

Three Towns Area Committee
20 November 1997

Ardrossan, 20 November 1997 - At a Meeting of the Three Towns Area Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.30 a.m.

Present

David Gallagher, Margaret Munn and Alan Munro.

In Attendance

The Director of Community and Recreational Services; S. McLaughlin, Area Community Development Officer; A. Weir, Parks and Horticultural Services Manager (Community and Recreational Services); S. Good, Divisional Housing Manager (Housing Services); W. Nichol, Senior Accountant (Financial Services); D. McColl, Cemeteries Services Manager (Commercial Services); S. Burns, Area Services Manager (Social Work); J. Ferguson, Assistant Principal Estates Officer (Legal Services); A. Osborne, Corporate Policy Officer and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Also In Attendance

Inspector R. Pollock and Sergeant J Bryce (Strathclyde Police); and Assistant Divisional Officer J Milligan and Community Fire Safety Officer T Kane (Strathclyde Fire Brigade).

Chair

David Gallagher in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

David Munn.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 October 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Monitoring Reports

Submitted the undernoted Monitoring Reports on local service provision:-

(a) Housing Response Repairs

Submitted report by the Director of Housing Services on service delivery in relation to Housing Response Repairs.

The Council have established 3 Response Repair priorities, each with a target maximum response time:-

emergency repairs - 24 hours,

category A repairs - 7 calendar days; and

category B repairs - 28 calendar days.

Within the Three Towns, the percentage repairs completed within the target response times

are emergencies 96%, category A 90% and category B 91%. Throughout North Ayrshire, the average time taken to complete Response Repairs is emergencies 0.3 days (i.e. 7 out of 10 emergencies are completed on the same day), category A repairs 4.56 days and category B repairs 13.95 days. Most Response Repairs are completed therefore well within the maximum response times. Assurances were given that procedures are continually being reviewed to ascertain if improvements can be made.

Noted.

(b) Community Development Grants Scheme: Analysis of Grants Paid to 13 October 1997

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Community Development Grants paid to 13 October 1997 in respect of the Three Towns, including details of the balance of funding remaining.

Noted.

(c) Social Work Services

Submitted report by the Director of Social Work on the provision of Social Work Services.

The Child Care Services being provided within the Three Towns Area including the number of Child Protection Referrals, Children supervised under Supervision Orders etc. were highlighted. The new temporary children's unit at Garven Road, Stevenston should be ready by late November 1997. The unit will be fully staffed and the Community House on the ground floor will continue to be available to all groups. Future proposals in relation to Child Care Services include the reviews of provision of a duty system, of child protection investigations and joint working with schools with a pilot project at Auchenharvie Academy being considered at present.

Assurances were given that the securing of the property at Warner Street, once it is vacated, would be dealt with.

Noted.

(d) Three Towns Initiative

Submitted report by the Three Towns Initiative Manager on the progress of the Three Towns Initiative.

Noted.

3. Community Development Grant Scheme: Requests for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services on requests for financial assistance:-

(a) SNAP Lone Parents Group

The Committee agreed to award SNAP Lone Parents Group £250; and

(b) SNAP Women's Group

The Committee agreed to award SNAP Women's Group £200.

4. Saltcoats Common Good Fund: Request for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request received from Saltcoats Victoria Junior Football Club for financial assistance from Saltcoats Common Good Fund.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Chair and Local Members for Saltcoats to determine this application.

5. Stevenston: New Street Cemetery

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on progress made with regard to enhancing security at New Street Cemetery, Stevenston.

On 9 October 1997, the Committee was provided with an initial report on possible works to address the problem of the vandalised headstones at the cemetery. Further investigations have now been carried out and it is proposed (i) to plant shrubs along the outside of two of the perimeter walls; (ii) to utilise existing staff over the winter months to re-erect the vandalised headstones; and (iii) to continue discussions with the local community police regarding their involvement in the security of the cemetery.

Noted.

6. Stevenston: Portland Place Industrial Estate: Security Measures

On 9 October 1997, arising from the discussion on the monitoring report on the letting/availability of factories on Council industrial estates, the Committee agreed to seek further clarification on the effectiveness of the security measures installed at the Portland Place Industrial Estate, Stevenston.

The CCTV system at Portland Place Industrial Estate is monitored by MSS Security Limited from their control room in Glebe Street, Saltcoats, along with a further CCTV system at Moorpark Place Industrial Estate, Stevenston. The system is subject to 4 test signals nightly for general inspection of the site and confirmation that all equipment is operating properly; the cameras are in operation between set hours; and approximately 20-25 alarm calls are registered each night with appropriate action taken. Only 2 incidents have been reported to the Estates Section this year and 1 incident to the Police within the past 3 months. The system has proved to be extremely worthwhile and of benefit to tenants in terms of reductions in vandalism, break-ins, etc.

Noted.

7. Saltcoats: St. Laurence Place: Play Site

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services on fencing at the St. Laurence Place play site, Saltcoats.

In 1993, a residents group called the St. Laurence Place Plots Group, was formed with the aim of transforming an area of land at the rear of their properties into a safe play site for their children. On completion of the works, the area was transferred to the former Cunninghame District Council and subsequently to North Ayrshire Council. This summer, the Housing Services Directorate erected a 1.8m high chain link fence to replace the vandalised fencing along the boundaries of the Council houses at the rear of Old Raise Road and Giffen Road, Saltcoats which border on the play area. Subsequently, it has been reported that vandalism to the rear boundaries of the private properties along Sharphill Road, Saltcoats, which also border on the play area has increased. There is a privet hedge along these boundaries, but where there are breaks, the boundary walls/fences have been badly vandalised. As a result, the residents of Sharphill Road have requested that the Council fence the complete length of their boundaries with the play area.

It is unclear whether the Council have any legal duty to provide such fencing or additional planting and there is no budget provision for either option. In similar situations, the costs have normally been shared equally with the adjacent owners. The residents have indicated that they wish a fence and not a replacement hedge. All residents would require to agree to any proposal as well as fund an element of the cost and ongoing maintenance costs.

The Committee was advised that vandalism is still occurring to the fencing provided by the Housing Services Directorate.

The Committee agreed (a) to note (i) that the legal responsibilities of the Council to provide a fence are being investigated; and (ii) that a further report will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee; and (b) that the Director of Community and Recreational Services should also consult with the Director of Housing Services on the matter.

8. Community Safety Strategy

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the development of a Community Safety Strategy for North Ayrshire.

On 21 October 1997, the Corporate Strategy Committee agreed to approve and adopt the Community Safety Strategy and to have it implemented. The Corporate Strategy Committee also agreed to a formal request from Strathclyde Fire Brigade for one of their officers to attend all future meetings of the 5 Area Committees, to enable general advice and assistance to be given and provide statistical information. The Community Safety Strategy will be used as a framework for improving community safety within North Ayrshire. It proposes a way forward for the Council within the overall Scottish context of community safety and indicates ways in which the Council may drive the issue forward in conjunction with other Agencies and through the Area Committees. The Strategy includes the proposed establishment of a Joint Agency Community Safety Steering Group. Targets for 1997/98 include (a) identifying and publicising Council and other statutory or voluntary agencies which promote community safety; (b) reducing the cost of crime to the Council and the community; (c) reviewing priorities annually in consultation with the local community; and (d) developing systems to monitor the success of the Strategy.

Noted.

9. Garden Tidy Scheme: Review of Service Delivery

On 28 August 1997, arising from the discussion on the monitoring report on the Garden Tidy Scheme 1997, the Committee agreed that (a) the feasibility of implementing a system whereby residents on the Garden Tidy Scheme remain on the list and do not require to re-apply each year be investigated; and (b) that the options be looked at to enable everyone who requires their garden tended to be given assistance.

The current budget for the Garden Tidy Scheme is £217,000, which allows 2,800 gardens to receive 6 grass cuts per season and where applicable, one hedge cut. To ensure an even distribution of gardens throughout North Ayrshire, each operating area has set limits based on the potential eligible applicants. Applicants must demonstrate their eligibility for the Scheme, apply each year and subject to being eligible, are then allocated a place on the Scheme on a "first come, first served" basis.

To retain the existing list of residents on the Scheme each year would require additional staff time for either existing Community and Recreational Services staff or the earlier appointment at the start of the season of the Scheme Manager and administration staff, as all those on the list would have to be checked to ascertain whether they are still eligible. It is envisaged that on completion of this check, the normal procedure of advertising the scheme would still be required to bring the total number of those on the Scheme up to 2,800.

The current criteria for the Scheme are that applicants must be incapable of tending their garden and also be either (i) over 80 years of age; or (ii) in receipt of 2 benefits, one of which must be old age pension or severe disablement allowance/incapacity benefit. To extend the criteria further to allow all senior citizens over a certain age to be eligible for the Scheme, based on previous estimates, would increase the number of gardens to between 6,450 and 10,918 at costs of between £499,875 and £846,145. The feasibility of involving the Community Services (Criminal Justice Unit) in the Scheme has previously been discussed by the Commercial Services and Social Work Directorates and it was considered that the numbers on Community Service could not

accommodate the existing work carried out on the Garden Tidy Scheme and therefore any extension of the Scheme would not be practical.

Assurances were given that further publicising of the Scheme would be looked at including publicising in "Look North".

After discussion, the Committee agreed (A) to note the increased financial implications if the Scheme were to be extended; and (B) to refer the matter to the Community and Recreational Services Committee.

10. Community and Recreational Services Directorate Strategy 1998-2003

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services on the Community and Recreation Strategy 1998-2003 consultation document.

On 12 August 1997, the Community and Recreational Services Committee approved the consultation document and agreed to support the proposed consultation programme, including consultation with Area Committees. The document sets out the Directorate's strategic aims and objectives in a "Framework for Action" with priorities and action plans. All proposals will be considered and interpreted in specific service plans which will be prepared within the Directorate between October and December 1997. "Partnership" and "Community" are fundamental elements within the Strategy and it is intended to ensure that meaningful and effective consultation takes place which reflects the range of service provision and users. The Consultation Programme will therefore include national organisations, local organisations, North Ayrshire Council Directorates, Community and Recreational Services staff, Trade Unions and members of the public.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the consultation document; and (b) to support the programme of consultation.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.