

Corporate Strategy Committee
22 October 1996

Irvine, 22 October 1996 - At a meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

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

In Attendance

The Chief Executive; The Director of Financial Services; The Head of Corporate Business; J Leckie, Head of Education Services (Education); G Lawson, Principal Officer (Policy/Administration), M Pepper, Principal Officer (Marketing/Publicity); and J Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr Browne in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

James Clements, Samuel Gooding and Robert Reilly.

1. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 10 and 27 September 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 7 October 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 8 October 1996.

(i) Community Grants: Three Towns Unemployed Workers Centre

Although a grant of £1,500 has been awarded to the Three Towns Unemployed Workers Centre to enable the Centre to provide information and advice to individuals in the Garnock Valley area, the Area Committee is anxious to ensure that the benefits will accrue solely to the Garnock Valley area.

The Committee agreed (i) that regular reports be submitted to future meetings of the Area Committee detailing the benefits to the Garnock Valley area resulting from this award; and (ii) otherwise to note the report.

(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS3) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the minutes of their meeting held on 9 October 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 9 October 1996.

(i) Roads Maintenance Contracts

The Committee was advised that the Irvine Area Committee has agreed to request that the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment submit draft proposals for future Roads Maintenance Contracts to that Committee for comment prior to their submission to the Infrastructure and Environmental Services Committee for approval.

The Committee agreed (A) that the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment provide this information to all Area Committees; and (B) otherwise 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 10 October 1996.

The Committee agreed (i) to note that the proposal to hold Community Consultation Meetings in individual Wards is still under consideration; and (ii) otherwise to note the report.

3. *Sigma-Aldrich Company Limited: Request to Purchase Factory Units at Second Avenue, Irvine*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request by Sigma-Aldrich Company Limited to purchase two factory units owned by the Council at 52 and 53 Second Avenue, Irvine.

The Company has invested £2m and increased employment by 25% since setting up in Irvine and has indicated its intention to invest approximately £0.5m per year in external and internal improvements at Irvine. The Company has a corporate policy of owning plants where investment is planned and consequently wish to purchase the two units currently leased from the Council. The rental from the two units is approximately £50,000 per annum.

The Committee agreed (a) in principle, to the sale of the factory units at 52 and 53 Second Avenue, Irvine to Sigma-Aldrich Company Limited on terms and conditions to be negotiated by the Legal Services Manager; and (b) to note that the Capital Receipt from the sale of the two units will be offset by a loss of £50,000 to the Infrastructure and Environment Services Revenue Budget in 1997/98 in respect of the lease of the two units.

4. *Reorganisation Accommodation Strategy: Implementation of Final Phase*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed implementation of the final phase of the Council's Accommodation Strategy.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) that a seminar be arranged for all Members of the Council to examine the options available to ensure that the final phase of the Council's Accommodation Strategy is complete; (b) that the matters raised in relation to the provision of additional interview room facilities and one-stop shops be taken into account; (c) that following the seminar a further report with appropriate recommendations on the Accommodation Strategy be submitted to the Committee for consideration; (d) that the Landscape Design Team within the

Community and Recreational Services Directorate transfer to Perceton House to alleviate the overcrowding in that Directorate; and (e) to note that the Legal Services Department of the Chief Executive's Directorate will move to Perceton House when accommodation becomes available in January/March 1997.

5. Budgets: Capital and Revenue

(a) Revenue Estimates 1996/97 - Mid-Term Review

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the probable income and expenditure projections for the financial year 1996/97.

In March 1996 the Council approved Directorate Expenditure of £156.594m and to date regular budgetary control statements have been produced comparing actual results to anticipated trends. Indications are that, in general, directorates are operating their activities within the approved budgets but there are instances where external influences have resulted in budgets not being achieved. These adverse situations have been compensated by an improved position in loan charges. Details of the main elements were given in the report.

The Council anticipated that it would inherit deficits from the former authorities of £800,000. Cunninghame District Council and North Ayrshire Council (Shadow Authority) have completed their accounts increasing the anticipated deficit by £535,000. Strathclyde Regional Council have still to finalise their accounts. No significant variance is anticipated through the major funding sources of Revenue Support Grant, Non-domestic Rates and Council Tax. Based on current information the Council will incur a net deficit of £450,000. The deficit which is relatively small, is to some extent disguised by a Loans Fund windfall saving of £2.317m. Consequently there is a need to reduce expenditure and prepare for the 1997/98 budget in advance.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve a reduction of 1% on the whole of the remaining portion of the Council's budget for the financial year 1996/97 to reduce the anticipated deficit; and (b) to note that based on current information the authority will incur a probable deficit of £450,000 compared to the break-even position initially envisaged.

(b) Capital Programme 1996/97 - Half-year/Resources Budget Statement

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on (i) expenditure on the Capital Programme for 1996/97 excluding HRA and projection of probable outturns to 31 March 1997; and (ii) on a review of the resources on the Capital Plan to maximise the possible expenditure in 1996/97 and beyond.

Expenditure to 10 October 1996 amounts to £3.6m representing 24.24% of the committed programme. Anticipated outturn expenditure at 31 March 1997 amounts to £13.935m, an apparent underspend of £1.209m. The 1997/98 Capital Programme should be prepared as soon as possible so that projects can commence early in the new financial year. The use of "Like for Like" projects which allow an authority to set off the cost of a replacement asset of the same category against the Capital Receipt received thus allowing the full value of Capital Receipt to be used, should be applied where possible to maximise use of Receipts thus increasing the Capital available for development. The underspend of £1.209m should be carried forward to 1997/98 and any excess beyond the maximum underspend at 31 March 1997 should be transferred to the Repairs and Renewals Fund to preserve the resource for 1997/98.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Director of Financial Services commence preparation of the Capital Plan for 1997/98 for submission to the Corporate Strategy Committee; and (b) otherwise to note the position meantime.

(c) Capital Programme Housing 1996/97

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on current expenditure on the HRA Capital Programme, the probable outturn figure to 31 March 1997 and the resources available to

finance the programme.

Noted.

6. Reinstatement of Woodlands Primary School following a Fire on 27 September 1996.

(Previous Minute Reference 27 September 1996.)

Submitted report by the Director of Education on the possible options for the reinstatement of Woodlands Primary School which would enable the school to function normally.

The report outlined four possible options, namely:-

Option 1 - to reinstate the damaged areas including elements of unavoidable betterment which arise from the necessity to implement current building legislation ;

Option 2 - to reinstate the damaged area by using modern building techniques;

Option 3 - to replace the existing school with a new school; and

Option 4 - to build a new extension in accordance with modern-day requirements.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve Option 4; and (b) that £300,000 Capital funding be allocated to this project.

The Committee also paid tribute to the staff of the Commercial Services Directorate for the speedy implementation of the necessary reinstatement work following this incident.

7. West of Scotland Loan Fund/European Development Fund Grant

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on an opportunity to secure additional European Regional Development Fund assistance towards the West of Scotland Loan Fund for local businesses in North Ayrshire.

The Council has the opportunity to secure additional resources from the European Regional Development Fund for business assistance in North Ayrshire as the level of ERDF approval is greater than anticipated. Any additional allocation by the Council to the Loan Fund will be matched pound for pound by the ERDF.

The Committee agreed to allocate a further £100,000 from the 1996/97 Capital budget to the West of Scotland Loan Fund to assist the development of local businesses.

8. COSLA: Uniform Budget Setting Day

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request from COSLA that the Council agree to a uniform date for all councils to fix their Council Tax.

The Committee agreed that the Council fix their Council Tax on Thursday 6 March 1997 as requested by COSLA.

9. Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of discussions with the Boundary Commission regarding North Ayrshire Council's review of electoral arrangements.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive have further discussions with the Boundary

Commission on North Ayrshire Council's proposals and report.

10. *Saltcoats: Focus Learning Centre*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive advising that the Education Committee on 17 September agreed to remit to the Corporate Strategy Committee consideration of a proposal to fund repairs to the Focus Learning Centre, Saltcoats. The repairs, which are minor, will cost approximately £6,000.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Architectural Services Manager arrange for the repairs, which will be met from the Central Repairs Budget, to be carried out at the earliest possible opportunity; and (b) that the Chief Executive report to a future meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee on any additional work which requires to be carried out to the property.

11. *Hamilton: Caird Centre*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal that the Council replace by 31 March 1998 the services currently provided by the Caird Centre Hamilton in relation to Council Tax and Benefits systems, the Community Charge system and printing services for financial systems payroll.

The Committee agreed (a) to replace all services currently provided by the Caird Centre, Hamilton prior to 31 March 1998; and (b) that the Information Technology Services Manager (i) advise South Lanarkshire Council of this decision; and (ii) report to a future meeting on progress.

12. *Cunninghame House: Access for Disabled People*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposed pilot project to improve access for disabled people to specific floors within Cunninghame House.

The Committee agreed that in the event of some slippage occurring in the Capital budget for 1996/97, £6,000 be allocated to allow the installation of automatically-opening doors at the entrance to the ground floor Library and the two entrances to the third floor of Cunninghame House.

13. *Women's Conference*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed arrangements for the Women's Conference 1997 to be organised by the Council.

The Committee agreed that the Conference be held on 7 March 1997 in Vikingar, Largs in accordance with the terms indicated in the report.

14. *Scottish Housing and Planning Council*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive advising that Mr Samuel Gooding has been appointed as Senior Vice-Chair of the Scottish Housing and Planning Council.

The Committee agreed (a) that Mr Gooding be congratulated on his appointment; and (b) to authorise payment of the appropriate expenses required to attend meetings of the Scottish Housing and Planning Council.

15. *Nomination of Council Representatives to Serve on Outside Agencies*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the nomination of members to serve on outside agencies.

The Committee agreed to nominate the following representatives to serve on the undernoted outside agencies:-

Outside Agencies	Representatives
Scottish Local Government Information Unit	Thomas Dickie
Strathclyde Credit Union Development Agency (SCUDA) Board of Directors	Stewart Dewar
The John Wheatley Centre	Thomas Morris

16. Safe Three Towns: Urban Programme Project

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals that the funding in respect of the Safe Three Towns Project be continued until March 1997. The project has been funded under the Urban Programme since 1992.

The Scottish Office will shortly award Priority Partnership Area Status having considered bids submitted under the new arrangements for the Urban Programme: Programme for Partnership. Successful partnerships will be responsible for all future project funding, including extensions of existing projects.

The Safe Three Towns project, in terms of the current rules, would have been eligible to apply for a three-year extension to its funding at the end of its four years, i.e. October 1996. This has been extended by one month to allow the new arrangements to be put in place.

The 1996/97 outturn figures indicate that the Project's funding level is £76,478 per annum and under the Urban Programme rules the Council is liable to meet 25% of the costs amounting to £19,120. Budgetary provision has been made in respect of this contribution.

The Committee agreed to extend the funding of the above project to the end of the financial year 1996/97 when the implications of the new arrangements for approval of extension funding are known.

17. Local Agenda 21: Progress Report

(Previous Minute Reference Corporate Strategy Committee 30 July 1996.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive giving details on the progress made on Local Agenda 21 in respect of advice and training, the support of outside agencies, the establishment of local contacts and an Officer's Team and proposals for consultation on a Draft Environmental Policy.

Noted.

18. North Ayrshire Litter Awareness and Prevention Campaign: Progress Report

Submitted report by the Chief Executive giving details of the preparations for the North Ayrshire Litter Awareness and Prevention Campaign which is to be initiated by the Council through all Directorates.

The Committee agreed (a) to authorise appropriate Officers to pursue the proposals outlined

in the report; and (b) that a further report on progress be submitted for consideration in due course.

19. *Control of Dog Fouling in Public Places*

Submitted report by the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on the increasing problems associated with dog fouling on footpaths and other public places in North Ayrshire which are causing public concern.

Details were given on the outcome of a survey on dog fouling in public places previously undertaken by the former Cunninghame District Council 1990 and of the range of measures taken by that Council to deal with such problems. Details were also given of a range of further proposals which might be adopted by the Council in an effort to address current dog fouling problems.

The Committee agreed (a) that the £18,000 presently allocated to the Infrastructure and Environment Services budget be transferred to the Corporate Strategy Committee budget for disbursement; (b) that a Working Party comprising Officers from Planning, Roads and Environment, Community and Recreational Services, Housing Services, Education Services, Commercial Services and Legal Services be established to assist in the provision of a service to address dog fouling problems in terms of the strategy indicated in the report; (c) to remit to Area Committees to determine the priorities in respect of problems relating to dog fouling in their areas; and (d) that regular monitoring reports be submitted to the Area Committees giving information on the progress of the measures taken in accordance with the terms of the strategy detailed in the report.

20. *Stirling: Public Inquiry: Suicides in Cornton Vale Prison*

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request from West Dumbartonshire Council for support for a motion recently passed by that Council urging the Secretary of State for Scotland to hold a Public Inquiry into the five deaths which have occurred in Cornton Vale Prison, Stirling in the past ten months.

The Committee agreed to support the motion in the terms indicated in the report, and to advise the Secretary of State accordingly.

21. *Apex Scotland*

Mr James Jennings has been invited to act as Chair of the Local Advisory Committee of Apex Scotland which is a national organisation providing employment and training for ex-offenders. The purpose of the Local Advisory Committee is to support Apex Scotland in the development and delivery of services in North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed (a) that Mr Jennings accept the invitation; and (b) to authorise payment of any additional expenses incurred as a result of attendance at meetings of the Local Advisory Committee.

22. *Employment Development Conference*

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on comments by the local Members of Parliament on the unemployment statistics for North Ayrshire and on a proposal to hold a conference to examine employment development opportunities for North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Council host an Employment Development Opportunities Conference in North Ayrshire; and (b) to remit the detailed planning of the Conference to a Member/Officer Working Group comprising the Committee Chairs, local Members of Parliament, Members of the European Parliament and the Head of Corporate Business.

23. North Ayrshire Heritage Merchandise

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal to produce merchandise to assist in the promotion of North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed to appoint a Member/Officer Working Group comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair, the Convener and Councillors Gooding and Munro along with appropriate Officers to consider the proposal and report.

24. Cemeteries Operation

(Previous Minute Reference Corporate Strategy 30/7/96.)

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the progress of the review of the operation and administration of cemeteries currently being undertaken.

The Committee agreed (a) that a full and final report on the outcome of the review be submitted to the Committee on 21 January 1997; and (b) to note the progress to date.

25. Convention of the Highlands and Islands

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal by the Secretary of State for Scotland to establish a Convention of the Highlands and Islands. The purpose of this body would be to strengthen co-ordination among the various economic development interests in the Highlands and Islands and to facilitate the exchange of views on issues affecting the economic prosperity of the area.

Invitations to serve on the Convention have been sent to MPs and MEPs whose constituencies lie within the area of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Councils whose area lies within the area of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and nominees from bodies with a significant involvement in the Highland economy. The Council has been invited to nominate one representative to serve on the Convention.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Convener be nominated to represent the Council on the Convention of the Highlands and Islands; and (b) to write to the Secretary of State drawing his attention to the recent issues (i.e. NUTS 2 Review and the increases in costs for subsidy for public transport) which have arisen in relation to Arran.

26. Requests for Financial Assistance

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

Organisation	Decision
Isle of Arran Music Society	Nil
ADAPT (Access for Disabled People to Arts Premises Today)	£300
Organisation	Decision

SCAPA (Scottish Campaign for Public Angling)	£150
The Scottish Wildlife Trust	£1,000
Irvine and District Poverty Action Group	£200

27. Urgent Items

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

28. Irvine Housing Association

The Chief Executive referred to a recent letter from Irvine Housing Association regarding the Council's nominee, Councillor Patrick Browne, to represent the Council on the Management Committee of the Association.

The Chief Executive, having expressed his disappointment over the response, referred to earlier correspondence in which the Irvine Housing Association Management Committee had reaffirmed its belief that in a total housing context the interests of many of the people of Irvine New Town will best be served by the Association and North Ayrshire Council working together to achieve common objectives. This was considered particularly important at member level and to that end the Management Committee continued to be of the view that the vacancy should be filled by a Council nominee.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) that the Chief Executive write to the Irvine Housing Association requesting a fuller explanation of their position on Mr Browne's nomination given the views expressed by them in previous correspondence and report; and (b) that in the event of an unsatisfactory response being received, the matter be brought to the attention of Scottish Homes.

The meeting ended at 2.50 p.m.