

Corporate Services Committee
28 January 2003

IRVINE, 28 January 2003 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

David Munn, Robert Reilly, Jack Carson, Jane Gorman, Elisabeth Marshall, Elizabeth McLardy, John Moffat, Alan Munro, David O'Neill, Donald Reid and John Reid.

In Attendance

A Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive (Finance); I Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); B MacDonald, Assistant Chief Executive and R Forrest, Principal Planner (Development and Promotion); G Young, Senior Personnel Adviser (Personnel); S Bale and A Sobieraj, Corporate and Democratic Support Officers and A Wattie, Communications Officer (Chief Executive's).

Also In Attendance

W Burns, Managing Director, Hunterston Container Hub Co Ltd; C Whyte, Montagu Evans, Consultants; J Duncan, URS Corporation (Engineers); and K Storrier, G D Lodge (Architects and Masterplanners).

Chair

Councillor Munn in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Samuel Gooding and Robert Rae.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 3 December 2002, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Hunterston Transhipment Project

2.1 Presentation

The Committee heard a presentation by W Burns, Hunterston Container Hub Co. Ltd. (Clydeport) on work being undertaken to develop and evaluate opportunities for a container transhipment hub at Hunterston.

Information was presented on the wide variety of social, economic and environmental benefits for shipping companies using Hunterston as compared to other areas in the UK. Hunterston offers good access to local, UK and European markets, with no congestion or berthing delays envisaged. It is able to offer substantial port capacity and local advantages include an ideal natural and geographical position and a direct route to all markets. In addition, the location is a brownfield site with planning protection.

Cost and benefit analyses have identified significant economic advantages for carriers as well as contributing to the economic and social well being of the surrounding community through long term employment.

Noted.

2.2 Progress and Funding.

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on progress on the Hunterston Transhipment Project.

Over the previous 18 months officers of the Council have been working with Clydeport and Scottish Enterprise at national level to develop and evaluate opportunities for the development of a container transhipment hub at Hunterston. The proposal was considered by the Committee on 30 April 2002 when it was agreed to support the project over a 2 year period, subject to appropriate reports being provided to the Council.

The Managing Director of the Hunterston Transhipment Project was appointed in September 2002. Progress to date on the project has been significant. It is proposed that the Council continue funding for a further year for 2003/2004. Support is also expected from Clydeport and Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire. The Council's contribution of £35,000 will be found from existing resources.

The Committee agreed to continue funding of the Hunterston Transhipment Project in the sum of £35,000 for 2003/2004.

3. Irvine: Montgomerie Park

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the Masterplan for the development of Montgomerie Park West, Irvine in accordance with Policies HOU4 and SOC7 of the Adopted Irvine/Kilwinning Local Plan 2001.

On 5 February 2002 the Corporate Policy Committee authorised the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) to proceed with the Masterplanning of Montgomerie Park, Irvine. This followed investigation of development options prepared by Montagu Evans, who were appointed advisors to the Council on the development and sale of Montgomerie Park. The URS Corporation was subsequently appointed as Engineering Consultants and G D Lodge as Masterplanners for the project and for the necessary ground investigation works.

The Committee received presentations on the proposals by C Whyte, Montagu Evans, Consultants, J Duncan, URS Corporation and K Storrier, G D Lodge Architects and Masterplanners.

The Masterplan is concerned with the western section of the Montgomerie Park area only, previously known as Knadgerhill and identifies various development areas including:-

- 13 sites for private housing with a capacity for approximately 800 - 900 family homes, primarily detached or semi-detached;
- 2 sites for social housing with a capacity for 50 sheltered and general needs homes built to barrier-free standards;
- 1 site for a 2-stream primary school with nursery with an enhanced capacity for the provision of a games hall and library facilities to facilitate shared community use;
- 1 site for a local neighbourhood shop with capacity for the development of a healthcare facility; and
- Extensive landscaped perimeters and a new distributor road, incorporating provision for buses, with footpath and cycle routes connecting all areas and establishing external links to the site.

The provision of the essential roads and services infrastructure will be incumbent on the developers of the first and subsequent developments. It is anticipated that the development will take up to 10 years to complete with site sales phased over 6-7 years. It is proposed that the Council, with the assistance of Montagu Evans, proceed to market the site in Spring 2003, with an estimated commencement of work on site in late 2003/early 2004.

The Committee agreed (a) to adopt the Masterplan for Montgomerie Park West, Irvine as presented by Consultants Montagu Evans; (b) the proposed marketing strategy for the site based on a quality/cost mechanism for the assessment of bids; and (c) to proceed to market the first development sites in Spring 2003.

4. Revenue Budget 2002/2003: Budgetary Control

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Finance) on the budgetary control position for Corporate Services at the end of November 2002, and on projections for the financial year 2002/2003.

Noted.

5. Irvine and Kilwinning: New Town Trail Regeneration

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on proposals for the regeneration of the Irvine and Kilwinning New Town Trail.

The New Town Trail path around Irvine and Kilwinning is a well established resource with extensive local community use, linking local communities and providing recreational opportunities for walkers and cyclists. Certain sections of the Trail link to the National Cycle Network. Since the Trail's inception, however, a number of factors have contributed to the route's decline in overall quality and use and it is proposed that regeneration work be undertaken as follows:-

- Route and Standard - 3 sections of the Trail will be re-routed;
- Signage - missing or damaged signposts will be replaced and new signposts erected;
- Public Information - a new leaflet/ map of the Trail will be designed, produced and distributed; and
- Restoration Work - some minor maintenance work will be carried out in particular on certain sections within Eglinton Country Park, Kilwinning.

The Committee agreed (a) that identified sections of the Irvine and Kilwinning New Town Trail be re-routed as detailed in Appendices 3 to 5 to the report; (b) that additional signage be erected along the New Town Trail; (c) that a new leaflet/map of the route be produced; and (d) that the New Town Trail be relaunched in Spring 2003.

6. Projects Funded by Landfill Tax Credits 2003

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on proposed changes to the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme and projects for funding in 2003.

The Council as Landfill operator can distribute up to 20% of the Landfill Tax it collects to enrolled bodies to fund projects in accordance with agreed criteria. Since 1997 the Council has distributed more than £1m to 44 projects.

In 2002 the Council had £228,000 in Landfill Tax Credits. In November 2002 the Government announced changes to the scheme effective from 1 April 2003 and it is envisaged that as a result, the financial resources available for distribution are likely to be limited to around 6% of the Landfill Tax collected. Projects dealing with waste minimisation and recycling will be removed from the scheme.

In 2003 approximately £109,000 will be available for new projects. Thirteen new projects have been submitted for consideration from enrolled bodies, other external organisations and Council services. These have been evaluated in accordance with criteria agreed in 1998 which includes job creation and training potential, partnership value and environmental impact.

The Committee agreed (a) that the projects detailed in Appendix 1 to the report be funded from the Council's Landfill Tax Credits in 2003; and (b) that the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) deal with minor variations within the projects, as appropriate.

7. Dalry: Property at Smith Street

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the proposed sale of land and buildings at 26 Smith Street, Dalry, comprising a vacant store (formerly a works sub depot) with land comprising car parking to the rear of New Street extending to approximately 3,700 square metres.

CG Property on behalf of the Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd has acquired adjoining land and buildings for a small supermarket development. Following negotiations, a formal offer has been submitted by CWS to purchase the Council property in the sum of £150,000 together with payment of the Council's reasonable legal and estates costs. Agents for the purchasers will submit a formal planning application in due course.

The Committee agreed to approve the disposal of the land and buildings at Smith Street, Dalry to the Co-operative Group (CWS) Ltd in the sum of £150,000.

8. Employment Act 2002 - Provisions relating to Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave/Pay

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the main provisions of the Employment Act 2002 as they relate to Maternity, Paternity and Adoption Leave/Pay. These come into effect on 6 April 2003 and provide for enhanced leave periods, reduced qualification periods and increased payments to eligible staff.

It is proposed that these provisions be incorporated into the Council's Terms and Conditions of Employment and Policies and Procedures with the exception of the Council's current Adoption Leave and Pay Policies and Procedures relating to Adoption Leave and Pay, which will be withdrawn.

The Committee agreed to approve the changes to the Council's Terms and Conditions of Employment and Policies and Procedures relating to Maternity/Paternity and Adoption Leave/Pay following the implementation of the Employment Act 2002 as detailed in Appendices 1 to 4 to the report.

9. Redundancy Policy and Procedures

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the adoption and implementation of the Council's Redundancy Policy and Procedures.

The Council may on occasion be required to change its service provision and method of delivery in accordance with modernisation or Government policy. This could include the reorganisation of the workforce, reducing the size of the workforce and changing the duties and responsibilities of certain posts. Although the Council is committed to the promotion of job security for all employees, redundancy situations may arise in certain circumstances.

Legislation imposes duties on the Council including:-

- To individually consult with employees affected by a redundancy situation; and
- To seek agreement with Trades Unions on the selection for redundancy criteria to be applied in line with anti discrimination legislation.

It is proposed that the Council adopts and implements the Redundancy Policy and Procedures, which aim:-

- To detail the Council Policy on Redundancy;
- To define a redundancy situation, specifying the rights of the employee and the Council's responsibilities;
- To provide details of support and assistance available to affected employees;
- To prescribe the procedure to be followed in the event of a redundancy situation; and
- To consider measures to avoid redundancy such as redeployment.

The Committee agreed to approve the adoption and implementation of the Redundancy Policy and Procedures as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

10. Redeployment Policy and Procedures

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the adoption and implementation of the Council's Redeployment Policy and Procedures.

Circumstances arise where employees, for a number of reasons, are unable to continue in their present post, for example, due to organisational change leading to redundancy situations, an inability to sustain a satisfactory performance level or, by reason of disability, an inability to carry out certain tasks within existing duties and responsibilities.

The present legislation linked to emerging case law, imposes a duty on employers to consider and, where appropriate, to offer alternative employment to employees who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to continue in their present post. The Council currently operates informal processes to deal with employees who require to be considered for redeployment. The development and introduction of a formal policy and procedures will be in the interests of the employee and the Council.

It is proposed that the Council adopts and implements the Redeployment Policy and Procedures, which include the following key elements:-

- To provide the means by which alternative employment is secured for displaced employees;
- To provide clear advice and guidance to managers and employees;
- To define the roles and responsibilities of the employing service, other Council services, Personnel, the employee and the relevant Trades Union; and
- To provide a detailed redeployment process, designed to assist the employee in securing alternative employment.

The Committee agreed to approve the adoption and implementation of the Redeployment Policy and Procedures as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

11. Secondment Policy and Procedures

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel) on the adoption and implementation of the Council's Secondment Policy and Procedures.

The Government's Modernising Agenda and national and local developments across a range of services have resulted in the Council continually changing the way it delivers services. This has resulted in an increase in temporary projects which require to recruit staff with the requisite local authority skills and expertise. The secondment of existing staff is an effective method of providing the resources required for these activities. The Council's secondment arrangements are currently organised on an informal or ad hoc basis.

It is proposed to introduce and implement within the Council the Secondment Policy and Procedures which include the following key features:-

- To define the types of secondment and arrangements;
- To advertise secondment opportunities;
- To detail the procedures to be followed when an employee is to be seconded or requests secondment; and
- To detail the implications for the Terms and Conditions of Service of seconded employees.

The Committee agreed to approve the adoption and implementation of the Secondment Policy and Procedures as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

The Chair agreed that the following item of business be considered as a matter of urgency in order that the Scottish Executive deadline for expenditure of monies prior to 31 March 2003 be met.

12. Additional Capital Allocation for Contaminated Land 2002-2003

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the balance of the additional budget awarded by the Scottish Executive for remediation of derelict and contaminated land.

On 6 December 2002 the Scottish Executive awarded the Council an additional £315,000 from the Remediation of Derelict and Contaminated Land, to be expended before 31 March 2003. The award was made on a bid to recover the site at Ailsa Road/High Road, Saltcoats. To ensure that the Council had maximum flexibility in managing its financial resources, the award was not ring-fenced.

There is a projected balance of £50,000 from the award which provides the opportunity to carry-out further remedial works within the Council's responsibility. The former Cunninghame District Council and Enterprise Ayrshire partially remediated the site of the former gas works at Dovecote Lane, Kilwinning. The bund however along the frontage of the site, represents a security risk for the occupants of the yard and also permits views into the adjacent Abbey Park.

It is proposed that the bund be removed and the area reinstated with inert materials to allow for the expansion of the yard and the creation of a pedestrian way and/or additional parking. It will also ease movement along Dovecote Lane which forms part of the National Cycle Route.

The Committee agreed that the balance from the additional capital allocation for Remediation of Derelict and Contaminated Land 2002-2003 be expended to remove the bund along the frontage of the site of the former gas works at Dovecote Lane, Kilwinning and to reinstate the site with inert material.

Councillor Munn declared an interest in the following item of business and vacated the Chair. The Vice Chair, Councillor Reilly assumed the Chair for this item of business.

13. Glengarnock Joint Venture

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective) on progress in the establishment of a joint venture to redevelop the Glengarnock steel site.

On 3 September 2002 the Committee agreed to enter into negotiations with Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire to establish the purchase price for the former steelworks site at Glengarnock. The purpose of these negotiations was to establish a joint venture with Hermiston Properties Ltd on the redevelopment of the site. The District Valuer has now identified the value of the site at £365,000.

The most financially efficient means of acquiring Glengarnock is for the Council to make a grant of £370,000 to North Ayrshire Ventures Trust to enable the Trust to enter into a joint venture with Hermiston Properties Ltd.

The acquisition of the site and the provision of working capital would be funded jointly by the Council and Hermiston Properties Ltd. This would allow for the early phase of redevelopment, recognising the opportunities following the Atomic Energy Authority announcement of its development at Lochshore. Partners have indicated that their matching financial contribution is currently available for the project. To ensure that the Council's interests are safeguarded, a condition will be imposed detailing that the funding must be spent for the purpose specified.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Special Meeting of the Corporate Policy Committee on 10 February be requested to include the project within the Council's Capital Programme in the financial years 2003/2004 and 2004/2005; and (b) that subject to the approval of that Committee, a grant of £370,000 be made to North Ayrshire Ventures Trust Ltd to enter into a joint venture with Hermiston Properties Ltd to redevelop the Glengarnock site.

The meeting ended at 3.35 p.m.