

Support Services Committee
16 December 1997

Irvine, 16 December 1997 - At a Meeting of the Support Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

David O'Neill, Alan Munro, Patrick Browne, James Clements, John Donn, Margaret Hight, James Jennings, David Munn, George Steven and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive; The Head of Corporate Business; the Personnel Services Manager; Information Technology Services Manager; the Legal Services Manager; D. Addison, Head of Revenue Service (Financial Services); and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Stewart Dewar and Elliot Gray.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held on 11 November 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Collection Statements

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the current collection levels in respect of Community Charge and Council Tax to 30 November 1997.

A total of £111,000 was collected in respect of Community Charge during November 1997 which compares favourably with the amount of £109,000 collected in November 1996. The outstanding recoverable debt due to North Ayrshire Council in this respect is now £17,420,000.

The sum of £2,691,000 was collected during November 1997 in respect of the Council Tax for 1997/98 and the outstanding recoverable debt due to North Ayrshire Council in this respect is £14,403,000.

Noted.

3. Community Charges and Council Tax Collection Scheme

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on a proposal to accelerate the introduction of automated payment facilities for Council Tax given the indicative costs of printing.

It is now proposed to replace the voucher book with a plastic "swipe card". The card can be used for payment at any Post Office where a printed receipt will be provided for each transaction, the details of which will be passed to the Council within 2 days. Payments made at Council Offices will still be dealt with manually or by card readers connected to computerised bills. The major advantage of the payment card is that it is valid for 3 years while voucher books require to be issued annually and will result in savings over 3 years of an estimated £100,000. During 1998/99 it is proposed to introduce payment by telephone using switch or credit cards together with facilities for the use of local Bank and Building Society cashbank terminals. A pilot scheme for the introduction of alternative payment methods for rents has been agreed by the Housing Services Committee. Initially voucher books will be used and if successful the scheme will be extended using payment cards.

Post Office facilities to test cards are available to the Council only from 21 December 1997 to 5 January 1998. A single manufacturer must provide both the test and production cards and Custom Card Services have been recommended to provide these. The Company can provide 75,000 cards including embossing at a cost of £13,950 and given the limited timescale, the Director of Financial Services recommended that this offer be accepted.

After discussion the Committee agreed (a) to approve the introduction of an automated payment system; and (b) to accept the quotation from Custom Card Services for the provision of cards in the sum of £13,950 in terms of Standing Orders 3(a) and 3(d) of the Standing Orders relating to contracts.

4. Communications Hardware Maintenance Contract

Submitted report by the Information Technology Services Manager on tenders for the Communications Hardware Maintenance Contract.

The current contract for the maintenance of all Communications Hardware terminates on 31 December 1997. Following the issue of invitations to tender for the maintenance of wide area network/local area network equipment one tender has been received from Datarange plc for the contract which will run from 1 January 1998 to 31 December 2000 covering all existing Communications Hardware.

Datarange plc have offered 3 options for cover namely, Gold cover (4 hour on site response) at a cost of £46,960, Silver cover (8 hour on site response) at a cost of £28,224 and Bronze cover (24 hours courier replacement) at a cost of £18,736. £18,000 has been allocated within the IT Services Revenue Budget for 1998/99 for the maintenance of Communications Hardware.

After discussion, the Committee agreed to award the contract to Datarange plc under

bronze cover at an annual cost of £18,736.

5. Support Services Sub-Committee: Minutes

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix SS1) of the Support Services Sub-Committee in on Severance Arrangements, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 11 November 1997.

Noted.

6. Social Work Directorate

(a) Staffing Establishment

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on proposals for an updated staffing establishment within the Social Work Directorate following the transfer and placement of staff. A copy of the staffing structure was tabled at the meeting.

The Committee agreed to approve the updated staffing establishment.

(b) Redesignation and Grading of Family Aide Worker Posts

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on proposals for the amendment of the designation and salary grade of two Family Aide Worker posts.

Two Family Aide Worker posts presently located within the Three Towns Area Team were created originally under the Urban Programme for a period of 4 years. On termination of Scottish Office funding these posts were permanently established within the Social Work Directorate without changes to designation or grade. The existing grade AP1 for the posts was determined when the Urban Programme submission was being developed and was based on the projected workload of the posts. Since that time increased duties and responsibilities have been placed on both posts which are now part of an Area Team. Accordingly it is proposed that the Family Aide Worker Posts be redesignated and assimilated into the Area Team as Social Work Assistants and that grading of the posts be altered from grade AP1 to grade AP2/3. Budgetary provision has been made for the proposed increased staff costs amounting to £1,567 per year.

The Committee agreed to approve the redesignation of the posts from Family Aide Worker to Social Work Assistant and the grading of the 2 posts from grade AP1 to grade AP2/3.

(c) Grading and Redesignation of the Post of Home Support and Day Care Officer: Redesignation of Day Care Officer Posts

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on (i) a proposed amendment to the salary grade and designation attached to the post of Home Support and Day Care Officer; and (ii) a proposed amendment to the designation of Day Care Officer

Posts to Home Support Officer.

Following a review it has been established that the duties and responsibilities of the post of Home Support and Day Care Officer have developed and increased. An analysis of the present duties and responsibilities has indicated that they are similar to those undertaken by Home Care Supervisors graded AP4 and the view is taken that the post should be of a comparable grade AP4 and that the designation should be changed to one which more accurately describes the responsibilities of the role. The annual cost of such a regrading will be £1,708.

Although Day Care Officers and Home Helps are similar posts, Day Care Officers are employed under APT & C Terms and Conditions whilst Home Helps are employed under Manual Worker terms and conditions. It is therefore proposed that the existing 6 Day Care Officer posts be redesignated as Home Support Officers.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the change in grading of the post of Home Support and Day Care Officer from AP3 to AP4 and to its redesignation to Home Support Supervisor; and (b) to approve the redesignation of Day Care Officer posts to Home Support Officer.

(d) Grading of the Post of Rehabilitation Officer for the Blind

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on an amendment to the salary grade of the post of Rehabilitation Officer for the Blind.

A review of the post of rehabilitation Officer for the Blind, currently graded AP3, has indicated that the responsibilities of the post have increased as a result of the introduction of community care legislation. There is now a requirement to assess and rehabilitate visually impaired clients with additional disabilities including learning/physical difficulties and mental health problems. Accordingly it is proposed that the salary grade be amended from grade AP3 to grade AP4.

The Committee agreed to approve the amended grading of the post of Rehabilitation Officer for the Blind from grade AP3 to grade AP4.

7. National Joint Council Circulars and National Agreements: Amendments to Conditions of Service

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on proposals for the adoption and implementation of amendments to Conditions of Service in respect of engineering craftsmen, craftsmen and building and civil engineering operatives and Teaching Staffs. Agreement has been reached nationally on these.

The Committee agreed to approve these amendments.

8. Report on Sickness Absence Statistics

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the rate of employee sickness absence within North Ayrshire Council.

An Absence Management Procedure is being produced for implementation early in 1998 which will aim to minimise sickness absence levels through the development of guidelines for the appropriate management of individual cases, and a further report will be submitted. It is also proposed to introduce a rationalised Absence Monitoring System in early 1998 and thereafter to report the Directorate absence levels on a quarterly basis.

Noted.

9. Report on Employee Turnover Rates

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on employee turnover rates within North Ayrshire Council between January-March, April-June and July-September 1997. It is proposed to continually review employee turnover rates and to develop strategies to address any potential employee shortages which are identified. The turnover rates are relatively low with seasonal adjustments having been anticipated.

Noted.

10. North Ayrshire Council Staff Association

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on a proposal to establish a Staff Association for all employees of North Ayrshire Council.

A Steering Committee comprising representatives from the Directorates/Departments of the Council has sought the views of employees on the feasibility of establishing a Staff Association and considers that there is considerable support for this proposal. The objectives of this Association will be to provide occasions and events at which members can meet socially outside the working environment. Full Membership of the Association will be open to all permanent and temporary employees of the Council and will be by annual subscription.

While the Association does not seek direct financial support from the Council it has requested support "in kind" e.g. use of photocopiers, use of accommodation, etc.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the establishment of a Staff Association for employees of the Council; and (b) to approve that support "in kind" be provided as requested.

11. Housing Services Directorate: Mainstream Housing Allocation Policy/Sheltered and Amenity Housing Allocation Policy

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the proposed establishment of a temporary project team to compile accurate and relevant data in relation to housing applications to North Ayrshire Council.

The Housing Services Committee have approved the content of the Mainstream Housing and Sheltered and Amenity Housing Allocation Policy and have agreed in principle that a project team be established on a temporary basis to review and where necessary compile effective data relative to the new allocation system in accordance with approved policies. The Team will comprise 8 Clerical Assistant posts graded GS1/2 to be established on a temporary basis for a 6 month period from January to June 1998 at a cost of £40,116 which will be met from existing Capital Budgets. Consultation will require to be undertaken with relevant Trade Unions.

The Committee agreed to approve the establishment of the temporary Project Team in support of the objectives of the project.

12. Disposal of Garden Ground/Open Space Areas

(Previous Minute reference: Support Services Committee: 11 November 1997)

Submitted further report by the Legal Services Manager seeking authority to negotiate provisional terms for the disposal of plots of ground to adjoining residential proprietors to extend their garden ground, without initial reference to the Committee.

The procedures currently adopted, following the consent of the relevant Service Committee to dispose of an area of land, can take a full 3 Committee cycles to complete. To enable these matters to be dealt with in a shorter period it is proposed that the Legal Services Manager be authorised to undertake the initial negotiations for the disposal of the land without reference to the Committee. This procedure however would only be implemented in relation to non-contentious areas of ground and would be subject to consultation with the Local Member for the area concerned.

The Committee agreed, subject to (i) a decision by the appropriate Service Committee to declare an area of ground surplus to requirements; (ii) the procedures being implemented in relation to non-contentious areas only; and (iii) appropriate consultation by the Local Member, to authorise the Legal Services Manager to negotiate provisional terms for the disposal of plots of ground adjoining residential properties without initial reference to the Committee.

13. Irvine: Unit 3: 22 Quarry Road

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the lease of small office and yard area at Unit 3, 22 Quarry Road, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the lease on the terms and conditions provisionally

agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

14. Dreghorn: Dundonald Road: Dreghorn and Broomlands Bowling Club

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a rent review in respect of the Dreghorn and Broomlands Bowling Club, Dundonald Road, Dreghorn.

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

15. Saltcoats: Land Adjacent to 111 Dalry Road

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the sale of land adjacent to 111 Dalry Road, Saltcoats.

The Committee agreed to the sale of the land to Mr. Conlan on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

16. Dalry: 16 Courthill Street: Garden Extension

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the lease of an area of ground at Dalry Public Park for a garden extension to 16 Courthill Street, Dalry.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to negotiate the lease of part of Dalry Public Park to Mr. Paterson.

17. Fairlie: House at 23 Keppernburn Avenue

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the disposal of property at 23 Keppernburn Avenue, Fairlie.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to negotiate with Quarriers Homes the disposal of property at 23 Keppernburn Avenue, Fairlie.

18. Largs Road: A760 Camphill Improvement: Phase 3

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed acquisition of ground for the purposes of the A760 Camphill Road Improvement, Phase 3.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to proceed with negotiations for the acquisition of ground for the Camphill Road Improvement, Phase 3.

19. Largs: 2 Alexander Avenue: Garden Extension

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the sale of an area of ground for garden extension at 2 Alexander Avenue, Largs.

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

20. Arran: Brodick: Ground at Invercloy

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a rent review in respect of ground at Invercloy, Brodick, Isle of Arran owned by Arran Estates

The Committee agreed to approve the revised rent on the terms and conditions provisionally agreed with Arran Estates.

21. Stevenston: Land Adjacent to 83C Glencairn Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of land adjacent to 83C Glencairn Street, Stevenston.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Legal Services Manager to enter into negotiations with Mr. and Mrs. McKenzie for the disposal of the land and report.

The Meeting ended at 3.00 p.m.