

Corporate Strategy Committee
20 January 1998

Irvine, 20 January 1998 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Ian Clarkson, Stewart Dewar, Thomas Dickie, John Donn, David Gallagher, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Joseph McKinney, Thomas Morris, Robert Rae, Robert Reilly, John Sillars and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Directors of Financial Services and Community and Recreational Services, M. Peffer, Principal Officer (Marketing and Publicity), A. Osborne, Corporate Policy Officer and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Jennings in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

James Clements, Patrick Browne, Samuel Gooding and George Steven.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 26 November 1997, 16 December 1997 and 6 January 1998, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Urban Programme Evaluation

On 21 January 1997, the Committee agreed to establish Officer Evaluation Panels to evaluate all current Urban Programme Projects. Submitted reports by the Chief Executive on the findings of the Evaluation Panel at its visits to the following projects:-

a) Harbour Arts Centre

As well as running the Harbour Arts Centre programme of activities, the project also undertakes outreach work to bring the Arts into the local community. The project has been in operation for the past 4 years and is due to terminate in March 1998. It was originally intended to be managed by a voluntary committee, but for much of the period of its funding has been run as a Council departmental activity. With the appointment of a new supervising officer from the Community and Recreational Services Directorate, the project has begun to address a number of problems, including (i) targeting on the eligible urban programme areas; (ii) the role of the voluntary management committee; and (iii) re-establishing a sound financial footing.

There are, however, still some issues of concern. No planning has taken place in respect of developing an exit strategy, and the Management Committee appear to be unaware of the need to meet urgently with the Community and Recreational Services Directorate to consider future funding. The Panel concluded that Urban Programme funding is not the most appropriate source of funding and that other sources should be pursued including the possibility of mainline funding.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the findings of the Evaluation Panel; and (b) to remit the report to the Director of Community and Recreational Services and to request that he hold

discussions with the Harbour Arts Centre on future funding arrangements and support.

b) Irvine Befriend-a-Child

The project makes befrienders available to offer support to vulnerable children and young people within the community. It is a departmental sponsored project by the Social Work Directorate and is currently funded under the Regeneration Programme until the end of March 1998.

The Panel concluded that the project is providing a quality service to vulnerable young people. The closeness of the supervision and integration with mainline services has, however, created a blurring of the independence and uniqueness of the project which may have led to the low priority given to developing a local ownership. It may have been more appropriate to set up a voluntary sponsored project as was the case with the Befriending Project in the Three Towns area.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the findings of the Evaluation Panel; and (b) to remit the report to the Director of Social Work for consideration in any discussions on future funding arrangements.

c) Three Towns Motor Project

The project aims to promote the safe use and maintenance of motor vehicles to young people and adults. It also provides access to training for these individuals to improve their skills and employment prospects and links with other agencies in an interventive and preventative strategy. It is a departmental sponsored project by the Community and Recreational Services Directorate.

The Panel concluded that the project should shift its focus to broaden and diversify the training aspects and demonstrate how it intends to make more effective use of physical and staffing resources. A bid has been submitted to the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership for continued funding.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the conclusions of the Evaluation Panel; and (b) to remit the report to the Director of Community and Recreational Services and to the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership for consideration in any discussions on future funding arrangements.

3. Applications to North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership - Council's 25% Contribution

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a prioritised list of bids for Regeneration funding under the Urban Programme.

The Officers Corporate Task Group on Regeneration has considered the bids for funding under the Urban Programme currently being evaluated by the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership, although the final decisions on the quality of the bids and the levels of the funding to be awarded will be taken by the Partnership. The Council is required to indicate which bids it is prepared to support in terms of providing a sponsoring Directorate and to indicate a priority ranking. The Council has budgeted for the Regeneration Programme 1998/99 funding which has been approved by the Scottish Office, with 75% of the total spending being eligible for reimbursement from the Scottish Office and the remaining 25% being contributed by the Council.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to establish a Working Group comprising the Chair, Vice-Chair and Chairs of the 5 Area Committees to consider the applications further with a view to making recommendations to the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership; and (b) to appoint the Leader of the Council as the representative on the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership Committee.

4. Review of Information and Advice Services

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on progress in establishing a single funded voluntary agency to provide information and advice services within North Ayrshire.

On 29 July 1997, the Committee agreed to approve the implementation of a single independent voluntary agency to provide information and advice services throughout North Ayrshire with effect from 1 April 1998, which would operate on the basis of a service level agreement with the Council. The annual funding awards currently made to the Three Towns Unemployed Workers Centre, the Cunninghame Citizen's Advice Bureau and the Arran Information and Advice Service would be transferred to fund the new agency.

A Steering Group has been set up to oversee the establishment of the new agency, comprising elected members, officers and representatives of the three existing agencies involved. It has been agreed to recommend a legal structure based on creating a company limited by guarantee. The current services are being maintained during the transition period and staffing arrangements for the new agency are being examined at present. The funding for the Citizen's Advice Bureau is currently held within the budget of the Corporate Strategy Committee, but the funding of the other agencies is spread amongst a number of Council Directorates.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the transfer of the current annual funding for the Three Towns Unemployed Workers Centre and the Arran Information and Advice Service from the Social Work, Community and Recreational Services and Housing Services Directorates budgets to the Corporate Strategy budget to enable a single funded agency to be established from 1 April 1998; and (b) to note the progress made to date in establishing a single funded agency.

5. Women's Safety

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on Strathclyde Police's Spotlight Initiative on Women's Safety.

Strathclyde Police have announced that during January and February 1998, it will be focusing its efforts on heightening awareness of women's safety and ways in which the Police can deal with crimes against women. The Council also has a significant role to play in relation to women's safety, e.g. in ensuring appropriate street lighting, planning and design, rehousing and advice to domestic violence victims, taxi licensing, community safety etc. It is proposed therefore that an Officers Working Group be established to consider practical means of addressing women's safety in North Ayrshire.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the establishment of an Officer Working Group on women's safety; and (b) that issues relating to passenger transport be included in the group's considerations.

6. Assistance in Kind to Community and Voluntary Groups

On 9 September 1997, the Committee agreed that a report be submitted on the level of "in kind" assistance given to community and voluntary groups. Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the results of research undertaken.

Assistance is given to groups in a variety of ways including (i) nominal, low cost or free lets; (ii) uplifts of rubbish/refuse and clean-up operations after events at minimal or no charge; (iii) the provision of professional services and advice at minimal or no charge; (iv) the provision of goods e.g. second hand computers and printers; and (v) administration services e.g. typing of minutes, letters, photocopying etc. Whilst it is difficult to determine an exact value of assistance "in kind", it is estimated as being approximately £1.1m in 1996/97 which should be taken into account when looking at the overall Council budget.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive, in consultation with appropriate officers,

consider the implications arising from the research into the level of “in kind” assistance and report to a future meeting.

7. Renewing the National Health Service in Scotland

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Government’s proposals for the NHS in Scotland.

The Government have produced a White Paper entitled “Designed to Care: Renewing the National Health Service in Scotland”. The White Paper includes proposals to (i) replace the internal market in health care and create a patient centred health service; (ii) retain the central role of primary care to allow GPs and other health professionals to take the lead in organising health services for patients in their local area; and (iii) reduce the number of Trusts. The Trusts will be reformed to create (a) Primary Care Trusts to be responsible for primary, community and mental health services; and (b) Acute Hospital Trusts. Ayrshire and Arran Health Board have indicated that they would welcome an opportunity to meet with the Council to discuss the proposals further.

The Committee agreed to meet with Ayrshire and Arran Health Board to discuss these proposals.

8. Best Value Submission

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on progress on the Council’s submission on Best Value.

On 26 November 1997, the Committee agreed to delegate to the Chair and Vice-Chair to approve a Draft Competition Policy to be submitted to the Scottish Office. The Scottish Office have now confirmed that they are satisfied with the policy document and accordingly the Council will be included within the next batch of authorities to be granted further exemption from CCT, subject to final agreement on the Council’s Best Value Implementation Plan. The Council’s Policy for “Continuous Improvement; Competition and Other Tools” includes a commitment to pursue continuous improvement across all services through a rolling programme of service reviews over the 3 year budgeting period. The timescale requires a timetable of reviews of services to be drawn up, with the maximum period for any review process being 12 months. There is an obligation to look at the competitive elements and priority will be given to services, or elements of services for which any of the following criteria apply:-

- 1) Those which would have been subject to CCT, both blue collar and white collar;
- 2) Those where there is evidence of under-performance; and
- 3) Those where a mature market is thought to exist.

The Committee agreed (a) to homologate the policy on “Continuous Improvement: Competition and Other Tools”; and (b) that a timetable for reviews of service be submitted to the Committee as soon as possible.

9. Local Agenda 21: An Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the background to the development of Biodiversity Action Plans and the proposed preparation of a Plan jointly with neighbouring authorities and local groups.

In 1996, the Scottish Office established the Scottish Biodiversity Group representing the Government, local authorities, industry, land owners, research establishments and conservation organisations and this year entered into partnership with COSLA, SNH, and the RSPB to set up a number of pilot projects with selected local authorities to develop good practice. At the invitation of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Council’s Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator has participated in

discussions locally with representatives of South and East Ayrshire Councils, Scottish Natural Heritage, RSPB, the Ayrshire Farming and Wildlife and Advisory Group and the Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan Manager with a view to pursuing an Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan. Such Action Plans are important for a variety of reasons including (i) ensuring that national targets for species and habitat are translated into action at local level; (ii) raising awareness of the need for conservation; and (iii) ensuring that opportunities for conservation are fully considered.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the establishment of a partnership with the other Ayrshire authorities and local groups as appropriate to pursue an Ayrshire Biodiversity Action Plan; (b) that the Council's Local Agenda 21 Co-ordinator be the Council's representative on this group; and (c) to authorise the Chief Executive in consultation with the relevant organisations to prepare a detailed report including resource implications to be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

10. Dalry Community Council: Application for Administration Grant

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request by Dalry Community Council for payment of their Administration Grant.

In accordance with recognised procedures, Community Councils are required to submit their accounts for audit on an annual basis to enable payment of the administration grant to which they are entitled. In this case, no accounts have been submitted by Dalry Community Council since 1989. The Community Council have now submitted backdated accounts and have requested payment of grant in respect of financial years 1990/91 to 1996/97 inclusive. As the financial accounts of the former Cunninghame District Council for the years 1990/91 to 1995/96 have been formalised, it is no longer possible for North Ayrshire Council to effect grant payments covering this period.

The Committee agreed to award Dalry Community Council £125.62 in respect of financial year 1996/97 on condition that their accounts be submitted on an annual basis in future.

11. Conferences

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

(a) Code of Guidance on funding External bodies and Following the Public Pound Conference to be held in COSLA's Offices, Edinburgh on 29 January 1998;

(b) STUC/TUC Conference: EMU The Scottish Economy and Jobs to be held in Moir Hall, Glasgow on 9 February 1998; and

(c) COSLA's European Conference Agenda 2000 - Preparing for New Programmes Conference to be held in UnivEd Training and Conference Centre, Edinburgh on 30 January 1998.

The Committee agreed that the Chair and Vice-Chair or their nominees be authorised to attend (a) (b) and (c).

12. 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 5 January 1998.

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 6 January 1998.

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 7 January 1998.

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 the Meeting held on 7 January 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

(e) Three Towns Area Committee

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of its Meeting held on 8 January 1998.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

13. Requests for Financial Assistance

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on requests for financial assistance:-

a) Scottish Gypsy/Traveller Association

The Committee agreed to refuse the application.

b) Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

The Committee agreed to refuse the application.

c) Scottish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

The Committee agreed to refuse the application.

d) Scottish Wildlife and Countryside Link

The Committee agreed to refuse the application.

e) Rural Forum Scotland

The Committee agreed to continue consideration of the application to financial year 1998/99.

The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.

