appointment of Assistant Recycling Officer to assist the Litter/Recycling officer appointed in 2003 to implement the targets set by the Scottish Executive for recycling;
- Continued elected member involvement in litter awareness and campaign promotions;

#### **Performance Lows**

- Failure to introduce introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices in respect of litter and dog fouling - Steps currently in progress with other Services of North Ayrshire Council to address this issue
- Increase in level of sickness absence due to long term sickness absence.

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- To continue to stimulate interest in the Litter Awareness Campaign;
- Using results of Local Environmental Audit management System (LEAMS) to maintain and improve standards of cleanliness;



- Further upgrade of unattended public conveniences on Arran;
- Retain Beach Award from Keep Scotland Beautiful for South Beach;
- Achieve Beach Award from Keep Scotland Beautiful for Irvine (Shorehead);
- Reduce level of sickness absence

## **Refuse Collection, Disposal and Recycling Services**

### **Performance Highs**

- Roll-out of kerbside collection scheme for certain dry recyclates in the North Coast, Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston areas. The remainder of mainland North Ayrshire will be completed by mid November.
- Continuing to maintain below average refuse collection costs whilst providing multiple weekly collections for garden waste, bulky household waste, white goods and residual household wastes;
- A projected 24% recycling rate for 2004/2005 whilst maintaining the lowest mixed Council disposal costs and remaining self sufficient in waste disposal;
- Satisfactory performance in relation to special uplifts and missed collections;
- Reorganisation of vehicles to ensuring continuity of service as well as greater quality and efficiency and conforming to changes in legislation in the provision of the service;
- Gas management system introduced at Shewalton and reported in the previous Performance Report is now producing energy of up to 1 megawatt which is being put into the national grid;
- Remodelled bid re Strategic Waste Fund Award accepted by the Scottish Executive which will allow upgrading of Bartonholm and Dreghorn Civic Amenity Sites;
- Appointment of Assistant Recycling Officer to assist the Litter/Recycling Officer in the implementation of the Strategic Waste Strategy
- Provision of new welfare facilities at Shewalton.

### **Performance Lows**

- Uncertainty regarding Arran's waste disposal/treatment provision
- No provision of recycling centre in Ardrossan/Saltcoats/Stevenston area

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Upgrade civic amenity sites and extend opening hours with support from Strategic Waste Fund;
- Ongoing introduction of separate Kerbside Collection Scheme, coupled with increased provision of banks to facilitate an increase in recycling by 2006;
- New bid for Strategic Waste Fund monies to improve recycling centres, support waste minimisation, further increase recycling, landfill diversion;
- Site search to determine availability of a waste disposal facility on Arran (Nearing Completion);
- Implementation Plan for the Strategic Waste Fund on Arran;
- Introduction of wheeled bins on Arran;
- Maintain improvement in sickness absence figures;

## **Roads Services**

### **Performance Highs**

- A760 Haylie Brae bend improvement; major rural improvement scheme at accident blackspot;
- Installation of GPS tracking system in vehicles, improved control of winter gritting and Health and Safety of drivers;
- Emergency carriageway repairs on B784, joint working/financing with local quarry operator ensured road remained open during peak periods;
- Ross Road, Arran, upgrade- joint venture with Forrestry Commission and use of innovative materials resulting in local stone being used and mixed on island, reducing numbers of vehicles using ferries;
- Continued achievement in excess of Government's targets for reduction in road safety accidents and casualties;
- The use of the Jetpatcher on Arran for minor patching repairs has proved a boost to performance and road safety on the island. The repairs appear to be more durable.

### **Performance Lows**

- Lack of control of correspondence within Service;
- High levels of Technical Staff time taken up with administration duties;
- Slow progress on implementation of Traffic Management Schemes;
- Slow progress on implementation of a pavement management and GIS systems;
- Slow progress on updating street gazetteer.

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Implementation of an internal dictation system for typing. Review the filing and mail recording system and implement the necessary improvements;
- Purchase and commission a pavement management and GIS system;
- Enhance information held on street gazetteer and bring up to level 3;
- Complete surveys/reports on the condition of lighting infrastructure;
- Prepare contract to engage consultants on a "draw down" basis to supplement Roads staff resources and complete the traffic management schemes;
- Issue questionnaire to stakeholders to determine what are seen as priorities by them and to obtain feed back on what the Service has delivered

### **School Crossing Patrol Service**

#### **Performance Highs**

- School Crossing Sickness absence level currently 4.12% for last 6 months. This is a reduction of 1.12% on previous year.
- Area Performance Plans for Customer Calls have now been developed and are in use
- Exit interviews are now being actioned and recorded
- All School Crossing Patrollers have been completely re-equipped with Personal Protective Clothing (PPE). Winter uniforms have been purchased for all staff
- A successful recruitment drive has ensured all vacant posts have now been filled.
- 6 Operations staff have completed and achieved Certificate in Training in Manual Handling

- Employee handbook has been completed, to be issued to all new and existing employees.

#### **Performance Lows**

- Staff induction not formally recorded at commencement of employment
- Travel costs for cover outwith base still high
- Due to the non functioning of road traffic control installations, demand is made of the school crossing patrol function for additional resources. Even though this service is the responsibility of the budget holder, requests from other services and the community affect the logistical arrangements for deployment of such resources.

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- Induction and training manual to be developed
- To address absenteeism by continuing to follow the Council's Sickness Absence Policy in partnership with Occupational Health.
- To discuss with Road Safety how we communicate to the public the established criteria for implementing a school crossing point
- Review level of relief cover required
- Monitor level of travel expenses

#### **Technical Services**

##### **Performance Highs**

- Customer satisfaction surveys on major housing improvement work extended to re-roofing and re-rendering programmes
- Implementation of the expanded Private Sector Grants Service and introduction of performance monitoring.
- Use of the on - line Barbour Index to provide instant access to current literature and reduce the requirement for manual storage.
- Achieving improvements in bringing in contracts on time and within or close to budget .
- Implementation of changes arising from Strategic Review of the Service.
- High performance levels on response times for housing repairs maintained.
- Ongoing progress with adaptations to Council properties to comply with Disability Discrimination Act.

##### **Performance Lows**

- Temporary difficulties with resourcing design services for contracts.
- Deterioration in sickness absence rate due to small number of long term absences.

##### **Immediate Priorities**

- Complete the re - tendering of a range of term contracts for specialist work to the Council's operational properties.
- Continue to progress the work of two in house improvement groups working on performance measurement, stakeholders consultation and business systems review.

- Completion of all project work for 2004 / 5 funded from the Capital Programmes and other sources.
- Preparation of 10 year investment plan for the housing stock and finalisation of associated stock data collection and recording arrangements.
- Ongoing review of Housing property management policies and procedures in readiness for future Communities Scotland inspection.
- Collection of first data sets on performance in relation to Housing Standards.

## **Transport Service**

### **Performance Highs**

- Multi functional vehicles to increase commercial services and to comply with changes in legislation for waste strategy;
- Sustaining the increased mileage in tyre management which means that more tyres are recycled for re-use which is of a cost benefit to the Council;
- Promoting the Council's Green Policy in reducing environmental pollution. This relates to the reduction in CO2 emissions and savings on Carbon Tax;
- Fitting of CRT unit to reduce oil pollution has resulted in further cost savings;
- Reduction in sickness absence;
- Heating the workshop is now more efficient and will reduce costs. This is currently being monitored to ascertain the savings benefits;

### **Performance Lows**

- Technical training for product ranges is reduced due to small workforce
- Computer system updates to improve information to user services.

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Continue to maintain sickness absence levels;
- Computer system updates;
- Further training to improve skill levels; and
- To ensure that the Taxi Inspection Programme starts within this financial year.

In response to members' questions, officers provided further information and clarification on all the reports.

The Sub Committee (a) noted the information provided for the consideration of the Members; and (b) agreed to receive a report from Building Services on repairs to Community Halls at a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 3.05 p.m.