Corporate Services Standing Sub Committee
1 March 2006

IRVINE, 1 March 2006 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Services Standing Sub Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present
Tom Barr, John Moffat, David Munn and Ian Richardson.

In Attendance
I. Snodgrass, Chief Executive; A. Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive (Finance); I.T. Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Protective); J.M. Macfarlane, Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel); B. MacDonald, Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion); J. Barrett, Assistant Chief Executive (Information Technology); J. Montgomery, Principal Performance Review Officer, and M. Anderson, Corporate and Democratic Support Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair
Councillor Barr in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence
Jack Carson, Gordon Clarkson, Margaret McDougall, Elizabeth McLardy and Robert Rae.

1.   Service Plans 2006-09

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the strategic priorities for the Corporate Services group as a whole and for each individual service for the period 2006/09.

The appendices to the report include Strategic Service Statements which focus on the strategic priorities for each service. These Statements are a key feature of the joint service planning and budgetary process put in place by the Council's response to recommendations contained in Audit Scotland's report on its aid of Best Value and Community Planning arrangements within the Council.

Chief Executive's Service

The following key service priorities were highlighted for the Chief Executive's service:-

- To prepare for the Local Government elections in 2007 and for changes in Council governance arrangements which will/may arise;
- To complete, support implementation and monitor progress of the new Council Plan setting out the Council's objectives and priorities until 2009;
- To complete, roll-out and monitor the new Community Plan and establish new partnership working arrangements to achieve its targets;
- To continue to monitor and support the implementation of the Regeneration Outcome Agreement;
- To further develop performance monitoring to support continuous improvement of services across the Council;
- To introduce a new system of internal communications across the Council and further develop processes for engaging with the community;
- To ensure compliance with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004; and
- To maintain service delivery whilst seeking to drive down costs

Clarification was provided on points raised as follows:-

- the role of the Communications Section in interacting proactively with the local press;
- the potential for joint working with the other Ayrshire Authorities and public bodies; and
- preparation for potential changes in arrangements for Council Governance following the 2007 Local Government Elections.

Development and Promotion

The following key service priorities were highlighted for Development and Promotion:-

- To complete and implement an economic development strategy for North Ayrshire to secure new investment, jobs and training in the area;
- To conduct a review of the Economic Development function to ensure activities and structures are geared to deliver the requirements of the updated economic development strategy;
- To pursue a formal local plan amendment in respect of rural development and affordable housing;
- To seek resolution of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan housing provision and distribution proposals; and
- To review the Development Plan Section's structure in response to staff inexperience and to maximise the role of support staff.

Clarification was provided on points raised as follows:-

- the future of the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan;
- the potential for development of the deep sea port at Hunterston;

- progress in terms of the review of staffing arrangements for the Estates Service;
- capital and revenue funding for urban regeneration; and
- the future of European funding to support local business.

Financial Services

The following key service priorities were highlighted for Financial Services:-

- To increase income to the Council through improved Council Tax collection, improved NDR collection, improved Benefits overpayments recovery, improved Sundry Debtors collection and by ensuring all grants are claimed as appropriate;
- To drive efficiencies in the Council and support a shift in culture within services;
- To continue to manage and improve performance (demonstrated through SPIs);
- To progress e-Government type issues (DIP, commitment accounting, etc); and
- To pursue "Customer service excellence", e.g. Charter Mark

Clarification was provided on points raised as follows:-

- new initiatives to collect income due to the Council, including the collection of non domestic rates; and
- the need to drive efficiencies in the Council by instilling a cost saving culture within services.

Information Technology Services

The following key service priorities were highlighted for Information Technology Services:-

- To continue to enhance the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and associated infrastructure in support of the Council's Customer Contact strategy;
- To collaborate on the development of shared databases, secure data exchange and customer authentication;
- To seek to drive down costs within IT Services;
- In collaboration with other Services, to develop and implement an improvement programme for key business processes to identify efficiencies and to improve the effectiveness of service delivery;
- To collaborate with East and South Ayrshire Councils and Ayrshire and Arran NHS on shared services for the Efficient Government Fund project;

- To collaborate with Scottish Executive on Customer First and Efficient Government; and
- To demonstrate the provision of an effective and quality service by securing retention of Charter Mark.

Clarification was provided on points raised as follows:-

- the development of initiatives to encourage joint working with the 2 other Ayrshire Authorities and pubic bodies such as the NHS;
- the need to ensure that the information technology training needs of Elected Members are met; and
- the role of the ICT Investment Appraisal Framework in analysing the benefits of IT investment.

Legal and Protective Services

The following key service priorities were highlighted for Legal and Protective Services:-

- To prepare for changes to the planning system in Scotland as a result of the Planning Bill;
- To be aware of the opportunity to be provider of choice for verifying building warrants and challenge from the private sector (Building Standards Verifier Status);
- To implement of a project plan to introduce e-planning within Development Control and Building Standards;
- To work with others on community issues such as under-age sales of alcohol and tobacco;
- To prepare for the implementation of new legislation on smoking ban provisions, animal welfare, private water supplies, liquor and non-liquor licensing, registration services, mental health, antisocial behaviour, child protection and summary justice; and
- To assist with the strategic review of the future of the Townhouse, either in the form of restoration or transfer to the Scottish Courts Service.

Clarification was provided on points raised as follows:-

- the implications of the Planning Bill for the development control division and the Planning Committee; and
- actions to encourage staff retention in respect of key roles.

Personnel (including Customer) Services

The following key service priorities were highlighted for Personnel (including Customer) Services:-

- To complete the modernisation of the reward and remuneration package in a way which is fair and equitable and equips the Council with a more flexible workforce to meet its future needs;
- To develop a revised HR Strategy and Action Plan which meets with audit and inspection report requirements; and
- To continue to roll out and implement the Council's Customer Contact Strategy, ensuring appropriate integration with the with Building Services call centre.

Clarification was provided on points raised as follows:-

- the development of a succession planning strategy to manage recruitment to replace the Council's ageing workforce;
- the key objectives of the Council's Customer Contact Strategy; and
- measures to ensure compliance with the Information and Consultation of Employees Regulations 2004.

The Meeting ended at 3.15 p.m.