

Support Services Committee  
30 September 1997

**Irvine, 30 September 1997** - At a Meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

David O'Neill, Alan Munro, James Clements, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, James Jennings and David Munn.

**In Attendance**

The Chief Executive, the Director of Financial Services, the Head of Corporate Business, the Personnel Services Manager, the Legal Services Manager, N. McCallum, Head of Commercial Support (Commercial Services) and S. Bale, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr O'Neill in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Elliot Gray, Margaret Highet, George Steven and Richard Wilkinson

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held on 19th August 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Collection Statements**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the collection of Community Charge and Council Tax.

A total of £104,000 was collected in respect of Community Charge during August 1997 which compares favourably with the amount of £28,000 collected in August 1996. The Council Tax collection level of £2,623,000 in August 1997 has dropped marginally from the level collected in July 1997, but is not giving any cause for concern.

A booklet giving clear guidance on Council Tax payment, including the penalties for late payment, was issued with Council Tax notices and reminders were also issued to late payers. There continues, however, to be an ongoing problem. In connection with the collection of water rates, whilst the collection rates tend to be slower, the amounts are smaller.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the penalties for late payment of Council Tax and the requirement to pay water rates be highlighted in Look North.

Arising from the discussion on this item, the Committee was advised that the

promotional caravan inherited from the former Irvine Development Corporation had structural problems, but was being examined with the possibility of using it as a mobile office.

Noted.

### **3. Council Tax Rebates: Restriction on Rebates to Band E Maximum**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on a proposed restriction on Council Tax Rebates to Band E maximum.

With effect from 1 April 1998, the Council Tax Benefit Regulations will be amended to restrict Council Tax Benefit for residents in dwellinghouses in Band F, G or H to the benefit which would have been payable on a Band E property. This amendment will affect some 120 Council Tax payers in North Ayrshire and those affected will be advised of this alteration and the impact on their Council Tax for 1998/99.

Noted.

### **4. Treasury Management: Annual Report**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the Treasury Management Annual Report.

On 25 March 1997, the Committee agreed the terms of the Treasury Policy Statement including the submission of an annual report on Treasury Management to the Committee. As a result of the borrowing and lending decisions, the actual interest paid to lenders and received from borrowers amounts to £14.781 million, a saving of £1.41 million on the estimate for 1996/97. Following the Corporate Strategy Committee's decision on 9 May 1996, the method of repayment of Loans Fund Debt to the Council's Revenue Accounts was changed from a straight line basis to an annuity basis. This resulted in savings to the Council of £5.466 million in 1996/97.

Noted.

### **5. Revenue Budgetary Control Report for Period 1st April 1997 to 15th August 1997**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the financial position of the Council at 15th August 1997 and early year end projections.

After allowing for adjustments to spending profiles, the position at 15 August 1997 indicates favourable variances of approximately £15,000 and £31,000 for the General Fund and Housing Revenue Account respectively. It is expected, however, that these will develop into adverse figures by 31 March 1998 and there is a potential overspend of just under £1 million. There are a number of factors involved including the underprovision of payroll and superannuation plus other expenditure still to be added.

In relation to individual Directorate variances, all Directorates have been notified and should take action where possible to reduce the overspend in their area. It is likely also that savings will be achieved in the Loans Fund and the improved performance in collection of Council Tax and Community Charge arrears may assist in offsetting the overspend.

Noted.

## **6. Joint Consultative Committee (APT&C Staffs)**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS1) of the Joint Consultative Committee (APT&C Staffs), being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 12 September 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **7. Joint Consultative Committee (Manual & Craft Workers)**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS2) of the Joint Consultative Committee (Manual & Craft Workers), being the Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 September 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **8. Commercial Services Directorate: Staffing Amendments**

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on staffing amendments within the Commercial Services Directorate.

On 26 June 1997, the Corporate Strategy Committee approved the detailed recommendations contained in the Executive Summary of the report by Deloitte & Touche, Management Consultants in relation to their review of the Property Repairs and Maintenance Services. Arising from this review, the consultants have made a number of recommendations including staffing adjustments required. In particular, they consider the Accountancy Section of the Support Services Section of the Commercial Services Directorate should be strengthened by the establishment of a new post of Senior Accountant with responsibility for all accountancy and invoicing, along with a number of other adjustments to the Support Services Section. The consultants consider also that the Works Section requires to have a flatter structure involving the redesignation of two posts to Operations Manager and realigning of the duties to improve managerial control of front-line services.

Further adjustments are required to the Commercial Services Directorate structure outwith the Deloitte and Touche review. These adjustments relate to (i) the consolidation of former Irvine Development Corporation staff transfers; (ii) proposals within the Catering and Cleaning Section to extend the grade of the two Area Officers to take dual responsibility for both Catering and Cleaning; and (iii) the establishment on a permanent basis of the temporary seconded post of Health Promotions

Manager, grade API/II.

The additional revenue costs of these proposals amount to £52,754 per annum which will be met from the Directorate's existing revenue budgets.

After a full discussion, the Committee agreed to amend the staffing establishment of the Commercial Services Directorate by (a) the redesignation of the post of Support Services Manager Grade PO15 to that of Finance Manager Grade PO12; (b) the establishment of a new post of Senior Accountant, Grade PO7; (c) the establishment of two new posts of Administrative Officer Grade APIV, as team leaders of the creditors and invoicing section; (d) the regrading of the post of Senior Administrative Officer from APV/PO2 to PO5 to be responsible for all Directorate payroll and personnel administration matters; (e) the establishment of a new post Administrative Officer Grade APIV, as team leader of the Personnel/Payroll Sections; (f) the realignment of the duties and responsibilities of the post of Operations Manager, Works and regrading from PO15 to PO13; (g) the realignment of the duties and responsibilities of the post of Works Controller and redesignation to that of Operations Manager and regrading from PO2 plus 10% to PO13; (h) the consolidation of the posts of Assistant Monitoring Officer grade APII, Assistant Area Officer grade APIII, and Administrative Assistant/Storeperson APII currently occupied by staff transferred from Irvine Development Corporation into the Directorate's establishment on the terms and conditions of service adopted by North Ayrshire Council; (i) the realignment of the duties and responsibilities of the posts of Area Officers for Catering and Cleaning and extension of their grade from Tech IV to Tech IV/V; and (j) the establishment on a permanent basis and redesignation of the Health Promotions Manager Grade API/II to Health Promotions Officer grade API/II.

## **9. Review of Occupational Health Service**

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager advising of the variety of Occupational Health activities which have been developed since June 1996.

A full time occupational health service is provided to Council employees with the range of activities covered including VDU eye tests; HGV and PSV medical examinations for drivers; and pre-employment medical examinations for new apprentices. A number of occupational health policies and guidance documents have been produced and the service has been promoted and advertised throughout all Directorates. It is proposed to develop the service further over the next year including the implementation of a policy on stress at work and the introduction of a full day training course on occupational health for Managers.

Noted.

## **10. Planning, Roads and Environment Directorate: Amendment to Staffing Establishment Structure**

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on a proposed amendment to the staffing establishment within the Planning, Roads and Environment Directorate.

On 24 September 1997, the Infrastructure and Environment Services Committee approved proposals to utilise the additional funding which has been made available from the Scottish Office to resource the additional enforcement action required on food safety as a result of the recommendations contained in the Pennington Group Report. The staffing implications included in these proposals have been remitted to the Support Services Committee for consideration.

The proposals are to establish two additional posts of Environmental Health Officer, grade APV/PO3 at an additional cost of £23,867 in 1997/98 and £47,734 in a full financial year. These posts are required to meet the additional workload arising from the Pennington Group Report and the costs will be met from the additional funding allocated by the Scottish Office for a 3 year period initially.

The Committee agreed to approve the establishment of two additional posts of Environmental Health Officer grade APV/PO3 within the Planning, Roads and Environment Directorate.

## **11. Financial Services Directorate: Community Charge and Council Tax Collection Scheme**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the Member/Officer Working Group recommendations on the Community Charge and Council Tax Collection Scheme.

On 19 August 1997 the Committee appointed a Member/Officer Working Group to determine the structure, processes and remit of a recovery team who will undertake initiatives in collecting outstanding Community Charges and Council Tax.

The Member/Officer Working Group which met on 5 September 1997, agreed (a) to approve (i) the various measures for recovering Community Charge and Council Tax arrears as detailed by the Director of Financial Services, subject to certain safeguards; (ii) the staffing proposals being the appointment of 5 Clerical Assistants at GS1/2 on 18 month fixed term contracts; and (iii) the necessary accommodation and equipment proposals; (b) to authorise the Director of Financial Services to submit an application for Special Grant of £106,690 to the Scottish Office Development Department, on the basis of the proposals approved, by the deadline of 12 September 1997; and (c) subject to confirmation by the Scottish Office that the Special Grant will be made available, to authorise the Director of Financial Services to fill the five new clerical posts.

The Committee agreed to approve the recommendations of the Member/Officer Working Group.

## **12. Personnel Services Department: Moorpark House Training and Development Unit**

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the accreditation of Moorpark Training and Development Unit to deliver the new SVQ Level 2 "Using Information Technology".

In March 1997, the Committee was advised that the Moorpark House Training and Development Unit provided SVQ's for adult returners and agreed that SVQ accreditation should be pursued, in order that the trainees could achieve a recognised qualification on satisfactory completion of their training programme. The Training Unit has now received validation to deliver the new SVQ Level II "Using Information Technology". The duties and responsibilities of delivering a full SVQ accredited training programme differ significantly from those of delivering a non-accredited programme and it is therefore proposed that the Training Officer post assigned to delivering these programmes be regraded from APII to APIII, the cost of the regrading to be met from the increase in income which will result from the delivering of accredited IT training.

The programme delivered by the Training Unit is continually restructured and reviewed in order to remain within the budget available.

The Committee agreed to approve the regrading of the post of Training Officer from APII to APIII.

## **13. Financial Services Directorate: Computer Auditor**

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager seeking approval to appoint a Computer Auditor within the Financial Services Directorate.

On 25 March 1997, the Committee agreed in principle to enter into an agreement with South Ayrshire Council to appoint a Computer Auditor on PO7 to be employed by the lead authority, South Ayrshire, but seconded to North Ayrshire for half of each year with the cost being shared equally by the two authorities. It has not been possible to fill this post and South Ayrshire Council has now intimated its intention to appoint its own Computer Auditor. It will not be possible therefore to share or utilise the services of that post.

Following consultation with the Accounts Commission, it is considered that there is a sufficient workload in North Ayrshire to justify the establishment of a full time post of Computer Auditor. It is proposed that two vacant posts, Internal Auditor APV/PO3 and Internal Audit Assistant APIII remain unfilled at present, which will allow the cost of the new post of Computer Auditor to be met from existing budgets in 1997/98. The post will cost approximately £30,000 per annum in future years.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to approve the establishment of a new

post of Computer Auditor PO7 in the Financial Services Directorate.

#### **14. Social Work Directorate: Learning Disability: Service Developments**

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on staffing recommendations resulting from the proposed development of Day Care services for adults with learning disabilities approved by the Social Work Committee on 17th September 1997.

Additional posts are required to meet (i) the creation of a new resource for adults with severe/profound needs; (ii) the development of an outreach service to enable individuals to access community resources; and (iii) the extension of the Ashgrove Publishing Project to provide on-site job training opportunities. Provision has been made in existing budgets to meet the costs of the proposed new posts.

The Committee agreed to increase the Social Work Directorate establishment by the creation of posts of (a) Day Centre Officer (Fergushill Resource Centre) at grade DCO(UQ); (b) Day Centre Officer (Manse Street Centre) at grade DCO(Q); and (c) Workshop Assistant (Ashgrove Publishing Project) at grade GS3.

#### **15. Society of Directors of Personnel Scotland Annual Conference**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an invitation to attend the Society of Directors of Personnel Scotland (SODOPS) Annual Conference to be held in St. Andrew's from 12-14 November 1997.

The committee agreed to authorise the Vice-Chair to attend.

#### **16. Irvine: Industrial Lets: Unit 1, Quarry Road; Kilbirnie: Unit 2, Riverside Place; Fairlie: Unit 3, Keppernburn Workshops**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on applications for the let of industrial properties at Unit 1, Quarry Road, Irvine; Unit 2 Riverside Place, Kilbirnie; and Unit 3, Keppernburn Workshops, Fairlie.

As a matter of urgency, the Chair authorised the let of these premises.

The Committee agreed to homologate the action of the Chair.

#### **17. Irvine: Irvine Royal Academy: Site Sharing Agreement for Location of Radio Communication Equipment**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a licence review in respect of the site sharing agreement for the location of radio communication equipment at Irvine Royal Academy, Kilwinning Road, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the renewal of the site sharing agreement and annual licence fee on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services

Manager.

**18. Irvine: Bridgegate House: Radio Mast**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on proposals to erect a roof top radio installation on Bridgegate House, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve in principle the erection of a roof top radio installation on Bridgegate House, Irvine.

**19. Irvine: Offices at 45 Townhead**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a renewal of lease in respect of offices at 45 Townhead, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the renewal of lease on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**20. Irvine: 156A Dickson Drive: Minute of Waiver**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager seeking the grant of a Minute of Waiver in respect of property at 156A Dickson Drive, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the grant of a Minute of Waiver on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**21. Irvine: 117 Bank Street: Minute of Waiver**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager seeking the grant of a Minute of Waiver in respect of property at 117 Bank Street, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the grant of a Minute of Waiver allowing any use of the site on terms and conditions to be negotiated by the Legal Services Manager.

**22. Irvine: Bourtreehill: 8 Lower Vennel**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the lease of a shop unit at 8 Lower Vennel, Bourtreehill, Irvine.

The Committee agreed subject to consultation with the Chair and the local member to approve the proposed lease on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **23. Irvine: 12/16 North Vennel: Lease of Office Accommodation**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the lease of office accommodation at 12/16 North Vennel, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed lease on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **24. Kilwinning Eglinton Angling Club: Fishings on River Garnock**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager in respect of the lease of fishing rights on the River Garnock, Kilwinning.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed lease on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **25. Kilwinning: Unit 9, Ashgrove Workshops**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the renewal of lease in respect of Unit 9, Ashgrove Workshops, Kilwinning.

The Committee agreed to approve the renewal of lease on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **26. Ardrossan: Hill Street: Lease of Land**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on an assignation of the lease of land at Hill Street, Ardrossan.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed assignation of the lease on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **27. Stevenston: Land at Caledonian Road: Former Petrol Filling Station Site**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a rent review in respect of the former petrol filling station site, Caledonian Road, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to approve the rent increase on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **28. Glengarnock: Development Site at Main Street**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the disposal of property in respect of a development site at Main Street, Glengarnock.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed sale of the property on terms and

conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**29. Largs: Promenade: Royal National Lifeboat Institution: Extension of Lease**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a request for an extension of lease for the site at The Promenade, Largs.

The Committee agreed to approve the request for the extension of lease on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**30. Largs: 44 Nelson Street: Ground Floor Flat: Disposal of Property**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a disposal of property in respect of ground floor flat at 44 Nelson Street, Largs.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed sale of property on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**31. Seamill: Land at Summerlea Road**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on an acquisition of land at Summerlea Road, Seamill.

The Committee agreed to approve the acquisition of land on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**32. West Kilbride: Kirkton Hall, 1 Glen Road**

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the lease of rooms within Kirkton Hall, 1 Glen Road, West Kilbride.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed lease on terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

**33. Bequest of Land at Skelmorlie to North Ayrshire Council**

Submitted report by the Director of Community and Recreational Services on a bequest of land at Skelmorlie to North Ayrshire Council.

The Committee agreed to accept the bequest of land on terms and conditions as provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

### **34. Exclusion of the Public**

If so 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 Paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A of the Act.

### **35. Support Services (Appeals) Sub-Committee**

Submitted the annexed reports (Appendices SS3, SS4 and SS5) of the Support Services (Appeals) Sub-Committee being the Minutes of its Meetings held on (a) 23 May 1997; (b) 27 June 1997; and (c) 29 August 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the reports.

### **36. Urgent Item**

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

### **37. Kilwinning: Dalgarn Mill**

Mr S. Dewar declared an interest in this item and took no part in the discussion thereon.

The Director of Financial Services reported a request has been received from Dalgarn Mill for bridging finance of £6,000 until their European Development Grant is received.

The Committee agreed to make the payment.

The meeting ended at 3.35 p.m.