

Support Services Committee
1 December 1998

Irvine, 1 December 1998 - At a Meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

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

In Attendance

The Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services); The Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services); The Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services); The Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel Services); The Assistant Chief Executive (Information Technology Services); J. Paul Head of Technical Services (Property Services); R. Samson, Principal Estates Officer (Development & Promotional Services); and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

George Steven.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held on 20 October 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Collection Statements

Submitted reports by the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) on the current collection levels in respect of Community Charge and Council Tax to 31 October 1998.

A total of £81,000 was collected in respect of Community Charge during October 1998 leaving outstanding recoverable debt of £16,383,000. A total of £513,000 has been collected to date during the current financial year. Total collections for 1998/99 are projected to be £600,000 less than was originally estimated and this is now being addressed.

A total of £3,186,000 was collected in respect of Council Tax in October 1998 leaving outstanding recoverable debt of £19,337,000. Collection levels are 1% less than for the same period last year and action will be taken to address this.

Noted.

3. Council Tax and Community Charges: Arrears Write Off

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) on proposals to write off arrears of Council Tax, Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rates for the financial years 1996/97 and 1997/98.

The current level of arrears for Community Charge is £16.9m and for Council Tax is £12.2m. While every effort is made to recover these arrears, the pursuit of outstanding arrears is not considered appropriate in circumstances where (a) a deceased person's estate has insufficient funds; (b) sequestration is involved; (c) Sheriff Officers confirm that the debt is irrecoverable; or (d) where small sums of arrears are outstanding. It is proposed that similar principles be adopted in respect of arrears for Non-Domestic Rates.

It is further proposed that a total of £164,955.09 in respect of Community Charges for 1996/97 and 1997/98 be written off together with Council Tax arrears amounting to £38,315.80 for 1997/98.

The Committee agreed (a) to the proposals to write off arrears of Council Tax, Community Charges and Non-Domestic Rates detailed in the report; and (b) that Community Charge and Council Tax arrears for the financial years 1996/97 and 1997/98 amounting to £203,270.89 be written off.

4. Personal Computer and Printer Maintenance Contract

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Information Technology Services) on the outcome of a tender for the Personal Computer and Printer Maintenance Contract.

In June 1998 tenders were issued for the Maintenance of Personal Computers and Printers Contract which will run from 1 December 1998 to 30 November 2000. NVT Computing Limited submitted the lowest tender of the four companies who responded, amounting to £58,000 with a 5% discount offered for the second year of the contract. Provision of £30,000 has been made within the IT Services Revenue Account for this contract and the shortfall in the new contract will be met this year by user services, with the costs for the remainder of the contract being met by an increase in the Central Support Allocation.

The Committee agreed to award the Personal Computer and Printer Maintenance Contract to NVT Computing Limited.

5. Standing Restricted List of Contractors for Building and Related Works

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) giving details of additional contractors who are deemed to have met the Council's technical and financial requirements to allow their inclusion on the Ayrshire-wide Standing Restricted List of Contractors for Building and Related Works previously adopted by the Council.

The Committee agreed to the inclusion of the contractors listed in the Standing Restricted List of Contractors for Building and Related Works.

6. Contracts for Works: Final Measurements

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on final accounts for various contracts carried out by North Ayrshire Council and the former Cunninghame District Council and Strathclyde Regional Councils.

Noted.

7. Minutes

(a) Support Services (Appeals) Sub-Committee

Submitted the annexed reports (Appendix SS1 and SS2) being the Minutes of the meetings of the Support Services (Appeals) Sub-Committee held on (i) 9 October 1998 and (ii) 6 November 1998.

Noted.

(b) Support Services Sub-Committee: Non-Domestic Rates

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS3) being the Minutes of the meeting of the Support Services Sub-Committee on Non-Domestic Rates held on 24 November 1998.

The Committee agreed to adopt the report.

8. Council Tax: Additional Collections

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) on a proposal to appoint additional part-time staff for the collection of arrears in respect of Council Tax and Community Charge.

It has been established that in the pursuit of arrears, telephone contact is much more successful if carried out during the evening. It is therefore proposed to appoint four additional part-time staff on a temporary basis working from 4.30 p.m. to 7.30 p.m. Monday to Thursday at an hourly rate equivalent to GS1/2 to pursue arrears by telephone. Details of the proposed staffing structure, the costs of which are estimated to be £15,843 for a full year, were provided in the report. The net benefits from the scheme are estimated at £30,000 for 1998/99 and £100,000 for 1999/2000. Close monitoring of the scheme should demonstrate longer term viability and the appropriate Trade Unions would require to be consulted.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the additional posts and collection initiative as detailed in the report; and (b) that further progress reports be submitted as appropriate.

9. Financial Services: Staffing Review

(a) Creditor Payments and Cashier/Municipal Bank

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) on proposed staffing changes within Creditor Payments and Cashier/Municipal Bank sections of Financial Services.

The decision to review these structures at this time has been influenced by approved departmental savings measures and the opportunity to benefit from the Spend to Save initiative. A review has recently been undertaken of the creditors section which is responsible for the control and processing of all external payments due by the Council and for the provision of management information. Details were provided on the existing staff costs of £54,936.60 and a proposed revised staffing structure with costs of £42,664.50, representing potential savings of £12,272 per annum.

A review has also been undertaken of the Municipal Bank and cashiers section which is responsible for the co-ordination of all banking for the Council, postal remittances, collection reconciliation's and the updating of ledger and personal accounts. Details were provided on the existing staff costs of £109,296.36. Details were provided of the proposed revised staffing structure with costs of £89,662.14, representing savings of £19,634.

The restructuring can be achieved as a result of the early retirement of certain officers and internal promotions. The proposals, which would result in total annual savings of £31,906, will require to be referred to the appropriate Trade Union.

The Committee agreed, subject to the early retiral of the officers concerned, to approve the revised structures as detailed in the report.

(b) Debtors and Council Tax

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) on proposed staffing

changes within the Debtors and Council Tax sections of Financial Services.

A review has recently been undertaken of the debtors section which is responsible for the billing and recovery of sundry debtors due to the Council, Housing Act Mortgages, car loans and car leasing. Details were provided on the existing staff costs of £56,621.52 and the proposed revised staffing structure with costs of £50,812.65, representing savings of £5,809.

A review has also been undertaken of the Council Tax section which is responsible for the billing and recovery of Council Tax from 60,000 people each year. Additional duties now require to be undertaken to co-ordinate and control all computer processing, test new software to identify and correct faults, document procedures and develop specialist training material and courses. It is proposed that a Systems Administrator and an Assistant Systems Administrator be appointed at a total additional cost of £36,453 to undertake these duties. Although the proposals will result in additional expenditure for which no budgetary provision has been made, it is considered that the additional posts will ensure the effective billing and recovery of Council Tax in future years thereby maximising the Council's main source of direct income.

The Committee agreed to approve the revised structures and costs as detailed in the report.

10. National Agreement - Standby Duty Payments

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel Services) on amendments to standby duty payments to North Ayrshire Council staff in line with national agreements.

The national negotiating bodies have agreed a change to standby duty payments for officers other than Social Workers which affect certain employees within the Council. Details of the revised payments are contained within Industrial Relations Circular 13/98 issued by COSLA and are effective from 1 April 1998.

In terms of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers, these nationally agreed payments have been made since that date.

Noted.

11. Outstanding Industrial Tribunal Cases

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Personnel Services) giving details of a number of cases which have been lodged with the Industrial Tribunal Office which may have an impact on North Ayrshire Council.

Noted.

12. Ardrossan: Eglinton Road: Seafield School: Site Visit

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS4) being the Minutes of the meeting of a Special Sub-Committee held on site on 18 November 1998 to examine the buildings and the boundary wall at Seafield School, Eglinton Road, Ardrossan and to consider the requirements for future maintenance.

The Committee agreed to adopt the report.

13. Largs: New Cemetery Compulsory Purchase Order for Land at Brisbane Glen Road

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) on a proposal to serve a Compulsory Purchase Order on property at Brisbane Glen Road, Largs.

The Committee agreed to make a Compulsory Purchase Order in respect of the property at

Brisbane Glen Road, Largs to form a new cemetery, in the terms of the amended Resolution tabled at the meeting.

14. Irvine: 45/47 Townhead: Remedial Repairs to Buildings

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) on the terms of leases held by North Ayrshire Council at 45 and 47 Townhead, Irvine outlining the circumstances under which the Council has a legal obligation to undertake remedial repairs to the properties. The cost of the works to fully carry out the repairs required in terms of the Council's legal obligation is £61,000.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the undertaking of remedial works by the Building Services of North Ayrshire Council in terms of the leases for 45 and 47 Townhead, Irvine; and (b) that the cost of the works be met from the Repairs and Renewal Fund.

15. Irvine: 218-234 Bridgegate House: New Lease

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on the lease of 218-234 Bridgegate House, Irvine to Irvine Housing Association, previously agreed by the Chair as a matter of urgency.

The Committee agreed to homologate the decision of the Chair.

16. Irvine: Land to the South of the Greenwood Interchange: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on the disposal of land to the South of the Greenwood Interchange, Irvine to Enterprise Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) to enter into negotiations with Enterprise Ayrshire for the disposal of the land required for the Greenwood Interchange upgrading programme.

17. Kilbirnie: 40 Main Street: Lease Renewal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on the renewal of the lease of 40 Main Street, Kilbirnie to Thomas Irvine and Son (Bakers).

The Committee agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) to proceed with the renewal of lease to Thomas Irvine and Son (Bakers) on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed and to conclude the transaction.

18. Glengarnock: Ground at Glengarnock Primary School: Grahamstone Avenue: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on the disposal of ground at Glengarnock Primary School, Grahamstone Avenue, Glengarnock.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) to advertise the ground at Glengarnock Primary School for sale on the open market.

19. Largs: Kiosk at RNLI Lifeboat House: Barrfields: Lease Renewal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on the renewal of lease of the Kiosk at RNLI Lifeboat House, Barrfields, Largs to Mr. W. Irvin.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) to proceed with the renewal of lease to Mr. W. Irvin on the terms and conditions

provisionally agreed and to conclude the transaction.

20. Delegated Powers: Property Reports

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on property transactions approved in terms of the Scheme of Delegation to Officers.

Noted.

21. Exclusion of Public

Resolved, in terms of Section 50A(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the meeting the press and the public for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 6 of Part 1 of schedule 7A of the Act.

22. Dreghorn: Ground at Corsehillmount Road: Disposal

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development & Promotional Services) on the disposal of ground at Corsehillmount Road, Dreghorn.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) to enter into negotiations with Messrs. Houston & Dunlop and Messrs. Dale & Marshall, on behalf of their clients, in respect of the disposal of ground at Corsehillmount Road, Dreghorn.

The Meeting ended at 2.55 p.m.