

Corporate Strategy Committee  
26 November 1997

**Irvine, 26 November 1997** - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

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

**In Attendance**

The Chief Executive; The Directors of Financial Services, Education and Social Work; The Head of Corporate Business; The Legal Services Manager; C. Watson, Head of Strategy and Business Management (Community and Recreational Services); G. Lawson, Principal Officer (Policy/Administration), M. Peffer, Principal Officer (Marketing and Publicity) and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr. Clements in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Stewart Dewar, Joseph McKinney and Robert Reilly.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 October 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Litter Awareness and Prevention Campaign**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the North Ayrshire Litter Awareness and Prevention Campaign.

The Litter Awareness and Prevention Campaign which was launched in January 1997 is scheduled to run during the period of this administration. A number of successful initiatives have taken place, including the establishment of a Litter Hotline; Campaign Awareness Days; promotional items such as posters, leaflets and T-shirts being made available at major leisure events; and a Tidy School Competition. Future proposals include (i) the production of a short video to promote the beauty of North Ayrshire; (ii) further involvement of schoolchildren; (iii) the use of the "Bin It" character and slogan on computer screens within Council offices and schools; and (iv) further involvement of businesses and local industries in the Campaign.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the progress on the Campaign to date; (b) to approve the future proposals; and (c) to authorise Officers to progress specifically the initiative in relation to the use of the "Bin It" logo on computer screens within Council offices and schools.

### **3. Local Agenda 21 Seminar**

Submitted report Chief Executive confirming outline arrangements for a Local Agenda 21 Seminar to be held in February 1998.

In February 1997, the Council hosted a Local Agenda 21 Seminar to heighten awareness of the issues and explain the crucial role of local authorities. The event was well received and it was agreed that a similar event should be considered in the future. The Council has since produced an Environmental Policy which sets eight challenges forming the basis of North Ayrshire's Local Agenda for the 21st century. It is proposed to hold a further Seminar in February 1998 to launch the policy formally. A draft programme has been drawn up for the Seminar with proposals to invite speakers from the industrial sector, the retail sector, the community and one other interest.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Local Agenda 21 Officers Team to organise the Seminar on the basis outlined in the report.

### **4. Customer Comments to the Quarter Ended 30 September 1997**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the Council's performance in managing Customer Comments for the 3 month period to 30 September 1997.

The overall number of customer comments recorded during the quarter was 211 compared with 140 received during the previous quarter. The majority of comments (65%) are in the form of complaints, although there have been more compliments in comparison with the previous quarter. Approximately 97% of customer comments were cleared immediately or cleared after a Stage 1 response (a response by an appropriate Officer). This reflects a key principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest practicable level, thus giving staff more responsibility. The increase in the total number of comments should be viewed as a positive trend as research has shown that where a customer comments scheme is promoted, the numbers of comments increase.

Noted.

### **5. Revenue Budgetary Control Report for Period 1 April 1997 to 10 October 1997**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services providing an update on the Council's financial position for the period 1 April to 10 October 1997.

A deficit of £2.261m is anticipated for the current financial year on normal activities within the budget. The final balance at 31 March 1998, however, will also be influenced by (a) balances to be brought forward for 1996/97; (b) the continued success of arrears collection in respect of Council Tax and Community Charge; (c) the anticipated Loans Fund surplus being achieved; (d) further unbudgeted expenditure materialising; and (e) the extent of savings which can be identified by the various services during the current financial year. Taking into account these factors, along with the inclusion of £2.422m for unidentified savings, the net estimated overspend as at 31 March 1998 is £1.583m.

The Committee agreed (a) to appoint a Working Party on Revenue Budgets, comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chair of each Service Committee to meet as soon as possible to consider the revenue budgets in more detail; and (b) that the Working Party should report if necessary to a Special Meeting of the Committee.

## **6. Revenue Budget Savings Exercise 1997/98**

Submitted reports by the Directors of Social Work, Community and Recreational Services, Education, Commercial Services and Financial Services and the Head of Corporate Business on revenue budget savings proposals for 1997/98.

The Committee agreed to remit consideration of these savings proposals to the Working Party on Revenue Budgets as detailed in Item 5 above.

## **7. Community Safety Challenge Budget 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request for financial assistance under the Community Safety Challenge Budget.

On 21 October 1997 the Committee agreed to continue consideration of the proposal to promote road safety through the Institute of Advanced Motorists Test pending the outcome of further enquiries to determine whether this is a separate branch being set up and the appropriate source of funding. The proposal is targeted at young drivers, especially young males. Tuition would be provided by individual members of the Institute of Advanced Motorists (IAM) based in Irvine who have formed a new organisation. A branch of the IAM already exists in North Ayrshire, but further information has been obtained indicating that the new Irvine group can meet a need without duplication.

A further proposal has since been received from Strathclyde Fire Brigade to provide suitable games for use with schools, youth groups and at special events and roadshows throughout North Ayrshire.

The Community Safety Challenge Budget was fully allocated at the last meeting of the Committee. Resources are, however, available within the Committee's total Community Safety Grants Budget to meet these requests.

The Committee agreed to grant (a) £500 to the Irvine branch of the IAM towards subsidising the costs of the Advanced Motorists Test for young drivers; and (b) £400 to Strathclyde Fire Brigade towards the fire safety experiential learning project.

## **8. Links With Malawi**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the possibility of developing links with Malawi.

On 29 October 1997, the Council was visited by the President of Malawi, who was opening the Malawi Consulate in Irvine. During his visit, the President discussed with the Convener and the Leader of the Council the possibility of the Council providing some assistance to Local Government officials from Malawi in connection with the changes currently taking place in their Local Government system which is moving towards a democratic, participatory style based on a decentralised model. Such assistance might involve providing placements within North Ayrshire for Local Government officials from Malawi and seconding some North Ayrshire staff to Malawi. It is proposed that the Head of Corporate Business visit the Malawi Ambassador to develop the discussions further and that external sources of funding be identified to develop such links at no cost to the Council.

The Committee agreed (a) that the possibility of developing further links with Malawi be investigated; and (b) that a report on the outcome of the investigations be submitted to a future Meeting of the Committee.

## **9. A Shared Economic Development Strategy For Ayrshire**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on proposals for a Shared Economic Development Strategy for Ayrshire.

On 3 October 1997, the Ayrshire Economic Forum considered a report by the Director of Strategic Development, Enterprise Ayrshire on a Shared Economic Development Strategy for Ayrshire. The Ayrshire Economic Forum agreed to note the proposal to prepare a Shared Economic Development Strategy and to invite the partner organisations to submit views on this proposal to the next meeting of the Ayrshire Economic Forum.

It is proposed that the Council agrees to contribute to the development of a Shared Economic Development Strategy for Ayrshire on the basis that (a) the Strategy should acknowledge that there are areas on which all organisations in Ayrshire share concern and where they would wish to work collectively and collaboratively e.g. the development of Prestwick Airport; the lobbying for improvements to trunk roads into Ayrshire; and (b) the Strategy should recognise that North Ayrshire Council (i) would wish to continue to develop its own Economic Development Strategy which may vary from the Economic Development Strategy agreed by partner organisations at the level below the pan-Ayrshire arrangements; and (ii) should be free, in conjunction with Enterprise Ayrshire, to develop appropriate strategies and solutions for the issues which face North Ayrshire and not necessarily be linked into only those which are identified as part of a joint Economic Development Strategy. There may also be situations which will involve North Ayrshire in relationships with other agencies, e.g. the Glasgow Conurbation, Renfrewshire Enterprise, Glasgow Development Agency.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to advise the Ayrshire Economic Forum that the Council will participate in the development of a Shared Economic Development Strategy, subject to (i) the Council's position as the primary Economic Development Agency in North Ayrshire being recognised; (ii) the Council's ability to combine with other neighbouring partners being retained; and (iii) the issues contained within the joint strategy being pan-Ayrshire and issues which are best developed locally within the Council areas being left to those Councils to develop independently; (b) that a Strategic Plan for North Ayrshire should be prepared; and (c) that the Minister for Industry should be invited to the Council meeting on 13 January 1998 when Enterprise Ayrshire will also be present.

## **10. Best Value Submission**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the Council's submission to the Secretary of State for Scotland on Best Value.

On 21 September 1997, the Committee approved the Council's submission on Best Value. The submission was required to demonstrate the Council's commitment to and compliance with Best Value by addressing 3 main aspects (i) confirmation that the Council has completed the CCT tendering processes in accordance with Paragraph 2 of SODD Circular 16/1997; (ii) an assessment of the Council's ability to operate Best Value incorporating the self-assessment questionnaire in the Accounts Commission's Management Module 1, i.e. where the Council is currently unable to operate Best Value systems and processes, it should provide a plan to upgrade systems and processes to enable it to comply with Best Value criteria; and (iii) a summary of documentary evidence to support any claims that Best Value systems are already in operation.

Following a meeting between COSLA leaders and the Secretary of State for Scotland, the Scottish Office announced on 7 November 1997, that an initial tranche of 7 authorities had satisfied the Best Value criteria and had therefore been granted exemption from CCT for another year. North Ayrshire Council was not included in the 7 authorities and subsequently the Scottish Office have requested clarification on 4 issues with regard to the Council's submission, 3 of which are related to CCT under the Local Government Planning and Land Act 1980 and the fourth related to how the Council intends to use the tool of competition in achieving Best Value. The 3 CCT enquiries can be readily responded to, but the issue of "competition" has wider implications for the Council and is already being addressed through the Best Value Development Team

comprising Officers from each Directorate. It is proposed that the role of competition be addressed by drafting a clear Competition Policy Statement and accompanying Competition Development and Implementation Plan.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to note the position with regard to the Council's Best Value submission; (b) to delegate to the Chair and Vice-Chair to approve a Draft Competition Policy to be submitted to the Scottish Office; and (c) that further reports be submitted on the Competition Policy and a Competition Development and Implementation Plan to future meetings of the Committee.

### **11. Strathclyde Passenger Transport: Bus Shelter Advertising Contract**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals to authorise SPT to tender for the bus shelter advertising contract.

The existing bus shelter advertising contract, which allows local authorities to secure additional bus shelter provision and maintenance at no charge in return for advertising space, is due to expire on 31 December 1997. Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) acts as agent in managing the contract for all 12 authorities within the former Strathclyde Regional Council area. Although there appears to be a general consensus amongst 11 Councils for continuing the economies of scale which a single region-wide contract will allow, Glasgow City Council have now indicated their desire to proceed on the basis of a dual tender seeking prices for the 12 authority area or for an 11 authority area with Glasgow standing alone.

The Committee agreed (a) to authorise SPT to advertise for expressions of interest in (i) a contract for all 12 participating authorities; (ii) a contract which enables Councils to form groupings; and (iii) a contract which provides a separate contractual arrangement for North Ayrshire and any others wishing to pursue this option; (b) to instruct SPT to make provision for the Council to secure the existing number of bus shelters as a minimum requirement within any contract; (c) to request SPT to arrange a presentation on what contractors can provide on the basis of the 3 contract options; and (d) to authorise an extension of 1 year to the existing contract in the first instance.

### **12. Health Strategies**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposed response to the AAHB's draft Health Improvement, Health Promotion, Maternity and Cardiac Services Strategies.

In September 1997 the AAHB began a 2 month consultation exercise on their draft strategies. As part of the consultation process, a presentation was given in October to Members and Officers on the content of the draft strategies, outlining the Board's proposed direction for the 5 year period from 1997 to 2002. The strategies include (i) bringing together the local health strategy, its corporate objectives and investment proposals and financial strategy; (ii) a review of maternity services with a recommendation to move the maternity unit at Ayrshire Central Hospital to the site of a district general hospital, either Crosshouse or Ayr, because the hospital does not have immediate access to an intensive therapy unit and other vital services; (iii) improvements to cardiac services to reduce waiting times, improved access to diagnostic services etc.; and (iv) health promotion to enable the people of Ayrshire and Arran to enjoy a healthier life.

The Committee agreed to respond to AAHB in the terms as outlined in the report, with the proviso that (a) more emphasis be placed on the Council's concern about the proposals to withdraw maternity services from Ayrshire Central Hospital in view of the increased travelling distances and costs; and (b) that consideration should be given to the provision of additional facilities at the new Three Towns Community Resource Centre proposed at High Road, Stevenston.

### **13. Vikingar: Catering Provision**

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services on proposals for inclusion of the catering operation at Vikingar within the tendering process.

Catering at the Magnum and Auchenharvie Leisure Centres is currently provided by a company, Letheby and Christoper. On 23 September 1997, the Community and Recreational Services Committee agreed to exercise the break clause in the contract with this company with effect from 31 March 1998 and the contract has since been advertised. The catering at Vikingar since its opening has been operated by Vikingar's own staff. With the advertising of the catering contract for the Magnum and Auchenharvie, an opportunity now exists to include Vikingar within the invitation to tender. This would standardise the management and provision of catering services in the Council's leisure facilities, contribute to the Council's application of competition within the Best Value regime and increase the attractiveness of the contract thus maximising benefit to the Council.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to include the catering operation at Vikingar in the tendering process for the Magnum and Auchenharvie Leisure Centres.

### **14. Magnum and Auchenharvie Leisure Centres: Catering Provision**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a list of contractors to be invited to tender for the catering contract at the Magnum and Auchenharvie Leisure Centres.

Following the advertisement of the contract for catering services at the Magnum and Auchenharvie Leisure Centres, four contractors have expressed an interest in tendering, viz. Commercial Services Catering Division, Caterleisure Limited, Select Service Partners Limited and Sports and Leisure Foods Limited. An Officers' Evaluation Panel, having assessed all the written documentation submitted, considers that each of the four contractors is potentially suitable to be invited to submit a formal tender. In order to allow the new contract to commence on 1 April 1998, the timescale requires tender documents to be issued in early December 1997 and a report submitted to the Corporate Strategy Committee on 3 March 1998 for a final decision on the award of the contract.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) that the four contractors named above be invited to tender for the catering contract at the Magnum and Auchenharvie Leisure Centres and Vikingar; (b) that at the same time as inviting tenders from the four contractors, enquiries should be made to appropriate fast food companies regarding whether they would be interested in tendering; and (c) that the Officers' Evaluation Panel should report in the first instance to a Member/Officer Working Group comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair, and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Community and Recreational Services Committee, prior to reporting to the Corporate Strategy Committee on 3 March 1998.

### **15. Scottish Maritime Museum**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the provision of temporary financial resources to the Scottish Maritime Museum.

On 19 August 1997, the Support Services Committee homologated the action of the Chief Executive in consultation with the Leader of the Council to authorise bridging finance of £50,000 to the Scottish Maritime Museum pending receipt of European Social Fund Grant. The grant has not yet been received from the ESF and the Director of Financial Services, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, has therefore advanced a further £30,000 to the Museum to meet payroll costs. Since then, a request has been made to the Scottish Office to make an immediate payment of the ESF grant.

The Committee agreed to homologate the action taken by the Director of Financial



Services in consultation with the Leader of the Council.

#### **16. Conferences, Seminars Etc.: Invitations**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on invitations to attend the undernoted Conferences, Seminars etc.:-

(a) IBC UK Conferences Limited: "Business, Governance and the Scottish Parliament" Conference to be held in the Caledonian Hotel, Edinburgh on 11th and 12th December 1997;

(b) A Chartered Institute of Transport (Scottish Section) Conference: Scotland's Transport Needs and the Proposed Scottish Parliament to be held in the Caledonian Hotel, Edinburgh on 1st December 1997;

(c) Political Leadership of Best Value Conference to be held in the Marlborough Hotel, London on 22nd January 1998; and

(d) Employment Policy: The New Agenda Conference to be held in COSLA Offices, Rosebery House, Edinburgh on Wednesday, 10th December 1997.

The Committee agreed (i) that there be no attendance at (a) (b) and (c); and (ii) that the Chair and Vice-Chair or their nominees be authorised to attend (d).

#### **17. Nolan Committee Report on Standards in Public Life**

Submitted report being the Minutes of the Meeting of the Member/Officer Working Group on the Nolan Committee Report on Standards in Public Life held on 31 October 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

#### **18. 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 its Meeting held on 17 November 1997.

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 its Meeting held on 18 November 1997.

Arising from the Minutes, it was confirmed that in relation to Agenda Item 7, Glengarnock: Former Steelworks Site: Lochshore, a press statement had been issued to clarify the position to members of the public.

The Committee agreed 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 its Meeting held on 19 November 1997.

Arising from the Minutes, the undernoted matter was brought to the attention of the Committee:-

#### **(i) Agenda Item 8(b): Crime Statistics**

The Area Committee agreed to remit to the Corporate Strategy Committee to investigate the possibilities of funding in respect of a North Ayrshire-wide CCTV Scheme.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the possibility of funding an North Ayrshire-wide CCTV Scheme being investigated; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

#### **(d) Irvine Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 19 November 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report, subject to an amendment at item 5(d) Scottish Maritime Museum:-

“Councillors Gray and O’Neill declared an interest in this item” should be amended to read “Councillors Dewar and O’Neill declared an interest in this item”.

#### **(e) Three Towns Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 20 November 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

### **19. Further Education in North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on recent developments in relation to Further Education provision in North Ayrshire.

On 10 November 1997, the Leader of the Council and the Depute Chief Executive met with the Minister for Education and Industry who announced that he had accepted the recommendations of the independent report on proposals for Further Education in North Ayrshire by Professor Tom McCool. The main recommendations contained within the report are (i) to proceed with plans to develop a mainstream FE college in Kilwinning based on the proposal developed by James Watt College; (ii) to require the proposed curriculum (course mix and higher education/further education balance) and scale of the project to be discussed with other interested parties seeking complementarity rather than competition; and (iii) in the context of a clear decision to proceed with Kilwinning, to initiate discussions involving interested colleges, North Ayrshire Council and Enterprise Ayrshire, to address immediate and long-term needs in the Three Towns. The Minister has also requested that the Council convenes an Implementation Group to take the developments further. The first meeting of the Implementation Group, which includes representatives from SOEID, Enterprise Ayrshire, James Watt, Kilmarnock and Ayr Colleges, has been held and a tight timescale set. It is aimed to complete the curricular planning aspect by mid-January. It is hoped to have a response from the Scottish Office on the proposed curriculum by the end of January 1998.

Although the Minister’s letter of 17 November 1997 stated “that decisions involving capital investment in the Three Towns should be deferred until the Kilwinning college is on-stream”, James Watt College still intend to develop at Auchenharvie Academy, Stevenston, and this should not require significant capital investment. It is envisaged that once the curriculum at Kilwinning is clarified, representations can be made to the Minister to look at provision in the Three Towns.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to note (a) the developments regarding Further Education provision in North Ayrshire as outlined in the report; and (b) that a further report will be submitted in due course on the ongoing work of the Implementation Group.



The Meeting ended at 3.10 p.m.