

Garnock Valley Area Committee
19 November 1996

Dalry, 19 November 1996 - At a meeting of the Garnock Valley Area Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.30 a.m.

Present

Robert Reilly, James Jennings, Thomas Morris and George Steven.

In Attendance

A Hewitt, Head of Service Management, K McGregor, Senior Community Worker (Social Work); J Mason, Principal Engineer, Roads Section (Planning, Roads and Environment); W Telford, Senior Accountant (Financial Services); L Griffen, Leisure Contract Manager, M Smyth, Area Community Development Officer (Community and Recreational Services); W McGee, Area Housing Officer, Kilbirnie (Housing Services); and J Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Also In Attendance

Inspector R Pollock, Strathclyde Police.

Chair

Mr Reilly in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Thomas Dickie.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 8 October 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Kilbirnie: Ladeside Playing Fields: Bund

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on the current position regarding the existing bund at Ladeside Playingfields, Kilbirnie.

The area has been inspected and a visual survey carried out which has confirmed that the length of the existing bund is approximately 200 metres and that the unprotected length is approximately 290 metres. It is not proposed to proceed with further investigations/survey work until clarification has been obtained regarding the recent transfer of responsibilities and changes to legislation in this regard about to be put before Parliament.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment submit a further report on this matter to the next meeting of the Area Committee.

3. Three Towns Unemployed Workers Centre

A cross-sectional investigation requires to be undertaken throughout the Garnock Valley area to obtain a clearer picture of the overall requirements of the area in terms of the provision of information and advice to individuals. This will involve a design stage, a consultation stage and finally the provision of an Action Plan which should be available in January 1997. Some reconnaissance work has already been carried out in twelve community areas within the Garnock Valley. The Committee expressed the view that its preference would be for a central information point to be established within the Garnock Valley area.

After discussion the Committee agreed that reports on the progress of the investigations be submitted to each meeting of the Committee.

4. Community Safety

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of the Community Safety Working Group together with proposals for promoting Community Safety both in the North Coast and Arran area and North Ayrshire wide and the disbursement of the Community Safety Challenge Budget.

The Committee agreed to recommend to the Corporate Strategy Committee (a) that Police representation at all Area Committees be continued; (b) that Community Development grant applications dealing with Community Safety issues continue to be given a degree of priority; (c) that Community Safety becomes a standing item on the agenda of all Area Committees to allow a programme of reports to be submitted from services and organisations addressing safety issues; (d) that the Community Safety Centre (formerly Safe Strathclyde) be invited to submit a report making proposals for the establishment of a Community Safety Task Group at a North Ayrshire Council wide area level to promote Community Safety issues within North Ayrshire; and (e) that the recommendations in respect of the Community Safety Challenge Budget allocations, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be approved.

5. Control of Dog Fouling in Public Places

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals for dealing with the problem of Dog Fouling in Public Places, including details of available funding.

On 22 October 1996 the Corporate Strategy Committee considered a report on the control of dog fouling in public places and it was decided:-

(a) that the £18,000 presently allocated to the Infrastructure and Environment Services budget be transferred to the Corporate Strategy Committee budget for disbursement;

(b) that a Working Party comprising officers from appropriate directorates be established to assist in the provision of a service to address dog fouling problems;

(c) to remit to Areas Committees to determine their priorities; and

(d) that regular progress reports be submitted to the Area Committees on the measures taken.

The representative from Strathclyde Police confirmed that dog fouling has been identified as a public nuisance item in the current 'Spotlight' operation. Although the Police have powers to take action under the Civic Government Scotland (Act 1982) the view is taken that more emphasis should be placed on the educational aspects of the problem incorporating appropriate publicity measures. In some instances dog toilet areas have been introduced. One problem area has already been identified in Dalry and Strathclyde Police will follow up any other complaints received.

The Committee agreed (a) to refer any requests/complaints relating to dog fouling matters within the Committee's area to the appropriate Officer Working Group for action; and (b) otherwise

to note the terms of the report.

6. Kilbirnie: Former Bingo Hall and Regional Water Services Buildings

In response to a recent enquiry from the Convener the Principal Officer Building Control has confirmed that following a recent inspection of the former Regional Council premises at 2 Bridgend, Kilbirnie arrangements have been made for the removal of the toilet annex to the building and to have the property secured against entry. The former Picture House/Bingo Hall at the Cross, Kilbirnie was also recently inspected and was found to be secure from entry at all access points although at the rear of the building adjoining the River Garnock one escape door had recently been boarded up. Around this exit door evidence was found of some charcoaled pieces of timber which had been previously set alight. The exit door has now been boarded up and the building is secure from entry. The Building Control Section is unable to take further action.

The Committee was further advised that Kilbirnie and Glengarnock Community Council had requested clarification from the Council on the proposed future use of the George Bingo Hall in Kilbirnie. Details were given of investigations undertaken by various directorates of the former Cunninghame District Council, which indicated that the property was unsuitable for use by that Council, have been forwarded to the Community Council who have been asked to pursue this matter with the Foster Group Limited, owners of the property.

Noted.

7. Monitoring Reports

(a) Road Lighting

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on Dark Lamp Faults within the Garnock Valley Area. A previous monitoring report which was considered by the Committee on 8 October 1996 appeared to indicate that there was a disproportionate number of Dark Lamp Faults in the Garnock Valley in relation to other areas of North Ayrshire and further clarification on this matter was requested.

The report indicated that the cumulative total Of Dark Lamp Faults reported between April and October 1996 in respect of the Garnock Valley area amounted to 11.04% of the relevant lamps for that area while the comparative figure for the whole of North Ayrshire was 10.54%. In addition the actual number of reported faults in the Garnock Valley area reduced from 65 in September to 50 in October.

Over the period since April 1996 the Garnock Valley is only marginally higher than the average for North Ayrshire for single Dark Lamp Faults. These figures will tend to vary over time and are only one measure of the performance of the street lighting systems. The age and quality of the plant has a significant effect on fault records and in the Garnock Valley area there are currently a number of older installations serviced by obsolete Scottish Power supply networks. Proposals for the replacement of these installations will be put forward for consideration for future capital programmes as funding permits.

Noted.

(b) Housing Services

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on the operation of the Council's allocation Homeless Service in the Garnock Valley area. The report included information on the performance of the Housing Service in allocating vacant properties in the area including information on rent loss and reasons for refusal.

In response to questions, the local area Housing Officer confirmed that there are currently 31 vacant properties in Longbar which are considered to be of reasonably good quality. For

historical reasons many applicants for houses do not choose the Longbar area as an alternative location. In addition Longbar is a fairly remote area with no public telephone and no shopping facilities. The unoccupied properties are checked on a weekly basis and some general maintenance including garden maintenance is carried out where required. The Housing Services Directorate is aware of the problems and is looking at the options available to encourage people to move into the Longbar area. There are currently 848 houses in the development 7 of which have been purchased and for which 3 additional applications to purchase have been received.

The Committee expressed its concern over the problems described by the Local Area Housing Officer in the allocation of properties in the Longbar area and expressed the view that everything possible should be done to encourage the take-up of these vacant properties.

After a full discussion the Committee agreed (a) that the Director of Housing Services submit a further report on this matter to the next meeting on 7 January 1997; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

(c) Garnock Swimming Pool

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services on attendances for the period 17 August to 11 October 1996, marketing/activities, maintenance and revised opening hours at Garnock Swimming Pool, Kilbirnie.

Noted.

(d) Analysis of Grants Paid to 14 October 1996

Submitted report by the Chief Executive detailing the various categories of Grants paid to 14 October 1996.

Noted.

8. Requests for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the undernoted applications for grants to voluntary organisations.

(a) Community Grants

(i) Beith High Church Playgroup

The Committee agreed to award Beith High Church Playgroup £75 towards the cost of books.

(ii) Beith Neighbourhood Watch - Trinity and Crummock Crescent

The Committee agreed to award Beith Neighbourhood Watch - Trinity and Crummock Crescent £66.46 towards the cost of erecting signs.

(iii) Glengarnock Pre-School Playgroup

The Committee agreed to award Glengarnock Pre-School Playgroup £850 towards equipment.

(b) Sports, Arts and Leisure

(i) Shamrock School of Dancing

The Committee agreed to award the Shamrock School of Dancing £500 towards competition costs.

9. Strathclyde Police: Crime Statistics

A report on crime statistics for the Garnock Valley area from April to November 1996 was circulated for information at the meeting by Inspector Pollock, Strathclyde Police.

Year to date overall crime within the Garnock Valley is down by 16%. The crime figures for September show a 30% reduction compared to September 1995. The overall detection rate within the Garnock Valley remains at 36%. Beith has witnessed a 17% reduction in crime with 298 crimes reported. Kilbirnie has witnessed a 19% reduction in crime with 250 crimes being reported. Dalry has witnessed a 13% reduction with 297 crimes being reported.

Serious crimes of violence against the person has shown a 47% increase with all three towns witnessing a rise (Beith has had 26 such crimes, Kilbirnie 23 and Dalry 23). Theft by Housebreaking is down by 45% with Dalry showing the largest reduction (down 56%) followed by Kilbirnie (down 38%) and finally Beith (down 35%). Overall car crime is down by 10% with Kilbirnie showing the largest reduction (down 28%), followed by Beith (down 5%). The exception is Dalry where car crime is up by 1%. Minor assaults have risen by 28% with 35 being reported in Beith to date, 54 in Kilbirnie and 25 in Dalry.

Breaches of the peace have risen by 50%, with 47 being reported in Beith, 46 in Kilbirnie and 56 in Dalry. Drugs related crime has fallen by 16% with a 40% reduction in Beith (24 reported), a 5% reduction in Kilbirnie (20 reported) and a 31% increase in Dalry (21 reported). The substantial increase in Dalry is most likely attributable to the increased police attention the town is receiving. Vandalism continues to rise with an 11% increase throughout the Garnock Valley Area. Beith has witnessed a 30% increase with 69 instances of vandalism being recorded to date. Kilbirnie has witnessed a 14% reduction with 66 instances being reported and Dalry has witnessed a 26% increase with 83 instances being reported.

As a result of proactive policing initiatives, 445 vehicles have been stopped in routine road blocks; 172 persons have been searched for drugs resulting in 17 persons being reported for drugs related offences and a further 3 being reported for other crimes or offences; 352 persons have been searched for weapons resulting in 6 persons being charged with carrying offensive weapons and a further 2 being reported for drugs related offences. There are few random attacks on innocent victims taking place and 80% of serious assaults are being detected.

Inspector Pollock referred to parking problems in Beith Main Street which in his view related to the fact that the double yellow lines which previously ran along Main Street were not replaced following the cobbling of the street. In addition, replacement no waiting signs are required.

The Committee agreed that the Principal Roads Engineer investigate this matter with a view to taking appropriate action to alleviate the problem.

Noted.

10. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed that the following item be dealt with as a matter of urgency.

11. Kilbirnie: 5 Cochrane Street: Condition of Derelict Building

Kilbirnie and Glengarnock Community Council has expressed concern over the derelict property at 5 Cochrane Street, Kilbirnie which it is alleged is in a very dangerous condition.

The Committee agreed that the Principal Officer Building Control be instructed to carry out

an investigation of this property as a matter of urgency and to take appropriate action.

The meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.