

Corporate Strategy Committee
21 May 1996

Irvine, 21 May 1996 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

James Clements, Patrick Browne, Jack Carson, Stewart Dewar, Thomas Dickie, John Donn, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Joseph McKinney, Thomas Morris, David O'Neill, Robert Reilly, John Sillars, George Steven and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive; The Directors of Education and Financial Services; The Head of Corporate Business; The Information Technology Services Manager; The Principal Officer (Policy/Administration); The Principal Officer (Marketing and Publicity); and Mr. Bannatyne, an Administration Officer.

Chair

Mr. Clements in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Ian Clarkson and Robert Rae.

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 9 April 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Area Committees

(a) North Coast and Arran Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS1) of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 3 May 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(b) Garnock Valley Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2) of the Garnock Valley Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 7 May 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix C3) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 8 May 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(d) Irvine Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 8 May 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(e) Three Towns Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 9 May 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

3. Armed Forces Access to Council Land and Facilities

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee of 9 April 1996.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive giving details of the existing policies which the Council inherited from the former Cunninghame District and Strathclyde Regional Councils with regard to the granting of access to the armed forces to Council land and facilities. These policies now require to be examined to ascertain to what extent they can be implemented in the context of a unitary authority taking into account the purpose and intended effect of any such policy restricting the use by the armed forces of Council land etc. while at the same time having regard to what is within the Council's span of control etc. A number of possible options for the introduction of a new policy were provided for consideration.

The Committee agreed (a) subject to the provision that no guns or military hardware be brought on to Council land, schools or other properties, to adopt the policy inherited from the former Strathclyde Regional Council which allows the armed forces unrestricted access to halls, leisure and community centres, parks and open spaces, public places and thoroughfares, and schools and educational premises; and (b) to note that the Careers and Guidance Services are exempt from this policy due to separate statutory provision.

4. Corporate Information Technology Strategy

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Corporate Information Technology Strategy remitted by the Support Services Committee for approval.

The Committee agreed to approve the Strategy.

5. North Ayrshire Population Projections 1995-2001

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the North Ayrshire Population Projections 1995-2001 remitted from the Infrastructure and Environment Services Committee for consideration.

The Committee agreed to endorse the use of these and subsequent annual projections as the demographic basis for the planning of services and allocation of resources in North Ayrshire.

6. Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee of 9 April 1996.)

(a) The Rural Day Card Ticket Scheme: Cost Increase

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal by Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority to increase the cost of the existing Rural Day Card from £2.50 to £3.20 from 2 June 1996.

The Rural Day Card Ticket Scheme which is co-ordinated by the Passenger Transport Authority operates in defined rural areas on a zonal basis and allows passengers unlimited travel by bus and in some cases ferries within each zone. It operates in a number of rural areas in Argyll and Bute, East Ayrshire, South Ayrshire and South Lanarkshire. In North Ayrshire the scheme operates very successfully on Arran where passengers are allowed unlimited bus travel on the island. Since the scheme's introduction in 1992 the fare has been set at £2.50 in each zone and has remained unaltered despite price increases of 25% in the same period in the maximum permitted rural fare scale on subsidised bus services. The Day Card is now significantly under-priced making it difficult for operators to participate in the scheme which is mandatory where rural services are subsidised.

Concern was expressed over the implications of the proposed increase for day trippers to Arran who frequently utilise the Day Card.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to propose that the cost of the Rural Day Card be increased from £2.50 to £3.00 as from 2 June 1996; and (b) that Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority be advised accordingly.

(b) Proposed Fares Increase Outwith the Designated Passenger Transport Authority Area

In February 1996 the Passenger Transport Authority agreed that fare increases averaging from 5% for those services under its control would apply from 2 June 1996. The Passenger Transport Authority has now requested that North Ayrshire Council consider whether it wishes to implement similar increases for services within its jurisdiction but outwith the designated Passenger Transport Authority area and to implement these also on 2 June to assist in communication with operators and the general public. This would affect fares for bus services on the islands of Arran and Cumbrae only.

The Committee agreed (a) to increase the bus fares on Arran and Cumbrae in line with the

Passenger Transport Authority's proposals for services under their control effective from 2 June 1996; and (b) that Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority be advised accordingly.

7. Ayrshire Biological Recorders Group

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request from the Ayrshire Biological Recorders Group for funding assistance towards the establishment of a Biological Records Centre at the Dick Institute Kilmarnock.

The Committee agreed to refuse the request.

8. The Dunblane Snowdrop Petition

The organisers of the Dunblane Snowdrop Petition have written to the Council requesting that approval be given for this petition to be circulated among Council staff for signature and to be made available to members of the public at local offices etc. The aims of the petition are to have recreational firearms removed from people's homes and communities and to have weapons of rapid destruction banned from private ownership.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive arrange for the petition to be circulated immediately among all North Ayrshire Council staff for signature, to be made available to the public at local offices etc. and returned to the organisers by 17 June 1996 as requested.

9. Proposed New Boathouse for The Royal National Lifeboat Institution: Largs North Promenade

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress on the request by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution to erect a new boathouse at Largs North Promenade.

The Committee agreed that the Chair, Vice-Chair, Chair of Community and Recreational Services Committee and the Member for Largs North and Skelmorlie along with appropriate Officers meet with representatives of the RNLI to discuss their application to purchase or lease ground from the Council at Largs North Promenade.

10. Procedural Matters

(Previous Minute reference: Corporate Strategy Committee of 9 April 1996.)

(a) Standing Orders, Contract Standing Orders, Delegation to Officers and Financial Regulations

Submitted documents relating to Standing Orders, Contract Standing Orders, Delegation to Officers and Financial Regulations approved at the Seminar for Members of the Council on 29 April 1996.

The Committee agreed to adopt the Orders and Regulations.

(b) Scheme of Delegation to Committees

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Scheme of Delegation to Committees which was circulated to all Committees for information and comment.

Although the Committees of the Council will now have authority to deal with those matters delegated to them without reference to the Council, it is proposed that the following matters be exempt from the Scheme of Delegation:-

- (i) Fixing of Council Tax;
- (ii) Setting rents for North Ayrshire Council Houses;

(iii) Determination of annual Capital Plans for submission to the Scottish Office and subsequent determination by the Council of its Budget for the financial year; and Capital

(iv) Fixing of the Revenue Budget.

Committees will only have authority to recommend approval or otherwise of these matters and in circumstances where a decision requires the approval of the Council the Committee Minute will require to clearly state that this is the case.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the Scheme of Delegation to Committees; and (b) to note those specific matters which will continue to require the approval of the Council following consideration by Committee.

11. Equal Opportunities Member/Officer Working Group

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee of 9 April 1996.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of the Equal Opportunities Member/Officer Working Group which is currently considering how equal opportunities issues may be dealt with by North Ayrshire Council.

The Committee agreed that the Working Group continue to progress the Draft Equal Opportunities Employment Policy, the proposed implementation plan for that policy, the Equality Audit of Council services, and report to a future meeting of the Committee.

12. Programme for Partnership: Guidance for Applying for Urban Programme Funding

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the implications of the Secretary of State's guidance on applying for Urban Programme funding under the Programme for Partnership proposals. In September 1995 the Council agreed to proceed with the preparation of a Council Area-Wide Strategy in consultation with key partners and to submit proposals for Priority Partnership Area status for Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston. The date for submission to the Secretary of State is 30 June 1996.

Under the new Programme for Partnership arrangements any Urban Programme funded projects managed by voluntary groups which reach the end of their fourth year funding could only be extended by the costs being met from the block allocations under the new arrangements. Temporary measures have been put in place to extend funding for such projects to 30 November 1996. Thereafter the Partnership or the Council will require to determine whether to extend funding for any such project out of the new allocation of Urban Programme resources.

The Regeneration Strategy to be submitted should include proposals for monitoring and evaluating its impact on both the Council and the local initiative area. Partnerships will be required to conduct an annual monitoring exercise and report on the outcome. After five years partnerships will be expected to conduct a full evaluation of all their activities.

Monitoring of Urban Programme initiatives in future will be carried out corporately by the Directorates of the Council and necessitate co-operation with the other partners in the Regeneration Strategy and the Priority Partnership Area.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Working Group together with other relevant Officers and the Regeneration Strategy partners complete the preparation of draft submissions for consideration and approval by North Ayrshire Council and the Regeneration Strategy partners to allow for submission to the Scottish Office by 30 June; and (b) to continue the present monitoring arrangements for existing Urban Programme projects.

13. Council Information Point

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee of 9 April 1996.)

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal to establish North Ayrshire Council's first Council Information Point at Vernon Street Saltcoats. In order to establish this objective it will be necessary to relocate certain members of staff who presently occupy the premises.

The Committee agreed (a) to establish a Council Information Point at Vernon Street; (b) in order to facilitate this (i) that staff from the Community and Recreational Services and Commercial Services Directorates be transferred from the Vernon Street office Saltcoats to premises currently occupied by the Social Work Directorate at Ardrossan Road, Saltcoats; and (ii) that staff from various locations in the Social Work Directorate including Manse Street Saltcoats be transferred to Vernon Street.

14. The Skye Bridge Campaign

A request for support has been received from the Highland Council which is committed to challenging the imposition of tolls on the Skye Bridge on the grounds that the tolls are (a) excessive and represent an unfair burden on the travelling public; and (b) fall disproportionately on the people of Skye and Lochalsh. It is accepted that the Skye Bridge is an excellent facility which apart from the tolls charged could greatly benefit the Skye and Lochalsh area.

In view of this the Highland Council recently resolved:-

"That the (Highland) Council commit itself to press, as a matter of urgency, for an alteration to the Scottish Office policy on the imposition of tolls on the Skye Bridge".

The Committee agreed (a) that North Ayrshire Council agree to support the Highland Council in its opposition to the imposition of tolls on the Skye Bridge; (b) to write to the Secretary of State indicating support for the Highland Council's resolution; and (c) that the Highland Council be advised of North Ayrshire Council's support.

15. Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) Annual Membership: Accident Prevention Committees: Community Safety

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a request from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents that the Council consider taking up membership for 1996/97. The report also outlined proposals for Area Committees to consider how best Accident Prevention Committees could be re-established within their area and how their role in the promotion of the wider concept of Community Safety can be developed. The development of Community Safety as an Area Committee role may have some financial implications for the Council. A budget of £10,000 was established by the Council to develop Community Safety in the first year and it is proposed that this will operate as a "Challenge Budget" remaining under the control of the Corporate Strategy Committee against which bids can be made for specific projects. Strathclyde Police have indicated that they would wish to be involved in any further development of this initiative.

The Committee agreed (a) to take up membership of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents at a cost of £229.13 for 1996/97; (b) that the Area Committees be requested to consider how local Accident Prevention Committees could be realigned with the Area Committees of North Ayrshire Council and expanded to consider the wider concept of Community Safety; and (c) that the Corporate Policy Unit report on this to the next round of Area Committees.

16. Environmental Improvements

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the role of Area Committees in examining the possibilities for environmental improvements within their local areas.

It is proposed that the Area Committees seek information from active and interested parties within their communities on how their local environment can be improved. The Area Committees could act as a catalyst to ascertain the extent of the contribution which can be made by these organisations towards environmental improvement schemes. Given the financial implications of any proposed environmental improvements it is envisaged that such schemes will be submitted to the Corporate Strategy Committee for consideration. Consultations have taken place with the Directors of Planning, Roads and the Environment and Commercial Services who have indicated their support for this proposal.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Area Committees be requested, in conjunction with interested parties in their communities, to examine the possibilities for environmental improvements within their area; and (b) that suggestions for improvement schemes be submitted to the Corporate Strategy Committee for consideration and approval.

17. Area Committees: Publicity

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the perceived need for increased publicity of the five Area Committees.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Principal Officer (Marketing and Publicity) draw up a scheme for publicising the meetings and activities of the Area Committees; (b) that the Area Committees consider in conjunction with the Principal Officer (Marketing and Publicity) how they wish the Committees to be promoted; and (c) that Area Committee meetings be arranged in locations with sufficient space for members of the public to attend and where quality of access is assured.

18. Compulsory Competitive Tendering: The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy Competition Advisory Service

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal that North Ayrshire Council subscribe to the CIPFA Competition Advisory Service for all six CCT Professional Services.

The Committee agreed to join the CIPFA Competition Advisory Service at a cost of £13,500.

19. Compulsory Competitive Tendering Timetable

In view of reorganisation of local government the Scottish Office had introduced a moratorium on CCT for services under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980. This delayed the date of implementation of this aspect of CCT to 1 July 1997. On 13 May the Scottish Office announced that tendering under the 1980 Act should resume on 1 January 1997 instead of 1 July 1997. The date of 1 January 1997 relates to when contracts must be up and running. The nature and timing of the change reduces from one year to six months the preparation and implementation period for a significant aspect of Council activity and the shortening of the CCT timescale is likely to prove a difficulty for the Council.

The Committee expressed concern over the proposed change in the CCT timetable and were advised that COSLA is currently seeking counsel's opinion on the legality of the proposal.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Head of Corporate Business report further on how the new timetable is to be met; (b) that the Committee be kept fully advised on progress; (c) to seek the support of the local Members of Parliament; and (d) otherwise to note the position meantime.

20. The Nobel Project: The Big Idea: Irvine Harbour

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and the Environment on the progress of the Nobel Project 'The Big Idea' bid for Millennium funding.

A previous bid for Millennium funding for the proposed visitor attraction was unsuccessful

primarily due to its proposed initial location on the site adjacent to Africa House, Ardeer, Stevenston. At that time re-siting of the project had not been clarified and the Council agreed to continue consideration of support for a further bid to the Millennium Commission pending clarification of the new location. Subsequently a further bid to the Millennium Commission for the project was made by ASSET, the proposed alternative location being the tip of the Ardeer peninsula immediately across the river from Irvine Beachpark. This bid has successfully won through the first round of consideration by the Millennium Commission and will now be the subject of further detailed investigation.

After full discussion, the Committee agreed to remit to the Chair, Vice-Chair, the Convenor and Vice-Convenor, local Members for Ardrossan, Saltcoats and Stevenston and North Ayrshire's MP's to meet with representatives from ASSET to further discuss this project and report.

21. Community Newspaper

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal to introduce a Community Newspaper for North Ayrshire Council.

It is proposed that a Community Newspaper would include positive news items and feature on a variety of Council activities of interest to the public. It would outline policies and aims and highlight the achievements and activities of the new authority across all Directorates. Such a mechanism would also provide a useful platform to project the profile of all Committees. The newspaper will be entitled "Look North" and will incorporate the North Ayrshire Council logo. It is anticipated that 25% of the production costs can be recouped through advertising in the first instance and that at a later stage 40% of costs will be recouped. A quarterly publication is envisaged with the first issue being distributed in late June/early July of this year.

The Committee agreed (a) that North Ayrshire Council produce a community newspaper; and (b) that an editorial panel be established comprising the Convenor, the Leader and Depute Leader of the Council, the Chief Executive and the Head of Corporate Business.

22. Requests for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on requests for financial assistance from outside organisations.

Having considered the requests for financial assistance the Committee agreed that the following payments be made:-

Organisation	Decision
Scottish National Federation for the Welfare of the Blind	£120.00
Arran Textiles	£250.00
Council for Scottish Archaeology	£100.00
Scottish European Aid	£150.00
Training 2000 Scotland	£150.00

VSO Sponsorship Scheme (Volunteer Wendy Feherty Solomon Islands)	£600.00
Scottish Civic Trust	£576.93
Royal Scottish National Orchestra	£1,500.00
Scottish Chamber Orchestra	£305.00

23. Scottish Trades Union Congress Centenary Workshop

Submitted report on an invitation to attend an STUC Centenary Workshop to be held in Stirling on Monday 10 June 1996 between 10.00 a.m. and 1.00 p.m. The purpose of the Workshop is to brief those attending on the Centenary to set out opportunities for local authorities and to report on local authority developments.

The Committee agreed that the Chair of the Community and Recreational Services Committee and the Director of Community and Recreational Services be authorised to attend the Centenary Workshop.

24. Enterprise Ayrshire: Invitation to Join Board

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an invitation from Enterprise Ayrshire that the Leader of the Council become a Director of the Board.

The Committee agreed that the Leader of the Council be authorised to accept the invitation.

25. Association of Direct Labour Organisations (ADLO): National/Scottish

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request from Councillor Dickie for authorisation to take up posts within National/Scottish ADLO.

The Committee agreed to authorise Councillor Dickie (a) to continue to act in his capacity as Chairperson of (i) Scottish ADLO's Direct Services Division Vehicle Maintenance Group and (ii) National ADLO's Vehicle Maintenance and Advisory Group for a further period of one year in each case; (b) to accept the position of Chairperson of Scottish ADLO's Building Division (three year period); (c) to accept the nomination for Chairperson of National ADLO and to take up the position of Chairperson if successful; and (d) to attend any future meetings in connection with the above posts.

26. Urgent Items

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

27. Disaggregation of Property: Strathclyde Regional Council, Headquarters, Glasgow

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed scheme of disposal of surplus Strathclyde Regional Council Headquarters property in Glasgow.

In terms of the Local Authorities (Property Transfer) Order 1995, property which was used by staff disaggregated to the new unitary authorities and having a common usage is to be regarded as pool property, i.e. property in which all Councils have a right and interest. The various buildings comprising Strathclyde Regional Council's Headquarters in Glasgow fall into this

category.

Under the proposals currently being considered by the Joint Property Forum a scheme has been devised as to how to deal with the practical terms of the splitting up of the Headquarters property. Details of the proposed scheme were given in the report.

The Committee agreed (a) to the method of disposal of pooled property in Glasgow as proposed by the Joint Property Forum in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) to instruct the Chief Executive to advise the other unitary authorities of North Ayrshire Council's agreement to the Scheme.

The meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.