

North Coast and Arran Area Committee
26 October 1998

Largs, 26 October 1998 - At a Meeting of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 10.30 a.m.

Present

John Sillars, Margaret Highet, Elizabeth McLardy, Robert Rae and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

J. Rankin, Arts and Cultural Services Manager, C. Ewing, Vikingar Centre Manager, J. Martin, Libraries and Information Services Manager, M. Smyth, Area Community Development Officer, and J. Lockhart, Area Cleansing/Grounds Maintenance Officer (Community Services); E. MacLean, Adviser (Educational Services); L. Scott, Supervising Engineer (Property Services); P. Doak, Accountant (Financial Services); and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Also In Attendance

Inspector W Ross (Strathclyde Police) and T Barr, Community Fire Officer (Strathclyde Fire Brigade).

Chair

Mr Sillars in the Chair.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 14 September 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Monitoring Reports

(a) Education: Review of Services for Children Under Eight

Submitted report by the Director of Educational Services on the final Review Documents on Services for Children Under Eight in North Ayrshire, copies of which had previously been circulated to all members of the Council.

The Children Act 1989 requires all local authorities to register and inspect all daycare services for children under eight within their area every three years. Following extensive consultation and appropriate advertising a final Review Document has been produced which takes account of the comments and suggestions received through the consultation process and details the full range of daycare and support services provided to children under the age of eight. It is published in two parts, comprising a Service Directory and a Summary containing an analysis of service pertaining to children under eight years of age in North Ayrshire. A video has also been produced and is available to interested parties. The final Review Document has now been submitted to the Scottish Office.

Noted.

(b) Community Services

(i) Sports Development

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services, providing statistical information on the levels of activity of the Sports Development Service throughout North Ayrshire over the period April to September 1998.

There has been a reduction in the level of attendance at sporting activities within the North Coast and Arran area largely due to the poor weather. A new Football Development initiative was introduced in May 1998 to promote football as an activity and a Football Development Officer has been appointed. This initiative, jointly funded by the Council, the Scottish Football Association and the Inverclyde National Sports Training Centre has resulted in a significant increase in activity.

Noted.

(ii) Leisure Management

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services, reviewing the level of activity at the Vikingar! Centre and sports pitches in the North Coast and Arran area.

There has been a reduction in the level of activity at the Vikingar! Centre in the first half of the financial year due to the lower level of swimming and coaching activities. Attendances at the Vikingar! Attraction show a slight increase and investigations are being undertaken with a view to revising the Vikingar! Experience for next season. Although 55 complaints were received during the period, the majority of these related to a single theatre performance. Attendances at sports pitches were lower than in the same period last year.

Noted.

(iii) Country Parks

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services, reviewing the level of activity over the period April to September 1998 within the Country Parks and Ranger Service.

Recorded attendances at Eglinton Country Park and at related special events are down in the first half of the financial year, largely as a result of the poor weather. Relevant statistical information was provided in the report.

The Committee (a) agreed that the staff of the Ranger Service be commended for their programme of activities; and (b) otherwise noted the report.

(iv) Libraries Issue Figures

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services giving details of the library issue figures from libraries within the North Coast and Arran area in respect of books, audio cassettes and videos. The figures covered the period from April to September 1998 and show a comparison with the same period for 1997.

The Committee expressed concern over the fall in book issues largely due to substantial cuts in the book fund and expressed the view that the maintenance of a high standard of library service should remain a priority of the Council.

The Committee agreed that the Director of Community Services be requested to consider how the book fund could be given increased priority in future budgets.

(v) Litter Awareness

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on service delivery regarding litter awareness.

The report indicated one instance of fly-tipping and four instances of abandoned vehicles

which have been dealt with. One call was made to the Litter Hotline since the last meeting.

Noted.

(c) Legal Services: North Ayrshire Council Industrial Estate Factories

Submitted quarterly report by the Legal Services Manager on the letting/availability of factories on Council Industrial Estates within the North Coast and Arran area.

The Keppenburn Workshops, Main Road, Fairlie comprise six units. The current occupancy rate is 100% and 14 full-time staff are employed in connection with these units.

Noted.

(d) Community Development Grants Scheme: Analysis of Grants Paid to 6 October 1998

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on Community Development Grants paid to 6 October 1998 in respect of the North Coast and Arran area, including details of the balance of funding remaining.

Noted.

3. Community Development Grants Scheme: Requests for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on requests for financial assistance.

(a) Arran Junior Sailing Club

The Committee agreed to award the Arran Sailing Club £500;

(b) Fairlie Playgroup and Mother and Toddlers Group

The Committee agreed to award the Fairlie Playgroup and Mother and Toddlers Group £200; and

(c) West Kilbride Bowling Club

The Committee agreed to refuse the application for grant on the grounds that the West Kilbride Bowling Club itself has significant resources to meet the costs of the equipment.

4. Largs: Viking Festival 1998

Submitted report by the Director of Community Services on an evaluation of the events programme for the 1998 Largs Viking Festival and on proposals for the 1999 Festival.

The report gave an outline of the 1998 Festival Programme and provided comprehensive details on the individual events held, including a break-down of costs.

During discussion, the following suggestions were made in relation to the 1999 Festival Programme:-

- an opening parade is essential to promote the Festival but must be of a suitable standard;
- consideration should be given to the introduction of a charge for entry to the Fireworks Displays;
- consideration requires to be given to the use of a local contractor to erect and dismantle the Viking Village which could result in savings;

- the provision of appropriate signage and publicity requires to be investigated in relation to the Craft Fayre;
- the timescale for the Battle of Largs re-enactment requires to be examined;
- the Festival dates require to be reviewed; and
- consideration should be given to inviting a representative from the Education Directorate to participate in the Festival Advisory Forum.

After full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to remit the suggestions made to the next meeting of the Viking Festival Advisory Forum; and (b) otherwise to note the position.

5. Isle of Arran: Roads Issues

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on the current position regarding the condition of the roads network on the Isle of Arran, in response to a number of matters previously raised by the Chair.

Water in the sub-structure of a road is a persistent problem and the failure to carry out annual maintenance to ditches on Arran has now resulted in springs breaking through the road surface causing potholes. Further problems have been caused by heavier vehicle loading and increased traffic partly due to timber extraction and the haulage of stone for construction. Additional bus traffic by service and visiting coaches has added to the road problem. Because of the island situation, hot material for roads is not an economic option and the alternative delayed set materials have become more susceptible to water in recent years resulting in difficulties in producing lasting repairs. Notwithstanding general budget stringency, the level of revenue funding for Arran roads remains in proportion to its road mileage compared to that on the mainland. No additional funding for roads is available through capital at present.

The Committee agreed to request (a) that a review of the present road conditions be carried out as quickly as possible and any remedial works costed; (b) that any consequential budget implications on roads' funding be submitted to a future meeting of the Infrastructure and Environment Services Committee for consideration; (c) that immediate attention be given to the upkeep of the ditches to reduce the effects of water attack on the road structure; (d) that the possibility of traffic management involving lorry routing be investigated; and (e) that the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment submit a further report on progress to the next meeting of the Area Committee.

6. Strathclyde Fire Brigade: Fire Statistics

Submitted report by Strathclyde Fire Brigade detailing fire statistics within the North Coast and Arran area for the period 1 August to 30 September 1998.

Arising from discussion, concern was expressed over the possible withdrawal by Caledonian MacBrayne Limited of emergency ferry services to Cumbrae. The Committee was advised that discussions are scheduled to take place with Caledonian MacBrayne Limited on future emergency service provision for Cumbrae. It has already been ascertained that no other suitable vessels are available to carry fire appliances to the island.

The Committee agreed to write to Caledonian MacBrayne Limited to intimate the Committee's concerns on this matter and to otherwise note the position meantime.

The meeting ended at 12.10 p.m.