

Support Services Committee
12 November 1996

Irvine, 12 November 1996 - At a Meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, Alan Munro, Patrick Browne, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Elliot Gray, Margaret Highet, James Jennings, David Munn, George Steven and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Director of Financial Services, the Head of Corporate Business, the Legal Services Manager, the Information Technology Services Manager, the Principal Personnel Officer (Personnel Services), the Corporate Information Technology Advisor, Development and Installations (Information Technology Services) and B. Hannah, an Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. O'Neill in the Chair.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held on 1 October 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. CIPFA Conference

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposed attendance at the CIPFA Scottish Branch Conference on "The Election: Opportunities for Change" to be held at Gleneagles on 10th - 11th November 1996.

The Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair be authorised to attend.

3. Revision to Treasury Policy Management Strategy and Treasury Policy Statement for 1996/97

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services seeking retrospective approval to a revision of the Treasury Policy Statement and Management Strategy.

The Treasury Management Strategy provides that a maximum of £3m shall apply to temporary investments with each approved organisation. On 17 October 1996 the Director of Financial Services required to increase the amounts temporarily invested with each approved organisation to £5m in order to achieve a competitive rate of interest. In accordance with the provisions of the Treasury Policy Statement any such revisions which occur to the criteria require to be reported to the Support Services Committee.

The Committee approved the actions taken by the Director of Financial Services to secure the interests of the Council.

4. Collection Statements: Council Tax and Community Charge

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the current collection levels in respect of Council Tax and Community Charge.

As at 31 October 1996 £12,485,000 of the 1996/97 Council Tax had been collected. Payments in respect of the 1993/94, 1994/5 and 1995/96 arrears continue to be made. A total of £72,000 was received during October 1996 in respect of Community Charge arrears from 1989/90 to 1992/93 inclusive, with the total recoverable debt in respect of Community Charge being £19,020,000.

Noted.

5. Desktop Systems: Supported/Recommended Products List

Submitted report by the Information Technology Services Manager on the list of supported and recommended products for use by the Council in the development of information technology systems.

The computer hardware and software inherited from the predecessor authorities has been reviewed and a list of supported and recommended products prepared for use by Directorates/Departments. Supported products are those which were inherited from the predecessor authorities and in some cases are already outdated. The recommended products are those which have been tested and evaluated by the IT Services Department to meet the needs of the Council and which comply with the principles of the Corporate Information Technology Strategy.

After discussion the Committee agreed to approve the supported/recommended products list.

6. Information Technology Security Policy

Submitted report by the Information Technology Services Manager on the Information Technology Security Policy and associated policies.

In terms of the Data Protection Act 1984, the Council is bound to ensure that data stored within its I.T. systems is properly secured. The Information Technology Services Security Policy formalises the necessary steps to be taken to allow the most effective security levels within the Council's I.T. systems. In addition to an I.T. Security Policy, associated policies have also been developed for personal computers and for UNIX systems, which will allow departments to comply not only with the main policy but with policies relating to their own individual needs. Additional policies relating to Internet security, network security and tape back-up procedures are currently being formulated for submission to a future meeting of the Committee.

The introduction of I.T. Security Policies may have training implications which will require to be addressed both corporately and at a Directorate/Departmental level. Directorates/Departments may require assistance from I.T. Services with their practices and procedures to ensure compliance with the policies.

After discussion the Committee agreed to request that the Corporate Strategy Committee approve the Information Technology Security Policies and thereafter instruct the Information Technology Services Manager to introduce them throughout the Council.

7. Social Work Directorate Staffing Recommendations: Criminal Justice Services

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on a proposed alteration to the Social Work Directorate's staffing establishment to enable the Criminal Justice Services to respond to new regulations and requirements.

The total cost of the proposals is £16,170 per annum which can be funded from the Scottish Office allocation for Criminal Justice Services.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to the revised establishment structure for Criminal Justice Services, Social Work Directorate by (a) the conversion of the existing 2.5 Sessional Supervisors posts to permanent appointments; (b) the appointment of an additional 0.5 Clerical Assistant/Typist and the regrading of an existing GS2 post to GS3 both within the Community Services Order Scheme; (c) the regrading of an existing Resource Assistant post to that of Social Work Assistant; (d) the creation of an additional post of GS1/2 Clerical Assistant/Typist; and (e) the regrading of two existing GS1/2 posts to GS3 all within the Criminal Justice teams.

8. Legal Services Department: Enforcement of Animal Health Act 1981

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager seeking approval for an amendment to the staffing establishment of the Legal Services Department.

The Legal Services Department, through the Trading Standards Service, have assumed responsibility for executing and enforcing the provisions of the Animal Health Act, 1981. A review of the Legal Services Department staffing structure indicates that, in order for the Council to meet its obligations, existing staff resources require to be revised by the creation of a new post of Authorised Officer together with the regrading of the Senior Trading Standards Officer and Enforcement Assistant posts at an estimated additional annual cost of £18,565.

After discussion the Committee agreed to amend the Legal Services Department staffing establishment by (a) the creation of a new post of Authorised Officer (Grade AP3); (b) the regrading of the existing Senior Trading Standards Officer post (PO6); and (c) the regrading and redesignation of the Enforcement Assistant's post to Authorised Officer (AP1).

9. Planning, Roads and the Environment Directorate: Staffing Establishment

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager detailing the staffing establishment in the Directorate of Planning, Roads and the Environment.

The Committee agreed to approve the staffing establishment for the Planning, Roads and the Environment Directorate.

10. North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service: Eglinton Country Park

(Previous Minute Reference - Community and Recreational Services Committee - 5/11/95)

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on a proposed alteration to the Community and Recreational Services Directorate's establishment.

In April 1996, the Council took over the responsibility for the management of the Eglinton Country Park Ranger Service. The Service is responsible for a number of duties including, education, conservation, resource protection and surveillance. The activities of the Service have been expanded to take in areas of North Ayrshire outwith the Irvine New Town area, and to develop the Service further. It is proposed to restructure the staffing levels by the creation of a new post of Senior Ranger and by making the temporary posts of Main Grade Ranger and Receptionist/Clerical Assistant, permanent. The net cost of the proposal is £20,277 which can be met from within the existing Staffing Budget for Country Parks.

The Committee agreed (a) that the post of Senior Ranger (AP4) be added to the Community and Recreational Services Directorate's staffing establishment; and (b) that the existing temporary posts of 2 Main Grade Rangers (AP2) and one Receptionist/Clerical Assistant (GS1/2) be made permanent.

11. New Town Pensions Administration: Compensatory Added Years

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on a proposal that North Ayrshire Council assume responsibility for the payment of the added pension years element to former Irvine Development Corporation staff who retired early and have been awarded Added Years.

Irvine Development Corporation have requested that North Ayrshire Council assume responsibility for paying the added years element of pensions payable to Corporation staff awarded added years. City of Glasgow Council administers all superannuation matters on behalf of North Ayrshire Council. It is therefore proposed that the Council enter into a formal agreement with the City of Glasgow Council to administer the pension awards on behalf of North Ayrshire Council. City of Glasgow Council would be reimbursed for the cost of the pension administration charge subject to the Council receiving formal notification from Irvine Development Corporation and the Scottish Office on the financial arrangements and amounts payable to the Council.

After discussion the Committee agreed to the appointment of City of Glasgow Council for the administration of the New Town Pensions Compensatory Added Years Scheme subject to appropriate financial arrangements being agreed.

12. Transfer of Staff to Irvine Housing Association

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the proposed transfer of staff from North Ayrshire Council to Irvine Housing Association.

Following the recent housing ballot, two Wardens posts at the sheltered housing units within the Social Work Directorate require to transfer to Irvine Housing Association under the TUPE provisions with effect from 29 November 1996.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) that the posts of Warden and Relief Warden (Grade Residential 1) at West Doura Court transfer to Irvine Housing Association on 29 November 1996; and (b) that the posts be deleted from the Social Work Directorate's staffing establishment.

13. Group Life Assurance: Scheme of Delegation

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager requesting a Scheme of Delegation for payments from the Group Life Assurance Scheme.

The Group Life Assurance Scheme is a discretionary trust which provides for payment of twice the annual salary or wage in the event of the death of an employee in service. All employees are required to complete a nomination form stating whom they wish to receive payment in the event of their death. Where an employee has failed to complete or return a nomination form, or where there has been a significant change in their personal circumstances and they have failed to submit an amended form, the Support Services Committee must consider who should receive payment of benefits under the scheme. Due to the Committee cycle, this can result in delays in payments being made and, in some cases, financial hardship may be experienced by the dependants of the deceased employee.

A Scheme of Delegation is therefore proposed to ensure that all benefits under the Group Life Assurance Scheme are paid speedily to relatives of employees where a nomination form is not available, or where an amended form has not been submitted.

After discussion the Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair, in consultation with the Chief Executive, Director of Financial Services and the Personnel Services Manager, be authorised to decide on the payment of benefits under the Group Life Assurance Scheme in the absence of a nomination or amended nomination being submitted by the employee.

14. Occupational Health Policy

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on a proposed Occupational Health and Welfare Policy Statement and Occupational Health Policy.

The Occupational Health and Welfare Policy Statement aims to promote health and well-being in all aspects of the organisation by enabling employees to work to their full potential. The Policy is supported by a wide range of Codes of Practice, Guidance and Statements.

After discussion the Committee agreed to approve the Occupational Health and Welfare Policy Statement and Occupational Health Policy.

15. Activities to Promote and Implement Positive Action for Disabled Persons

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the promotion of positive action for disabled persons.

The Council was the first unitary authority to adopt the Employment Services Agency's Double Tick Initiative and has committed itself to employment of persons with disabilities. As part of the Double Tick Initiative, all applicants with a disability who meet the minimum criteria for a particular post are guaranteed an interview. In addition, the Disability Discrimination Act comes into force on 1 December 1996 and specialised training for nominated Officers has been arranged by the Personnel Services Department to provide advice and guidance on the statutory responsibilities and promote awareness of the provisions of the Act.

Noted.

16. European Week for Safety, Hygiene and Health 1996

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the European Week for Safety, Hygiene and Health Roadshow, held between 7 and 11 October 1996.

Noted.

17. National Joint Circulars

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the implementation and amendments to conditions of service following agreements by the national negotiating bodies.

The Committee agreed to the adoption and implementation of the Conditions of Service Circulars as detailed in the report.

18. Early Closing of Administrative Offices and Branch Libraries on Hogmanay, 1996

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the proposed closure of administrative offices and branch libraries of the Council at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 31 December 1996.

The Principal Personnel Officer reported that, in addition to the proposed closure of offices on Hogmanay, Unison have requested that the Council consider closing the administrative offices on Friday 27 December 1996 and Friday 3 January 1997 with staff using a days annual leave for the Friday 27 December closure, and the Council providing an ex gratia day in relation to Friday 3 January.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) subject to the exigencies of service, that the Council's administrative offices and branch libraries close at 1 p.m. on Tuesday, 31 December 1996; and (b) to refuse the request from Unison for the closure of offices on 27 December 1996 and 3

January 1997.

19. Kilwinning: 18 Bannoch Place: Land Surplus to Requirements

((Previous Minute Reference - Community and Recreational Services Committee - 5/11/96)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a decision of the Community and Recreational Services Committee on 5th November 1996 to declare an area of land adjacent to 18 Bannoch Place, Kilwinning, surplus to requirements.

The Committee agreed to dispose of the land on terms and conditions to be negotiated by the Legal Services Manager in consultation with the Director of Community and Recreational Services.

20. Kilwinning: Hazeldene: Property Surplus to Requirements

(Previous Minute Reference - Social Work Committee - 30/10/96)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a decision by the Social Work Committee on 30 October 1996 to declare the former lodge and gardens located within Hazeldene Resource Centre, Kilwinning, surplus to requirements.

The Committee agreed to dispose of the former lodge and gardens on terms and conditions to be agreed by the Legal Services Manager in consultation with the Director of Social Work.

21. Tenders for Bank Services

Submitted the annexed report (SS1) of a Support Services Sub-Committee being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 1 November 1996.

The Committee agreed (a) to adopt the report; and (b) to instruct the Director of Financial Services to make the necessary arrangements to appoint the Clydesdale Bank for the provision of banking services from 1 April 1997 till 31 March 2000.

22. Non-Domestic Rates: Appeals

Submitted the annexed report (SS2) of the Support Services (Non-Domestic Rates) Sub-Committee being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 8 November 1996.

The Committee agreed to adopt the report.

23. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed that the undernoted items be considered as a matter of urgency.

24. New Street Shopping Centre, Stevenston

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed assignation of lease in respect of the New Street Shopping Centre, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to approve the assignation of lease subject to satisfactory references being received.

25. Accommodation Strategy at Bridgegate House

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business requesting approval for a change of lease at Bridgegate House in respect of Irvine Housing Association.

Irvine Development Corporation had previously agreed that the Housing Association should occupy certain parts of Bridgegate House. The accommodation referred to was previously used by the Corporation as a Housing Office. North Ayrshire Council now require to occupy the property concerned and it is proposed to offer the Irvine Association alternative accommodation within Bridgegate House and to make an ex gratia payment of £20,000 to the Housing Association to facilitate their move as the premises identified by the Council will require refurbishment. The proposed ex gratia payment can be met from within existing budgets.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to instruct the Head of Corporate Business to negotiate a new lease at Bridgegate House with Irvine Housing Association; and (b) that the Council make an ex gratia payment of £20,000 to Irvine Housing Association to facilitate the move.

Exempt Information

26. Exclusion of Public

Resolved, in terms of Section 50(A)4 of The Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the meeting the press and the public for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

27. Employee in Redundancy Situation: Education Directorate

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager requesting approval for the termination of employment of an Education Directorate employee.

The Committee agreed to the recommendations as detailed in the report.

The Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.