

Corporate Strategy Committee
10 November 1998

Irvine, 10 November 1998 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

James Clements, Patrick Browne, John Donn, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Joseph McKinney, Thomas Morris, Robert Rae, Robert Reilly, John Sillars and George Steven.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Corporate Directors (Educational and Property Services), the Assistant Chief Executives (Personnel and Legal and Regulatory Services), the Director of Financial Services, L. Owens, Head of Education Services (Educational Services), G. Lawson, Principal Officer (Policy/Administration) and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive's).

Chair

Mr Clements in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Stewart Dewar, David O'Neill and Samuel Taylor.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 29th September and 21st October 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Further Education: Member/Officer Working Group

Submitted report of the Member/Officer Working Group on Further Education Provision, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 5th October 1998.

The Committee agreed that James Watt College be invited to a future meeting of the Council to brief members on the FE developments in Kilwinning and the Three Towns.

3. Print Room: Partnership with Xerox Business Services

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the outcome of discussions on the Council's proposal to enter into a partnership with Xerox Business Services in respect of the Council's Printing Services.

The Committee agreed to establish a Working Party comprising the Chair, the Vice-Chair and the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Support Services Committee to meet with Unison to discuss the proposal further in the first instance before proceeding further.

4. Sheltered Housing Warden Services

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the proposed review of the Sheltered Housing Warden Services.

The Council currently provides a Warden Services comprising 22 Wardens and 22 Relief Wardens to approximately 439 tenants in its sheltered housing units. The service is funded from the Social Work budget. An Officers Working Group has been established to review the provision of the service and has undertaken a survey of Scottish Local Authorities on the operational and financial arrangements in place elsewhere.

It is proposed that a Member/Officer Working Group now be established to consider the outcome of the review.

The Committee agreed (a) to establish a Member/Officer Working Group; and (b) to appoint the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Social Work and Housing Services Committees to the Working Group.

5. North Ayrshire Town Centre Management Initiative

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on action taken to establish a North Ayrshire Town Centre Management Initiative.

A meeting was held recently with approximately 60 local traders/retailers together with representatives of Enterprise Ayrshire, the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Strathclyde Police to explore the setting up of a Town Centre Management Initiative, which is a recognised process of addressing many of the problems associated with the decline of town centres. At the meeting it was agreed that a North Ayrshire Town Centre Management Steering Committee be formed to examine a strategic framework for Town Centre Management in North Ayrshire. The core membership will comprise 17 representatives from local businesses, the Ayrshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Enterprise Ayrshire, Strathclyde Police, Railtrack and Strathclyde Passenger Transport. A visit has already been arranged to a Town Centre Management Initiative in Dumfries. The Council will provide support at Officer level and it is further proposed that Members be appointed to serve on the Steering Committee.

The Committee agreed (a) to support the development of a North Ayrshire Town Centre Management Initiative; and (b) to appoint Councillors Donn, Munro and Carson to serve on the Steering Committee.

6. Largs Promenade: Leisure Development

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Regulatory Services) on proposals to redevelop the leisure facilities at Gallowgate Street, Largs.

The owners of the Cumbrian Amusement Centre adjacent to the promenade have indicated that they intend to redevelop their property and as part of the scheme, require land lying to the north of their premises for their new expanded facility. This land is owned by the Council. There are various interests in this area of ground, on which are located (i) the public toilet block held on Commercial Services account; (ii) the Tourist Information Centre held on the Planning account; and (iii) a confectionery kiosk held on the Community and Recreational Services account. No planning application for the development has yet been approved and as part of the negotiated conditions of any sale of the ground, the developer would be required to obtain planning permission and to provide the same or similar facilities to those currently located on the Council owned ground.

The Committee agreed (a) to declare the land at Gallowgate, Largs, as detailed in the report, surplus to requirements; and (b) to instruct the Principal Estates Officer to negotiate the terms of disposal to the owners of the Cumbrian Amusement Centre, on appropriate terms and conditions, including a condition on obtaining planning permission.

7. Childcare Partnership and Childcare Information Services

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Educational Services) on progress in implementing a Childcare Partnership and a Childcare Information Service.

On 29th September 1998, the Committee agreed to approve proposals to improve Childcare provision throughout North Ayrshire from the specific Scottish Office grant allocation of £113,560 as part of the National Childcare Strategy for Scotland. One of the approved initiatives was the allocation of £30,000 to support the development of a Childcare Partnership and a Childcare Information Service in North Ayrshire. An Early Years Forum was previously established by the Education Committee and it is proposed that the Forum now be expanded to meet the requirements of the Childcare Partnership. It is further proposed that (a) the Childcare Partnership should (i) plan and undertake an audit of Childcare services in North Ayrshire; and (ii) submit regular progress reports on developing services to the Corporate Strategy Committee; and (b) arrangements be made to second an existing employee to service the Childcare Partnership and set up a local Childcare Information Service.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposals.

8. Land Reform Policy Group: Identifying the Solutions

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on a proposed response to the consultation document "Identifying the Solutions" issued by the Land Reform Policy Group.

The consultation paper illustrates the Scottish Office's commitment to the aims of fostering and enabling the sustainable development of rural communities and recognises the need to remove land based barriers to aid such communities. The paper also addresses the issue that land reform must become more integrated within an overall rural policy framework. The two key themes of the paper are (i) increased diversity on the way land is owned and used as the best way of dealing with damage to the local community or environment and encouraging the fullest possible exploitation of rural development opportunities; and (ii) increased community involvement in the way land is owned and used, to ensure that local people are not excluded from decisions which affect their lives and the lives of their communities.

The Committee agreed (a) to advise the Scottish Office and CoSLA that (i) the Council welcomes the consultation paper "Identifying the Solutions" which aims to remove the land based barriers to the sustainable development of rural communities; and (ii) there is concern that securing the key components of diversity and community involvement has implications on resources in terms of time, expenditure and staff expertise, at a time of continuing financial restraint; and (b) to submit the comments as detailed in Appendix 2 of the report as the Council's formal response.

9. Funding to Help Local Authorities Increase Paper Recycling: Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal to support the Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill.

Friends of the Earth Scotland are seeking the Council's support of the Recycled Content of Newsprint Bill which if passed by Parliament will give newspaper and magazine publishers a duty to ensure that by 2010, 52% of newspapers and magazines are collected and recycled. This duty will guarantee that waste is diverted from landfill and will ensure that funds go to local authorities and others to carry out newspaper and magazine recycling. The bill will further require the recycled content of newspapers to be increased to 80% by 2010.

The Committee agreed (a) to support the aims of the Newsprint Bill; (b) to write to Friends of the Earth intimating the Council's support; and (c) to request the support of the two local

MPs and the Minister for the Environment.

10. Tall Ships Race/Celtic Water Sports Festival

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the work undertaken in relation to the Tall Ships Race and Celtic Water Sports Festival.

The Cutty Sark Tall Ships Race will, as one of the legs of the race, visit Scotland in August 1999. Whilst the Scottish leg of the race will be concentrated in Greenock, following negotiations between the Council and the company organising the race, the ships will sail between Millport and Largs and thereafter out into the Irish Sea on 3rd August. Separately, the fifth Celtic International Water Sports and Cultural Festival will be taking place in Largs from 24th July until 30th July 1999, which is immediately prior to the Tall Ships Race. Both events will provide the Council with a significant opportunity to promote the area.

There will be implications, however, in terms of traffic management on the A78 between Largs and Skelmorlie and surrounding roads, particularly in relation to the Tall Ships Race as a large spectator turn out is anticipated. The Celtic Water Sports Festival is also seeking assistance in terms of use of Council facilities.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Emergency Planning Officer should plan jointly with Strathclyde Police for both events; and (b) that appropriate assistance in kind be provided in this financial year and in 1999/2000 to support these events, subject to a further report to the Committee on the estimated cost of such assistance.

11. Area Committees

(a) North Coast and Arran

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS1) of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 26th October 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(b) Garnock Valley

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2) of the Garnock Valley Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 27th October 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn & Springside

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS3) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 28th October 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(d) Irvine

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 28th October 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(e) Three Towns

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 29th October 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

12. Conferences, Seminars Etc.: Invitations

Submitted invitations to attend the undernoted conferences/seminars:-

(a) The CoSLA conference on The Scottish Integrated Transport White Paper entitled "Challenges and Opportunities for Councils" to be held in Edinburgh on 16th November 1998.

(b) The CoSLA conference on The Emerging Agenda entitled "The Work of the McIntosh Commission" to be held in Edinburgh on 16th November 1998.

(c) The British Urban Regeneration Association Annual Conference, Lecture and Dinner on The New Approach to Regeneration entitled "The Tools for Success" to be held in London on 1st December 1998.

(d) The South Ayrshire Council conference on Women's Safety entitled "At What Cost?" to be held in Ayr on 25th November 1998.

The Committee agreed to authorise the attendance of one Member at (a) (b) and (d).

13. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed to hear the following items as a matter of urgency.

14. Review of Committee Structures

The Chair referred to the requirement to review Committee/Member structures following the recent approval of a new Corporate Management structure for the Council.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive in conjunction with the Chair be authorised to examine the Committee/Member structures and report.

15. Review of Assisted Areas Map: Great Britain

Submitted report by the Assistant Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on a government consultation paper on the Review of the Assisted Areas of Great Britain.

The Assisted Areas are those areas of Great Britain where Regional Aid may be granted under European Community Law. The North Ayrshire area currently benefits from Assisted Area status. In assessing the appropriateness of geographical units for use in Assisted Area designation it is considered that Travel to Work Areas (TTWAs) represent the only credible geography which consider both labour supply and demand issues in the definition of boundaries.

The Committee agreed to respond to the Scottish Office in the following terms:-

(a) that the preferred geography for Assisted Area Review be the Travel to Work Area; (b) that the preferred criteria for Assisted Area designation be (i) the official unemployment rates; (ii) the trend in unemployment over the last 3 years and beyond where unemployment has been a persistent problem; (iii) overall employment decline; and (iv) the degree of dependence on manufacturing employment and local trends; and (c) that the North Ayrshire TTWA be designated

Assisted Area status under the current review.

16. Appointment of Monitoring Officer and Appointment of Chief Financial Officer

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the appointments of Monitoring Officer and a Chief Financial Officer.

The current Monitoring Officer for the Council is Brian MacDonald, Head of Corporate Business and the current Financial Officer is Robert Hunter, Director of Financial Services. It is proposed in the light of the recent Corporate Management structure approved by the Council that the Council's Monitoring Officer in terms of Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 be Ian Mackay, Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Regulatory Services) and the Council's Chief Financial Officer in terms of Section 95 of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 by Alasdair Herbert, Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services).

The Committee agreed to approve the appointments of (a) the Assistant Chief Executive (Legal and Regulatory Services) as Monitoring Officer; and (b) the Assistant Chief Executive (Financial Services) as Chief Financial Officer.

17. Exclusion of the Public

Resolved, in terms of Section 50A (4) of the Local government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude from the Meeting the press and the public for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 3 and 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

18. Request for Financial Assistance: Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board

Submitted report by the Assistance Chief Executive (Development and Promotion) on the financial position of Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board.

At a meeting of the Tourist Board on 4th November 1998, the interim Chief Executive submitted a report to the funding partners in which he indicated the significant difficulties in the current operation of the Board. It is considered that if the Board remains in its present form, there will be continued financial losses and a continued deterioration on the quality of services offered to its Members. North Ayrshire Council is the biggest public sector contributor, contributing £163,200 with South Ayrshire Council contributing £146,880 and East Ayrshire Council £79,152. The Board has a number of creditors of whom North Ayrshire Council is one in respect of the Largs Tourist Information Centre for which the rental owed in this financial year will be £14,000. The public sector funding partners are being requested to contribute to a funding package to allow the Board to continue to operate.

After a full discussion on the options available to the Council, the Committee 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 to allow the Ayrshire and Arran Tourist Board to continue; 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 and a sum of £26,000, subject to a satisfactory business plan for the Board being produced.

19. New Housing Partnerships: Development Role

Submitted report by the Corporate Director (Property Services) on progress in respect of the New Housing Partnership Initiative.

The Initiative being promoted by government is wide ranging, broadly covering a partnership between the Council, Scottish Homes and tenants, with some other interests represented, which would provide a vehicle both to transfer properties and thereafter manage the properties transferred. A Steering Group has been set up to focus on the development of the kind

of organisation which is considered to be appropriate as a transfer and a future management vehicle. Broad agreement in principle has already been reached between the Council and Scottish Homes that a new organisation be created to which Scottish Homes stock of approximately 860 properties would transfer if this was considered by tenants to be an appropriate way forward. Within the Council, officer support has been provided to the Steering Group, but more direct and substantial input is now necessary in terms of the workload which will be required to set up the new housing company, and accordingly the secondment of a Senior Officer on a full time basis is proposed.

The Committee agreed to approve the secondment of a Senior Officer of the Council to the post of Initiatives Manager of the New Housing Partnership Programme, on the basis outlined in the report.

20. Corporate Management Structure

Submitted report by the Chief Executive advising the Committee of new appointments and offers of early retirement.

On 27th October 1998 a Special Sub-Committee of the Council approved reports on matters relating to the Director of Community Services and the Head of Planning and Environment and further agreed to appoint a Selection Panel to interview eligible candidates for the posts of Head of Housing and Head of Technical Services.

On 9th November 1998 the Selection Panel appointed Fanchea Kelly as Head of Housing and James Paul as Head of Technical Services. Also on 9th November 1998, a Sub-Committee of the Support Services Committee agreed that the Director of Community Services and the Head of Planning and Environment be permitted to retire on the grounds of the efficiency of the service, having considered the financial implications for the Council.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.