

Corporate Strategy Committee
5 January 1999

Irvine, 5 January 1999 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

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

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Corporate Director (Educational Services), the Assistant Chief Executives (Financial Services, Development and Promotional Services and Information Technology Services), F. Keddlity, Head of Service (Educational Services), R. Young, Y2K Project Manager, J. Montgomery, Principal Performance Review Officer and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Mr Clements in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne, Thomas Dickie and Samuel Gooding.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 10th November 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 meeting held on 16th December 1998.

Noted.

3. Council Tax Collection: It Pays to Collect

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) on the Joint Scottish Office/COSLA Consultation Paper on possible improvements in the efficiency of Council Tax collection procedures.

The Committee agreed to establish a Member/Officer Working Group to consider the consultation paper and submit the Council's response to the Scottish Office by 31st January 1999.

4. Print Room Services

Submitted (a) reports being the Minutes of the Print Room Services Working Group held on (i) 24th November 1998 and (ii) 16th December 1998; and (b) report by the Chief Executive.

The Print Room Services Working Group received presentations from Xerox Business Services on their proposals to take over responsibility for the Print Room and Mail Room functions

currently provided by the Common Services Section of the Chief Executive's department. The Working Group also heard from Unison on their reaction to the proposals and certain counter suggestions.

The Working Group (a) expressed the view that Mail room Services should be retained within the Council; and (b) agreed that the Chief Executive should submit a report to the Corporate Strategy Committee.

From the discussion to date, which has focused mainly on a comparison of costs, it is apparent that Xerox will be able to operate the Print Room at less than the current Council costs and make a substantial investment in the facility. Xerox have accepted the TUPE transfer of the staff affected and have undertaken to maintain their salaries and conditions over the five year contract period. It is also evident that there is no quality management regime in place by which proper benchmarking comparisons can be made either with Xerox or other Councils.

Having considered the options available of (i) a bench marked Council service in 1999; (ii) voluntary competitive tendering; or (iii) the transfer of the Print Room Service to Xerox, it is considered that a negotiated transfer to Xerox Business Services is the best option for this non-core business. This will result in annual savings and capital investment by Xerox which the Council are unlikely to be able to match, as well as the transfer of all permanent staff on acceptable terms.

The Committee agreed to transfer the Print Room Service only to Xerox Business Services, subject to a revised agreement and a service level agreement being concluded.

5. Request for Additional Financial Assistance: Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the position regarding the request for additional financial assistance to Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board.

On 10th November 1998, the Committee noted that the public sector funding partners were requested to contribute to a funding package to allow the Board to continue to operate and agreed (a) that the Leader, the Convenor and Councillor D. Munn, as the Council's other representative on the Tourist Board, meet with South and East Ayrshire Councils to consider a funding package; and (b) that they be authorised to agree to a contribution of £40,000, by way of waiving the rental payment of £14,000 due to the Council in respect of the Largs Tourist Information Centre and the sum of £26,000, subject to a satisfactory business plan for the Board being produced.

The Council's representatives subsequently attended the AGM of the Tourist Board at which a rescue package was agreed. This involves a reduction in the size of the Board with the North Ayrshire Council membership reducing from 2 to 1 member. North Ayrshire Council has historically contributed the largest sum of the three Ayrshire Councils to the Tourist Board, but an analysis of the benefit derived to North Ayrshire from Tourist Board expenditure has shown that North Ayrshire receives only 31%, whereas South Ayrshire receives 53%. It is proposed therefore that the Council should renegotiate its contribution for 1999/2000 on the basis of benefit derived.

After a full discussion, during which assurances were given that the business plan now produced by the Board would appear to be satisfactory, the Committee agreed (a) to release the supplementary funding package to Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board, amounting to £40,000, by way of waiving the rental payment of £14,000 due to the Council in respect of the Largs Tourist Information Centre and the sum of £26,000; (b) that this advance should be deducted from the 1999/2000 contribution; and (c) to authorise the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotional Services) to renegotiate the Council's contribution for 1999/2000 based on the benefit derived to North Ayrshire and report back to the Committee.

6. Stevenston: Auchenharvie Improvements Scheme

Submit report by the Chief Executive seeking authority for a feasibility study into access and environmental improvements at Auchenharvie Academy and Auchenharvie Leisure Centre, Stevenston.

The Three Towns members have been concerned for some time about access to Auchenharvie Academy and Auchenharvie Leisure Centre, as well as the appearance of the area surrounding both these premises, which they consider to be unattractive and exposed. They are particularly concerned that existing problems in relation to transport and access to the area will be exacerbated with the future development of a community learning facility within the school building. Discussions have been held with the Three Towns Initiative and Landwise, the training provider, regarding the possibility of obtaining partnership funding for environmental improvements, although there would be no possibility of including any road works within this package. The overall costs will be substantial and it has become evident that a full feasibility study will be required to progress the project, even to the stage of tenders.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to authorise a feasibility study at an estimated cost of £20,000 in partnership with the Three Towns Initiative and Landwise into (i) the provision of improved access to Auchenharvie Academy and Auchenharvie Leisure Centre, Stevenston; and (ii) the enhancement of the environment surrounding these facilities; and (b) that the feasibility study should include the possibility of obtaining funding from the sale of land for housing in the surrounding area.

7. Proposed North Ayrshire Leisure Trust

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on the proposed formation of the North Ayrshire Leisure Trust.

On 26th May 1998, the Committee agreed to establish a Steering Group comprising the Chairs of Corporate Strategy, Community and Recreational Services and Support Services Committee, Councillor Carson, appropriate officers and representatives of staff affected to investigate the feasibility of transferring the operation of North Ayrshire Council's leisure facilities to a charitable Trust. The Steering Group has met on five occasions, which included as part of their deliberations a presentation from Greenwich Leisure Limited and a visit to Greenwich Borough Council. A general meeting of those staff who may be affected has also been held to provide information and receive comments.

It is considered that a Leisure Trust could result in immediate financial benefits of up to £400,000. The Steering Group in their deliberations have also concluded, however, that due to the sizeable task involved in forming a Trust, external assistance will be required from consultants. Four appropriate companies were interviewed by the Steering Group who recommended that Deloitte and Touche be appointed. The cost of the company's initial work will be £10,000. Further costs will be incurred in establishing a Leisure Trust including further fees of up to £46,000 to Deloitte Touche.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the appointment of Deloitte Touche as consultants to assist in the formation of the Leisure Trust; (b) that an initial sum of £10,000 towards the costs of the consultants be allocated in the Capital Budget for 1998/99; (c) that a bid be made for the provision within the Capital Budget for 1999/2000 of the sum of £100,000 to fund the creation of the Leisure Trust; (d) to approve the continuation of the Steering Group to develop and advise on the formation of the Trust; and (e) that the Vice-Chair of the Community and Recreational Services Committee be added to the membership of the Steering Group.

8. Kilwinning: Corsehill Bowling Club

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a remit from the Community and Recreational Services Committee to identify finance within the Capital Programme for Corsehill Bowling Club, Kilwinning.

On 24th November 1998, the Community and Recreational Services Committee considered a report on the current condition of the bowling green at Corsehill Bowling Club, Kilwinning. Over the years the synthetic surface of the green has deteriorated and surveys have indicated a requirement for the synthetic carpet and concrete surface to be removed, re-screeded and a new carpet fitted at a total cost of around £36,000 inclusive of professional fees. If no remedial work is undertaken on the facility, it will not be available for use in forthcoming seasons.

The Committee agreed to allocate a sum of approximately £36,000 in the Capital Programme to meet the cost of the refurbishment of the bowling green at Corsehill Bowling Club.

9. Irvine: Cunninghame House: Access Audit

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the costs of improving accessibility to Cunninghame House for disabled people.

The Equal Opportunities Member/Officer Working Group agreed that an access audit of Cunninghame House be undertaken to identify means of improving accessibility of the Council's headquarters for people with disabilities. The completed audit has identified various works required at an estimated cost of £12,000. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995, providers of goods, common services or facilities have a duty to alter or modify their premises to make them accessible to people with disabilities by 2005. It is therefore proposed that further investigation be now carried out to identify the work required to all Council buildings to meet the requirements of this legislation.

The Committee agreed that when the Capital Plan for 1999/2000 is being determined (a) to consider allocating (i) £12,000 for the works identified as a result of the access audit to Cunninghame House; and (ii) £100,000 for improvements to the Council's public buildings; and (b) that a rolling programme of works be identified and reported to a future meeting.

10. Flood Prevention and Land Drainage (Scotland) Act 1997: Delegation of Authority

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal & Regulatory Services) on the responsibility now placed on the Council in terms of the Flood Prevention Land Drainage (Scotland) Act 1997.

The Act provides that a local authority in circumstances where it is of the view that any watercourse in its areas is in a condition which is likely to cause flooding of land, which is not agricultural land, shall undertake such cleaning, clearing or repair of the water course as is necessary to reduce substantially the likelihood of flooding. Most flooding occurs with very little warning and in such cases of emergency or urgency, it will not be possible to await a meeting of the appropriate Committee to determine action. Delegated powers under the Scheme of Delegation to Officers are therefore proposed in these circumstances.

The Committee agreed (a) to authorise the Corporate Director (Property Services) to undertake such works as are necessary in terms of the Council obligations in terms of the Flood Prevention and Land Drainage (Scotland) Act 1997 in cases of emergency or urgency, subject to a report on the action taken being submitted to the first available Committee meeting; and (b) to adjust the Scheme of Delegation to Officers accordingly.

11. Cumbrae Community Council

Submitted report by the Chief Executive seeking approval for the dissolution of Cumbrae Community Council.

Formal intimation of resignation has recently been received from all 10 members of Cumbrae Community Council, with the reason given as being the emergence of a local committee on Cumbrae entitled “the Cumbrae Economic Strategy Committee”, which the Community Council consider are addressing similar local issues. Since Cumbrae Community Council is no longer active, it is proposed to invoke the formal procedures for dissolution in terms of paragraph 25 of the Council’s current Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils.

The Committee agreed to approve the dissolution of Cumbrae Community Council.

12. Strathclyde Passenger Transport: Arran: Post Bus Services

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an approach made by Royal Mail Postbuses to Strathclyde Passenger Transport seeking possible support towards various Postbus services in the former Strathclyde Region and in the case of North Ayrshire, in Arran.

There is already a contract in place to provide comprehensive bus services on Arran from October 1997 for a five year period and, due to the limited passenger usage of the Postbus service, it is not considered to provide sufficient value for money to merit financial subsidy.

The Committee agreed to advise SPT that the Council does not wish to provide financial support to the Arran Postbus Service.

13. Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme: Joint Committee

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal to establish a Joint Committee to be known as the Strathclyde Travel Scheme Joint Committee.

The management of the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme has continued effectively but in an informal manner since local government reorganisation in April 1996, through meetings of the Leaders of the 12 Councils of the former Strathclyde area, together with the Convener of the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Authority. On 10th November 1998, at the West of Scotland Leaders meeting, it was agreed that it was now appropriate to formalise current arrangements by establishing a Joint Committee of the 12 Councils.

The Committee agreed (a) to establish in terms of Section 56 (5) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 with the other 11 Councils in the former Strathclyde area, a Joint Committee to be known as the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme Joint Committee and to delegate to this Joint Committee its functions under Section 93 to 101 of the Transport Act 1985 in relation to the Strathclyde Concessionary Travel Scheme; (b) to appoint the Leader of the Council as the Council’s representative; (c) together with the other 11 Councils, to invite the Convener of Strathclyde Passenger Transport to be a member of the Joint Committee; and (d) to instruct the Chief Executive to adjust with the other 11 Councils (i) a Minute of Agreement giving effect to this resolution and containing all other necessary provisions for execution by the Councils; and (ii) Standing Orders for approval by the Joint Committee.

14. North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership

(a) Decisions on Applications

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the decisions taken by the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership on applications for funding.

The Working Group, which had previously been appointed, met on 19th November 1998

to consider the applications for regeneration programme funding for 1999/2000. The recommendations of the Working Group were subsequently submitted to the Partnership Implementation Team and the final decisions on the applications were taken by the meeting of the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership Board on 2nd December 1998. The Partnership further agreed to authorise the Implementation Team to allocate the ringfenced amounts for (i) the Social Inclusion Fund; (ii) ASSIST underwrite; (iii) the Social Enterprise Development Fund; and (iv) the Housing Advocacy Development Fund up to a maximum of £120,000, along with any unallocated underspend as appropriate.

The Committee agreed to note the decisions taken by the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership on 2nd December 1998 as detailed in Appendix 2 to the report.

(b) Social Inclusion Partnerships (SIPs)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on progress in the setting up of a Social Inclusion Partnership.

On 29th September the Committee agreed to authorise the preparation of a bid for new funding for a Social Inclusion Partnership through the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership. A bid was subsequently submitted by the Partnership to which the Scottish Office have since responded advising that the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership should not be invited to proceed to the second stage of the process. This in effect means that whilst the Partnership can still progress to convert to a Social Inclusion Partnership, there will be no additional funding. As requested by the Scottish Office, to enable them to consider the proposed conversion to a SIP further, a report has been submitted outlining the ways in which the Partnership has already achieved the transition from addressing the inherited situation to managing the Regeneration Programme in ways to promote Social Inclusion. The Scottish Office response is expected in late January/early February.

Noted.

15. Performance Management and Planning Framework

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on progress towards and proposals for the development of a formalised Performance Management and Planning Framework for the Council.

On 18th August 1998, the Committee noted the terms of SODD Circular 12/98 on the development of Best Value in Scotland, which referred in particular to the requirement to develop a Performance Management and Planning framework involving Public Performance Reports for public scrutiny. The Best Value Development Team has since produced a Performance Management and Planning framework for the Council. Councils are also required to submit a revised Implementation Plan setting out the series of targets and objectives to develop their Performance Management and Planning framework. The previously approved Implementation Plan included a Service Review of all Council services within a 3 year period. This contrasted with the majority of Councils which had opted for a 5 year programme. The 3 year programme is now considered to be too demanding of resources and the Accounts Commission has also questioned the feasibility of a 3 year programme. The programme has therefore been revised to review all services within a 5 year period.

The Committee agreed to (a) approve the recommendations contained within the report for the development of a formalised Performance Management and Planning framework for the Council; (b) to approve the revision of the Service Review Programme from a 3 year period to a 5 year period; and (c) to homologate the action of the Leader of the Council in approving the updated Best Value Implementation Plan at Annex 2 to the report, as submitted to the Scottish Office.

16. Guide to Service Planning

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals for the development of service planning.

The previous item on the Performance Management and Planning framework set out a number of tasks to enable the preparation of full Public Performance Reports by Spring 2000. One of the required tasks is the need for corporate guidance for managers with regard to Service Planning. A "Guide to Service Planning" has therefore been prepared as a reference for managers in the preparation and review of service plans from 1999/2000.

The Committee agreed to approve the "Guide to Service Planning", including that the proposed contents of a service plan as detailed within the Guide should normally be expected as a minimum for actual service plans.

17. Proposed Management Arrangements Audit for Best Value

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on initial proposals by the Accounts Commission regarding the audit of management arrangements.

The Accounts Commission had sought a response by 18th December 1998 to the proposals in their consultation paper. Under the Local Government Act 1998, auditors must satisfy themselves that Councils have made "proper arrangements for securing economy, efficiency and effectiveness" in their use of resources. The new approach proposed to the audit of management arrangements (i) uses self assessment with external independent scrutiny; (ii) supports continuous improvement but identifies where poor performance is not being addressed; and (iii) aligns with councils' planning processes, in terms of both timing and content. The proposals are broadly consistent with the Council's own plans for developing a Performance Management and Planning framework.

The Committee agreed (a) to homologate the response as detailed in the report, welcoming the proposals in principle; and (b) that a further report be submitted on the more detailed proposals when they are issued by the Accounts Commission.

18. Scottish Office Consultation Paper: Best Value Key Performance Indicators

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the development of key performance indicators for Best Value.

Scottish Office Circular 26/1998 issued on 25 November 1998 provided advice on the development of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for Best Value and invited comments by 18 December 1998 on an initial set of KPIs to be used in the development of Public Performance reporting. An initial response has been submitted covering issues including (i) the short length of the consultation period; (ii) the purpose and value of the proposed report on a first set of KPIs which is required by the Scottish Office by 26th February 1999; (iii) the criteria for good KPIs; (iv) resource implications; and (v) target settings.

The Committee agreed (a) to homologate the response as detailed in the Annex to the report; and (b) that a further report on the final KPIs be submitted in due course.

19. Customer Comments Scheme: Performance Review Report for Quarter Ending 30 September 1998

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Council's performance in managing customer comments for the three month period to 30 September 1998.

The overall number of customer comments during the quarter was 289, which compares with 234 received during the previous quarter. Councillor Carson raised the matter of a number of

written customer comments forms, response to which he believed had not been sent

The Committee (a) agreed that the issues raised by Councillor Carson be investigated; and (b) otherwise noted the report.

20. The Year 2000 Problem

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

On 18th August 1998, the Committee agreed to approve the Year 2000 Policy and Strategy Statements, Conformity Requirements and Project Plan. Since then, action has been taken in accordance with the timetable detailed in the project plan on IT applications, data and voice systems, PCs, file servers and UNIX servers, printers and embedded systems. In addition, action has been taken in relation to contingency planning, staff awareness and third parties.

The Committee (a) agreed to approve the action being taken in relation to IT and non-IT equipment and business systems to ensure that they are Year 2000 compliant; and (b) noted the action taken to date.

21. Environmental Policy: Programme of Action 1999

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the programme of action to implement the Council's Environmental Policy.

The programme covers the period from January 1999 to 31st December 1999, during which time the performance will be monitored. The finalised programme of action will be published as a formal document for widespread circulation.

After discussion, during which a number of suggested amendments and additions to the programme of action were made, the Committee agreed to approve the programme of action for 1999, subject to (a) a final round of consultations on the detailed wording of the document with each Corporate Director and Assistant Chief Executive; and (b) the suggested amendments/additions being taken into account in finalising the document.

22. Kilwinning: Bridgend Lane: Ground Surplus to Requirements

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on ground surplus to requirements at Bridgend Lane, Kilwinning.

The site at Bridgend Lane, Kilwinning is held jointly in the Housing, Education and Social Work accounts. Discussions on the draft Irvine/Kilwinning Local Plan have identified it as being suitable for housing development and car parking for the adjacent cemetery. Housing, Educational and Social Services have confirmed that they have no proposals for the site and would propose to declare each of their sections of the site surplus to requirement.

The Committee agreed (a) to declare the site at Bridgend Lane, Kilwinning surplus to requirements; and (b) to refer its disposal to the Support Services Committee.

23. Area Committees

(a) North Coast and Arran

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2) of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 7th December 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(b) Garnock Valley

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS3) of the Garnock Valley Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 8th December 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn & Springside

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 9th December 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(d) Irvine

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 9th December 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(e) Three Towns

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS6) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 10th December 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

24. Conferences, Seminars Etc.: Invitations

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an invitation to attend two Seminars organised by CoSLA on the development of a Cabinet System to be held on 11th and 29th January 1999.

The Committee agreed to authorise the attendance of two members at each of the seminars.

25. Urgent Item

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

26. Storm Damage

The Chair referred to the recent storms which had occurred in late December/early January and to the emergency work undertaken by staff in Property Services.

The Committee agreed to express their appreciation to all staff involved in dealing with the storm damage.

The meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.

