

Corporate Strategy Committee
18 August 1998

Irvine, 18 August 1998 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

James Clements, Jack Carson, Ian Clarkson, John Donn, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, James Jennings, Thomas Morris, David O'Neill, Robert Rae, Robert Reilly, John Sillars, George Steven and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

Chief Executive, the Directors of Financial Services and Social Work, the Head of Corporate Business, the Information Technology Services Manager, R. Young, the Year 2000 Project Manager and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Clements in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne, Stewart Dewar, Thomas Dickie and Jane Gorman.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 26 May and 25 June 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Budget Monitoring Working Party

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS1) of the Budget Monitoring Working Party, being the Minutes of its Meetings held on 6, 10 and 14 August 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

3. Private/Public Sector Partnership to Achieve the Development of Brownfield Sites Within the Regeneration Area

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on a Public/Private Sector partnership model which will facilitate the development of brownfield sites currently unattractive to the market.

The North Ayrshire Regeneration Strategy sets out a number of clear strategic aims including (i) to ensure the quality of housing and variety of housing options available in the target areas are substantially improved; and (ii) to improve the environment to increase the attractiveness of the target areas as places to live. Within the Regeneration Area of the Three Towns, the Council owns 15 hectares of brownfield land which is not attractive to the market by reason of its location, contamination or undermining and offers no return to the Council. The land does, however, have the capacity to accommodate some 300 houses. The development of these sites for housing would improve the appearance of the area, increase the range of housing on offer within the Regeneration Area and through the construction process create local jobs and training opportunities, thus addressing a number of the Regeneration Strategy's aims. The sites are unattractive to developers, however, as building on them will not realise sufficient profit.

It is proposed therefore that the Council enters into a partnership with a private sector builder or builders to secure the development of the brownfield sites for which there is currently a lack of market interest. The Council's contribution would be the value of the land, subject to Scottish Office approval, which would help to secure for the developer an agreed level of profit. The developer would provide, through the development process, local employment, training opportunities and housing for sale or let as agreed with the Council. Scottish Homes and Enterprise Ayrshire would also be invited to become parties to the partnership. Enterprise Ayrshire would be asked to commit to expenditure on stabilisation and clearing any contamination and Scottish Homes, to commit to GRO grant for certain sites.

Among the sites owned by the Council is land at Central Avenue/Burgh Yard, Ardrossan, adjacent to a site at McDowall Place, currently proposed for development by a local builder, David Cook. The Council land is unattractive for development being backland and potentially contaminated from previous uses. The Three Towns Motor Project is at present located on the site. It is proposed that a joint development of the two sites be investigated as a pilot project. This would require the relocation of the Three Towns Motor Project.

The Committee agreed (a) to participate in Partnership development as detailed in the report and to contribute, subject to Scottish Office approval, all or part of the value of the sites selected, as required; (b) to invite Scottish Homes and Enterprise Ayrshire to enter into an agreement to facilitate the Partnership development of selected brownfield sites within the Regeneration Area; (c) to invite the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership to lend its support and commitment to the proposals; (d) to investigate the feasibility of relocating the Three Towns Motor Project; and (e) subject to (i) the participation of Enterprise Ayrshire and Scottish Homes; (ii) establishing that there is no real open market interest in the site; and (iii) the relocation of the Three Towns Motor Project, to pilot the project at Central Avenue/McDowall Place, Ardrossan in conjunction with David Cook, the private developer.

4. *Kilwinning: Abbey Park*

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the purchase of Abbey Park, Kilwinning.

On 10 February 1998, the Support Services Committee authorised the compulsory purchase of Abbey Park, Kilwinning as being necessary in the interests of the proper planning of the area. Following the serving of the Compulsory Purchase Order, one objection has been received from agents acting for Palmer Brothers (Kilwinning) Ltd., the owners of the ground. The owners agents have indicated however that they are prepared to sell the ground to the Council for £70,000. The lease of Abbey Park has expired and the purchase of the ground would avoid the possibly lengthy and expensive compulsory purchase procedure and secure the use of the site as a playing pitch for the local community and for Kilwinning Rangers Football Club. An independent valuation has confirmed that the purchase price is considered reasonable.

The Committee agreed to approve the purchase of Abbey Park, Kilwinning at a cost of £70,000.

5. *The Year 2000*

Submitted report by the Year 2000 Project Manager on action being taken or contemplated to minimise the impact of the Year 2000 date change on Council services.

The Chief Executive has authorised the secondment of the Principal Officer (Common Services) to the post of Year 2000 Project Manager, together with administrative support, until March 2000. The Year 2000 Working Group comprising Officers from each Directorate/Department continues to meet regularly chaired by the Head of Architectural Services, with the remit to ensure a satisfactory transition to Year 2000 conformity. The Working Group has drawn up a Year 2000 Policy Statement, Strategy Statement, Conformity Statement and Project Plan. The embedded systems problem is being addressed through the appointment, jointly with Renfrewshire and South Ayrshire Councils, of the National Engineering Laboratories, East Kilbride as technical consultants. The Architectural Services Section are currently undertaking an audit of

all embedded systems located within non-housing properties.

Consolidated lists of I.T. and non I.T. equipment are being drawn up by the I.T. Services Manager and prioritised by Directorates/Departments to identify those which are "mission critical" and will be tackled first in so far as Year 2000 conformity is concerned, with the intention that all "mission critical" business activities, processes and supporting systems are Year 2000 compliant by the end of July 1999.

There has been no extra capital allocation made by the Scottish Office to deal with the Year 2000 and £10.6m revenue has been allocated for the whole of Scotland in 1999/2000.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the Year 2000 (i) Policy and Strategy Statements; (ii) Conformity Requirements; and (iii) Project Plan; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

6. *Service Review Programme*

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on progress regarding the Council's Service Review Programme and proposals for its continued development.

On 7 April 1998, the Council (a) noted that the Scottish Office have approved the Council's Best Value Implementation Plan; (b) agreed to approve the proposals for external assistance with regard to service reviews; and (c) agreed to hold a seminar for Trade Unions on the Service Review Programme. A seminar was subsequently held on 3 June 1998 for all recognised Trade Unions on the Service Review Programme and Best Value in general and induction training commenced during July to Service Review Teams. A Service Review Work Programme has been developed by the Best Value Development Team, which includes a requirement for the Head of Corporate Business to approve all Service Review Project Plans. A Service Review Appraisal Group has also been set up comprising the Leader of the Administration, the Chair of the Service area being reviewed, two other Members, the Chief Executive, the Head of Corporate Business and the Director of the service area being reviewed, to hear the report of each Service Review Team and make recommendations to the Committee.

The Accounts Commission for Scotland and COSLA have jointly published Guidance on Service/Performance, which will require to be taken in to account in the Council's Policy on Continuous Improvement.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) the required revision to the Policy on "Continuous Improvement: Competition and Other Tools" as a result of the COSLA/Accounts Commission "Guidance on Service/Performance Reviews"; and (b) the proposals for quality assurance, reporting and decision-making with regard to Service Reviews.

7. *Development of Best Value*

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the development of Best Value in Scotland.

The Scottish Office has issued SODD Circular 12/98, which provides further information about the development of Best Value in Scotland and is of fundamental importance to all Scottish Councils. In particular it refers to the requirement to develop a Performance Management and Planning framework involving Public Performance Reports for public scrutiny.

The Committee agreed that a seminar be held for Members to raise further awareness of the implications of SODD Circular 12/98.

8. *Corporate Plan 1998 - 2001*

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the consultation process with regard to the Corporate Plan.

On 25 June 1998, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the draft Corporate Plan 1998-2001 as a consultation document; and (b) that a further report be submitted in due course. Extensive consultation has taken place on the draft document and the responses received have been taken into account in the revised Plan.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the final text of the Corporate Plan; and (b) that the Head of Corporate Business prepare and implement a Communications Strategy in respect of the Corporate Plan.

9. *EDI Partnership Agreements*

The Head of Corporate Business reported on a presentation made this morning by EDI Limited to the Member/Officer Working Group on the Economic Renewal Initiative.

On 25 June 1998 the Committee agreed to examine jointly with EDI Limited the creation of joint venture companies to develop (i) the landraise site at Bogside, Irvine; and (ii) call centres within North Ayrshire. EDI Limited have undertaken investigations, particularly on the landfill site at Bogside, are looking at the Garnock Estuary and have discussed using landfill tax credits in connection with the sites. They are also looking at the call centre sites and have suggested the setting up of a Charitable Trust to feed into a joint venture company. The further development of the proposals will require (i) the agreement on an organisational structure; (ii) a framework for the Garnock Estuary based on principles of environmental sustainability and local economic benefit; (iii) relating the development costs of the landraise site to (ii); (iv) initiating a call centre study; and (v) the preparation of a Draft Joint Venture Agreement with project memoranda.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that a presentation should be arranged within the next six weeks for all Members of the Council on the legal and financial implications of an EDI Partnership Agreement, to enable a final decision to be given to EDI Limited on this matter.

10. *I.T. Development Programme 1998/1999 & 1999/2000*

Submitted report by the Information Technology Services Manager on the I.T. Projects to be developed through 1998 to March 2000 and the resources and funding required to meet these needs.

Increasing demands are being made of the Corporate I.T. Services Department as a result of the Council's need to improve its systems and services. The Council's I.T. requirements separate into two areas (i) core activities, covering ongoing maintenance tasks of existing systems; and (ii) new developments including implementation of new systems or replacement of existing systems. Directorates have therefore been requested to identify their I.T. plans for 1998/1999 and 1999/2000, in order to assess the total I.T. resource required to meet these plans. The assessment of resources identified a need for a total of 60 I.T. Officers.

Following further consultation, the new developments have been prioritised and taking into account the core activities and the immediate priorities, the revised total resource required is 46 I.T. Officers. Following a review of the client/contractor splits and the Central Support Services, the Committee agreed on 25 June 1998 that all I.T. staff based in Directorates would transfer to the I.T. Services Department. There still remains, however, a shortfall of 9 I.T. Officers required to meet the I.T. Development Programme up to March 2000. It is considered that it would be more cost effective for the Council to employ its own I.T. Officers.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the prioritised I.T. Development Programme as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report; (b) to approve the funding of £140,000 for 1998/999 and £240,000 for 1999/2000 to be made available in the Capital Programme to meet the cost of employing 9 I.T. Officers; (c) that a review be undertaken to address the funding requirements for I.T. resources from March 2000; and (d) that a report be submitted to the Support Services Committee on the revised structure of the I.T. Services Department.

11. *Response to the Commission on Local Government and the Scottish Parliament*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the response to the Commission on Local Government and the Scottish Parliament.

The Commission has a remit to consider (i) how to build the most effective relations between Local Government and the Scottish Parliament and Scottish Executive; and (ii) how Councils can best make themselves responsive and democratically accountable to the communities which they serve. The Commission visited North Ayrshire on 30 June 1998, meeting with elected Members, Directors, Trade Union representatives etc. and in addition sought a response to their consultation paper by 30 June 1998. Following a pre-meeting of Members and the Commission visit, the response has been forwarded to the Commission on the various issues, a copy of which is appended to the report.

Noted.

12. *Scotland For Children Campaign*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Scotland for Children Campaign.

The Campaign is a grouping of some of Scotland's major voluntary childcare organisations, statutory organisations and academics who are working to ensure that there is a commitment to the interests and welfare of children and the UN Convention on the rights of the child at the heart of the Scottish Parliament. The Campaign has requested all Scottish Councils to sign a statement confirming their agreement to its aims which support the three main principles of the UN Convention on the child, (i) provision of healthcare, education, a home and social support; (ii) protection from emotional, physical and sexual abuse; and (iii) participation in the decisions that affect them.

The Committee agreed to support the aims of the Campaign.

13. *Proposals for the Millennium Festival*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals to celebrate the Millennium Festival in North Ayrshire.

The Member/Officer Working Group on the Millennium Festival has considered various proposals for the celebration of the Millennium in North Ayrshire. It has also received a presentation from the Scottish Partnership Manager of the New Millennium Experience Company on the types of projects which could be eligible for grant assistance from the Millennium Fund. The Working Group proposes that "Youth and Age" should form a theme for the Council's activities. Several of the proposals outlined in the report will be dependent on attracting grant funding from the Millennium Festival Company and from other sources. A number of existing local organisations have also expressed an interest in holding Millennium events. It is proposed that the Council provides some financial assistance towards the local community events.

The Committee agreed (a) that the appropriate Officers submit grant applications for the funding of the proposals as detailed in the report; and (b) that provision of £40,000 be made in the 1999/2000 budget to be split between each Area Committee to assist local groups in funding community events.

14. *Area Committees*

(a) *North Coast and Arran Area Committee*

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2) of the North Coast and Arran Area

Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 22 June 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(b) Garnock Valley Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS3) of the Garnock Valley Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 23 June 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 24 June 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(d) Irvine Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 24 June 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(e) Three Towns Area Committee

Submitted the annexed reports (Appendix CS6) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meetings held on 25 June and 10 July 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

15. Requests for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on requests received for financial assistance:-

West of Scotland Community Relations

The Committee agreed (a) to award West of Scotland Community Relations £1,000; and (b) to refuse their separate application for assistance towards the production of a video.

16. Conferences, Seminars Etc.: Invitations

Submitted invitations to attend the undernoted Conference/Seminar:-

(a) the Centre for Scottish Public Policy conference entitled "A New Vision For Local Government" to be held in Edinburgh on 28 August 1998; and

(b) the Health Services Management Centre's two-day seminar entitled "New Methods for Involving the Public in Decisions" to be held in the University of Birmingham on 19-20th October 1998.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Chair or his nominee to attend (a); and that there be no attendance at (b).

17. Urgent Items

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

18. Print Room Facilities - Proposed Partnership

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the outcome of a review of Print Room facilities.

With the advent of Best Value, the opportunity was taken during an internal review of the funding of and recharging policies of the Council's Print Room and Mail Room facilities to include a private sector comparison. Following discussions with Xerox Business Services who currently lease the photocopying machines in the Print Room to the Council, it is proposed that the Council considers entering into a Service Level Agreement with the company to provide all the Council's Print/Mail Room requirements. This would involve the existing staff transferring by means of TUPE to Xerox Business Services and based on current costs, the savings to the Council in the first full year would be £15,000, which is equivalent to 5%.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) that the Trade Unions be advised of the proposal; and (b) that discussions be continued with Xerox Business Services with a view to the company taking over the Print Room facilities, subject to a further detailed report being submitted to the Committee.

The Meeting ended at 2.40 p.m.