

Property Services Standing Sub Committee  
14 September 2005

**Irvine, 14 September 2005** - At a Meeting of the Property Services Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.00 a.m.

**Present**

John Bell, Stewart Dewar, Margaret McDougall, David O'Neill, Samuel Taylor and Nan Wallace.

**In Attendance**

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

**Chair**

Councillor Bell in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Richard Wilkinson.

**1. Performance Reports**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on the performance for each of the main service areas within Property Services for the year to 31 March 2005.

**Building Services**

**Performance Highs**

- The service met the standards required to become members of SELECT (Scottish Electrical Contractors Association).
- The service received accreditation as an approved contractor working to BS6576 for timber treatment. As a result of this accreditation the service appears on the National quality register for such works which is maintained by SOVEREIGN.

**Performance Lows**

- Sickness absence

### **Immediate Priorities**

- 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.

### **Catering Service**

#### **Performance Highs**

- The Hungry for Success (H4S) initiative has been successfully implemented in all 53 primary mainstream schools and in the four special schools, changing menu choices for children to healthier meal options.
- 72% of primary schools achieved Commended Scottish Healthy Choices Award for school meals and food provision.
- 60% of secondary schools achieved Highly Commended Scottish Healthy Choices Award for school meal and food provision.
- Kerelaw redeployment addressed within timescale (April 2005).
- 9 Catering Managers qualified in Intermediate Food Hygiene Certificate

#### **Performance Lows**

- Marginal decrease in secondary school uptake of school meals
- Unsuccessful in meeting the target set for the update of schools meals in both primary and secondary schools

### **Immediate Priorities**

- To increase the number of invoices processed for payment within the 30 day timescale
- To engage with pupil councils, school board and parent teacher associations in promoting aims of Hungry for Success
- To increase the uptake of pupil spend school meals to the 40% KPI target in primary and secondary schools
- To continue to address absenteeism by following the Council's Sickness Absence Policy in partnership with Occupational Health

### **Cemeteries Services**

#### **Performance Highs**

- Kilwinning Cemetery War Memorial wins Champion of Champions category of the

#### Royal British Legion Best Kept Memorial Competition

- Successful achievement of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Charter for the Bereaved
- The digital copying of all mainland cemetery registers
- 60% of cemetery staff trained through the ICCM Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme.

#### **Performance Lows**

- A slower than planned execution of the programme for the inspection of memorials in Ardrossan
- A delay in the extension to Beith and Hawkhill cemeteries

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- Distribution of an information pack with each Lair Certificate combined with leaflets of memorial works, right of burial, etc in local offices, libraries etc.

#### **Cleaning Service**

#### **Performance Highs**

- Retained ISO 9001:2000 in Building Cleaning across all 120 sites in North Ayrshire that have more than one operative
- All mobile cleaning supervisors achieved SVQ Assessor status
- 29% attended manual handling training courses, exceeding the KPI target
- New employee Handbook issued as part of Induction Programme to all staff at commencement of employment
- Police redeployment achieved 6 months ahead of target (September 2005)

#### **Performance Lows**

- Site specific risk assessment programme not yet complete
- Unable to recruit and retain staff on Arran
- Did not achieve full stakeholder consultation with customers
- Sickness absence remains above target levels

#### **Immediate Priorities**

- To continue to address absenteeism by following the Council's Sickness Absence Policy
- To implement new SVQ standards for janitorial staff
- To provide further training in Health and Safety to Cleaning Supervisors to enable

them to train staff within their teams

## **Cleansing**

### **Performance Highs**

- Increase in litter and dog bin provision
- A recycling rate of 23.78% for 2004/05 whilst maintaining the lowest mixed Council disposal costs and remaining self sufficient in waste disposal
- Introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices in respect of litter and dog fouling with local publicity
- More effective delittering of grass verges etc in Irvine New Town and Garnock area implemented with the introduction of two "Littermasters" which have defined beats
- Introduction of small mechanical sweepers in various areas leading to more effective and efficient street cleaning
- All bonus payments have now been consolidated in employee salaries with full agreement of the trade unions

### **Performance Lows**

- Uncertainty regarding Arran's waste disposal/treatment provision.

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Ongoing Litter Awareness Campaign
- Maintain improvement in sickness absence figures
- Further bid for Strategic Waste Fund monies to facilitate recycling on the Isle of Arran

## **Grounds Maintenance**

### **Performance Highs**

- Successful application to SFGS for Forestry Management Report. A grant has been awarded to the Council to carry out a survey of the woodlands in and around the Irvine area. The Steering Group has to meet to discuss the way forward with amendments being made at this time prior to the document going for Committee approval
- Consolidation of Bonus. Negotiations took place with the various Unions to look at the consolidation of the manual Workers Bonus Scheme into their rate of pay. After many meetings, an agreement was reached and the consolidation of bonus was introduced

- Participation in joint working. The Section has been involved in a number of projects:-

Castlehill - new seating and litterbins have been provided and paths have been brought up to an abilities standard as per the DDA Regulations

Provision of plant material for West Kilbride's hanging baskets

- Over the past couple of seasons there has been an increase in the volume of grass being collected by the Section. All areas on the mainland have at least one or more ride-on mowers that can collect grass which is taken away for recycling purposes.

### **Performance Lows**

- Slight increase in sickness absence levels due to periods of long-term sickness absence
- Garden Tidy Scheme - due to the lack of investment in the Scheme there will be an overspend for this service

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Improve sickness levels
- Joint working with Educational Services on provision of draft Play Strategy. This document is in a draft format at present. The Steering Group has to meet to discuss the way forward with amendments
- Joint working with North Ayrshire Leisure and Educational Services on provision of Football Pitch Strategy. This document is awaiting Committee approval
- Joint working arrangements are in place between the Grounds Maintenance and Cemeteries Sections to enhance the War Memorials in North Ayrshire. To date, four memorials have been completed and it is proposed to have the rest finished in the 2005/06 budget period.

### **Housing Services**

#### **Performance Highs**

- Two Tenant Participation Conferences held, one in April 2004 at which draft Tenant Participation Strategy launched, and one in October 2004 introducing the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and discussing repairs
- Housing Service Standards consulted on and launched for implementation from 1st October 2004. The standards describe clearly what levels of service tenants can expect
- The % of void rent lost has dropped year on year for the last 3 years and now stands at 0.73%
- 84.3% of empty houses were re-let within 4 weeks during 2004/05

- Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team have succeeded in taking 9 cases to court for Interim Anti-Social Behaviour Orders, 3 of which went to full ASBOs during 2004/05
- In addition 48 cases were resolved without the need for court action
- Community Wardens now operating in four areas, with funding from the Scottish Executive
- Rent Arrears
  - Achieved a significant reduction in arrears, now standing at 9.2% of net rent due, compared to 12.3% in 2003/04
  - Serious rent arrears (i.e. tenants owing more than 13 weeks rent, excluding those owing less than £250) reduced from 6.8% in 2003/04 to 5.4% 2004/05
  - The rent arrears service was recognised by the Rent Income Excellence Network as “providing a good service with promising signs for further improvement”
- 20% of Housing Services staff are undertaking further education
- Homelessness
  - Developed homeless prevention project for young people. Of 227 referrals, 177 received assistance and were able to return to the family home, 39 could not return home because that would have been inappropriate due to violence and/or abuse. Only 11 of the 227 who were referred could not be assisted to return home
  - 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
- Development - Working in partnership with Communities Scotland and Housing Associations, 75 properties have been completed. Total investment was over £5m above that in 2003/04
- Working with Social Services, child protection procedures have been introduced to ensure appropriate referrals are made by housing staff and vulnerable children are protected
- Continued reduction in sickness absence levels from 4.7% in 2001/02 to 3.4% in 2004/05

### **Performance Lows**

- Closure of Bed & Breakfast establishments meant an inability to meet statutory obligation to provide temporary accommodation consistently, despite expansion of furnished flats
- Processing time for homelessness applications has increased

## **Immediate Priorities**

- Develop an affordable housing policy
- Complete options appraisal for the Vineburgh area, Irvine
- Tenant Participation – development and implementation of tenant participation strategy and action plan
- Develop homelessness service to focus on prevention
- Implement new management structure for provision of community safety and anti-social behaviour services
- Introduce new nomination agreement with RSLs
- Review the allocation policy to meet legislative requirements and the housing needs of residents in North Ayrshire

## **Roads Service**

### **Performance Highs**

- The purchase and commissioning of Pavement Management System which will allow Maintenance staff greater opportunity to monitor condition of network
- Achieved Accident Reduction Targets set by government which will improve the health and well-being of the community

### **Performance Lows**

- Slow progress on issue and analysis of stakeholder questionnaire which will assist the Service to target resources

## **Immediate Priorities**

- Complete financial options and priority review for street lighting
- Prepare for formation of Regional Transport Partnership which will change the way in which the Council deals with transportation issues

## **Technical Services**

### **Performance Highs**

- The Service continued to contribute to the achievement of high performance levels on housing response repairs better than the Scottish Average in three out of four categories
- 99% customer satisfaction with the overall Private Sector Housing Grants Service
- 100% spend of new Private Sector Housing Grant representing an increase of over 200% in expenditure on Private Sector housing grants compared to 2003/04



- Completion of major office refurbishment to provide more efficient use of space, improve productivity and address health and safety issues in relation to work station layout and general clutter

### **Performance Lows**

- Delay in implementation of a joint housing repairs quality assessment procedure with Building Services due to longer than expected development process
- Increase in time taken to process requests for minor works to operational properties due to increased workload in this area
- Increase in sickness absence rates due to a small number of long term absences

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Bring in projects on time and within budget within the expanded Housing and General Services Capital Programmes
- Survey 25% of housing stock against Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- Deliver an expanded energy management service to the Council designed to achieve annual targets for reductions in energy usage
- Continue to play a major role in the establishment of a corporate asset management system including the procurement of updated condition surveys and associated computerised plans for the Council non-housing property estate designed to reduce property costs, improve the condition, suitability and sufficiency of properties and inform new SPI for asset management

## **Transport Service**

### **Performance Highs**

- High reduction in sickness absence levels
- Usage of bio fuels as well as low sulphur further reducing emissions
- Fleet management system and fuel management system upgrades have taken place
- Apprentice received Engineering Award for the Year in London for the UK

### **Performance Lows**

- Increase in number of vehicle accidents causing damage to Council vehicles and affecting service delivery

### **Immediate Priorities**

- Reduce accident damage by implementing training programmes

- Maintain and/or improve level of engineering training

In response to members' questions, officers provided further information and clarification on the reports. The Head of Technical Service undertook to provide Members with further statistical information on the number of complaints in relation to refurbishment.

Noted.

## **2. Housing Service Standards**

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on performance against Housing Service Standards.

Housing Services primarily measures its performance by the use of Performance Indicators. However, in addition to these nationally prescribed performance indicators, Communities Scotland and the Chartered Institute of Housing recommends that authorities should also ensure that tenants (and other customers of housing and related services) are aware of the standards of service they can expect from their Housing Service.

Following consultation with tenants, customers and staff, the proposed Service Standards and performance monitoring framework were approved by the Property Services Committee on 25 August 2004. The Service Standards were introduced on 1 October 2004 and it was agreed that performance against the standards would be reported annually.

The report covered the 6 month period from October 2004 to March 2005 and demonstrated the progress that has been made in developing the monitoring framework, which should be fully developed and in place in time for the next annual report.

The standards cover the following areas:-

- Customer Care
- Complaints
- Equal Opportunities
- Rehousing Services
- Managing Empty Properties
- Collecting rent
- Managing the estate
- Concierge Services
- Services for elderly people
- Repairs
- Major repair and improvement work
- Homelessness

Details of performance against the 50 service standards, which are measurable quantitatively, was as follows:-

- 31 (62%) of the standards were met fully
- 6 (12%) of the standards were within 10% of the target
- 6 (12%) of the standards did not achieve within 10%
- 7 (14%) of the standards did not have adequate monitoring methods in place to judge our performance

Performance of a number of other standards, which are qualitative, will be measured through customer satisfaction surveys, mystery shopping, conducted by tenants trained in such techniques and exit interviews.

Overall progress in the development of the Service Standards framework has been satisfactory in the first 6 months of the standards operating. There are areas where some of the data is incomplete, or the monitoring methods are insufficient. Where this has been identified new monitoring methods are being developed and introduced.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.