

Support Services Committee
25 March 1997

Irvine, 25 March 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, Elliot Gray, Margaret Highet, James Jennings, David Munn and Richard Wilkinson.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive, the Director of Financial Services, the Head of Corporate Business, the Architectural Services Manager, A. Ferguson, Principal Personnel Officer and S. Kerr, Principal Training and Development Officer (Personnel Services), R. Samson, Principal Estates Officer (Legal Services) and B. Hannah, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. O'Neill in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne and George Steven.

1. Minutes Confirmed

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

2. Treasury Management Policy Statement 1997/98

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services detailing a proposed Treasury Management Policy Statement for 1997/98 to comply with the CIPFA Code of Practice on treasury management in local authorities.

The Policy details the management arrangements for the Council's cash flows, borrowings, investments, the management of risk and associated matters.

In addition the Policy defines the responsibilities and activities of the Director of Finance and outlines the powers delegated to the Committee.

The Committee agreed to approve the Treasury Management Policy Statement for 1997/98.

3. Treasury Management Strategy 1997/98

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on a proposed Treasury Management Strategy for 1997/98 as required by the Council's Treasury Management Policy Statement.

The Strategy detailed the expected activities of the treasury function in the financial year 1997/98 which related to seven major areas and outlined the procedures/prospects in respect of each namely:-

- a) the current treasury position;
- b) the prospects for interest rates;
- c) treasury limits in force which will limit the activity of the Council;
- d) the capital borrowing required and the portfolio strategy;
- e) the investment strategy;
- f) the application of set aside capital receipts; and
- g) debt rescheduling opportunities.

The treasury limits for 1997/98 have been set in accordance with Section 43 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The amount of the overall borrowing limit which may be outstanding by way of short-term debt is set at £50m with the maximum proportion of interest on borrowing which is subject to variable rate being set at 40%. In constructing the Treasury Management Strategy for 1997/98 advice has been taken from the Council's financial advisors in relation to prospects for interest rates etc. The advice received has been applied to the Council's budgetary process.

The Committee agreed to approve the Treasury Management Strategy for 1997/98.

4. Banking Arrangements: Indemnities

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services seeking approval for various indemnities required by the Clydesdale Bank who are the Council's bankers.

The bank have requested that the Council indemnify them against any losses arising from particular services. The indemnities required are normal practice and relate to cash in transit, lithographed signatures, cheque cashing facilities and other services.

The Committee agreed to instruct the Director of Financial Services (a) to issue the Clydesdale Bank with the required indemnities; and (b) to make such administrative arrangements as necessary for the provision of banking services.

5. Collection Statements

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the current collection levels in respect of Community Charge and Council Tax for the period ended 28 February 1997.

Noted.

6. Non-Domestic Rates: Write-Offs

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services seeking authority to write-off specific and global non-domestic rates arrears.

The writing-off of certain non-domestic rates arrears is required as part of the Abstract of Accounts. The procedure adopted by the former Strathclyde Regional Council was to provide for a global write-off of outstanding rates which were billed 3 years previously with specific write-offs being made in relation to debtors where, for example, liquidators had been appointed.

There are no financial implications to the Council because, as part of the aggregate external finance agreement, all rate arrears are pooled and distributed between Councils. In addition, Sheriff Officers will pursue any outstanding debts where recovery becomes possible.

The Committee agreed to approve (a) a total write-off of £1,211,168 in relation to the 1993/94 financial year comprised of £956,684 global and £254,484 specific write-offs; and (b) a total of £452,113 in specific write-offs for the financial years 1994/95 to 1996/97 inclusive.

7. Ex Council Tenant Arrears for Write-Off

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services seeking approval to write-off various ex-Council tenant rent arrears in excess of £100.00 in accordance with the provision of the Financial Regulations.

There are certain circumstances which may prevail whereby the Council cannot recover rent arrears due to it from ex-tenants. In the financial year 1996/97 a total of £76,086.53 has not been recovered representing 0.28% of the Council's total rental income for that year.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the write-off of ex-Council tenant arrears totalling £76,086.53 for the financial year 1996/97; and (b) to note that efforts will continue to be made to pursue the recovery of the outstanding debts.

8. Contracts for Works: Final Measurements

Submitted report by the Architectural Services Manager on final accounts for various contracts carried out by the former Cunninghame District and Strathclyde Regional Councils.

Noted.

9. Computer Auditor

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the proposed appointment, on a shared basis with South Ayrshire Council, of a Computer Auditor.

Given the Authority's reliance on computer systems the Accounts Commission in their audit report on computer audit provision in Ayrshire identified the requirement to employ a Computer Auditor at the earliest opportunity.

Discussions on this matter have been held with South Ayrshire Council and it is proposed that North Ayrshire and South Ayrshire Councils enter into an agreement to employ a Computer Auditor on a contractual basis. South Ayrshire Council would be the lead Authority with the auditor being seconded to North Ayrshire Council's Financial Services Directorate for 6 months each year. The cost of employing the Computer Auditor and other related costs would be met equally by the 2 Authorities and there is provision in the 1997/98 budget to meet these costs.

After discussion the Committee agreed, in principle, to enter into an agreement with South Ayrshire Council to appoint a Computer Auditor on grade PO7 on terms and conditions to be finalised by the Director of Financial Services in consultation with the Personnel Services Manager.

10. Clerical Assistant Recruitment Policy: Skillseeker and Adult Returnees

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager detailing a proposed policy for the recruitment of clerical assistants on GS1/2 graded posts from skillseeker and adult trainees attending training programmes managed by the Council's Training Unit at Moorpark House, Kilbirnie.

Moorpark House is mainly funded by Enterprise Ayrshire and provides a variety of courses for skillseekers and adult trainees. Courses range from 9-12 weeks to up to 2 years and can lead to SVQs at level 3. It is proposed that all temporary posts and a minimum of 40% of all Clerical Assistant posts at grade GS1/2 be recruited from the skillseeker and adult trainee population subject to the candidates meeting the job requirements and the availability of trainees. Such an approach would have benefits to both the trainees and the Council with the trainees gaining enhanced job prospects and the Council being able to maximise funding available from Enterprise Ayrshire; and reduce the requirement for post-entry training; reduce advertising costs associated with the filling of vacancies.

The Committee discussed the proposals in relation to the proposed development of further education establishments within North Ayrshire.

After discussion the Committee agreed that (a) subject to trainees meeting the requirements of the post and their being available trainees, that all Directorate/Departments of the Council (i) recruit all temporary Clerical Assistant posts graded GS1/2 directly from the Training Unit; and (ii) recruit a minimum of 40% of permanent Clerical posts graded GS1/2 directly from the Training Unit; (b) normal external recruitment sources only be utilised where it can be demonstrated that

trainees are unable to meet the requirements of a vacant post or where the prescribed intake into permanent posts have been achieved; (c) trainees recruited to either temporary or permanent posts be permitted to complete their training; and (d) that the Chief Executive examine, in conjunction with the Further Education providers in the area, the possibility of developing a collaborative approach between the Council and colleges for the provision of training services once the development of Further Education in North Ayrshire, currently under consideration, has taken place.

11. Directorate of the Chief Executive: Architectural Services Department: Rationalisation of Administrative Staffing Support

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on proposed alterations to the administrative support staffing structure within the Architectural Services Department.

On 28 August 1996 the Committee approved the staffing establishment for the Chief Executive and Corporate Support Services Directorate which includes the Architectural Services Department.

A rationalisation of the administrative support staff has now been conducted within the Architectural Services Department to ensure it is able to respond effectively to changing priorities and increased demands.

The estimated cost of the proposals are £11,405 per annum which can be met from within the existing Departmental budget. A member of staff who cannot be accommodated within the revised structure will be offered redeployment or may submit an application for voluntary retirement in terms of the Council's approved scheme.

The Committee agreed to approve the restructuring of the administrative support staff within the Architectural Services Department as detailed in Appendix SS1.

12. Social Work Directorate

(a) Assistance to Romania: Social Work Secondment

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on an application in terms of the Council's Special Leave Scheme.

An officer within the Social Work Directorate has requested approval of a secondment on an unpaid leave of absence basis to work in Romania for a period of between 6 and 12 months. The Social Work Committee on 30 October 1996 agreed to approve the application in principle.

The Committee agreed to approve the full-time secondment for a period of up to one year without pay.

(b) Supervised Attendance Order Scheme

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on painting and decorating work previously

undertaken by the Training Unit at Moorpark House.

On 11 February 1997 the Committee agreed that the painting and decorating programme operated by the Moorpark Training Unit be discontinued and further that the Director of Social Work be requested to investigate the adoption of the Programme under the Supervised Attendance Order Scheme on a social needs basis.

On 12 March 1997, the Social Work Committee was advised that the Supervised Attendance Order Schemes have set budgets and are undertaken in conjunction with Apex Scotland, a voluntary employment agency working with offenders. As the projects have short-term duration it is unlikely that Apex Scotland would recruit painting and decorating supervisors to offer such a scheme which is undertaken, in part, within the Community Service Order Scheme.

Noted.

13. Commercial Services Directorate: Transfer of Carlton Catering Partnership at Ardeer

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager seeking approval for the transfer of staff presently employed by Carlton Catering Partnership to the Commercial Services Directorate.

On 12 February 1997, the Commercial Services Committee agreed that the Catering and Cleaning Section of the Commercial Services Directorate take over the responsibility for catering services currently provided by Carlton Catering Partnership at Ardeer.

The Carlton Catering operation involves one Chef Manager and 3 General Assistants and it is proposed that the staff transfer to North Ayrshire Council on terms and conditions in line with those afforded to other staff holding comparable positions.

After discussion the Committee agreed to approve the transfer of 3 catering staff employed by Carlton Catering Partnership to North Ayrshire Council.

14. Procedure for Occupational Health and Welfare Referrals

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager detailing proposed procedures for the usage of Directorates in referrals to the Occupational Health and Welfare Service.

The Committee agreed to approve the procedures for Occupational Health and Welfare referrals.

15. Moorpark House Training and Development Centre

Submitted report by the Personnel Services Manager on the functions and activities of the Council's Training and Development facility at Moorpark House, Kilbirnie.

Noted.

16. Irvine: Cunninghame House

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on proposed terms of a lease for Cunninghame House between North Ayrshire Council and Ravenseft Properties Limited.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the terms and conditions provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager; and (b) to instruct the Legal Services Manager to conclude the contract immediately.

17. Irvine: Unit 75: Kyle Road Industrial Estate

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on an application for the lease of a factory unit at Unit 75, Kyle Road Industrial Estate, Irvine.

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

18. Irvine: Irvine Shoe Repairs: 89 High Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a rent review in respect of shop property at 89 High Street, Irvine.

The Committee agreed to approve the terms provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

19. Irvine: Factory Unit 32(B) Kyle Road, Irvine and Stevenston: Units 13 and 14 Portland Place

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a proposed relocation of a business from Units 13 and 14 Portland Place, Stevenston to Unit 32(B), Kyle Road, Irvine.

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

20. Irvine: Proposed Landfill Site Adjacent to Bogside Golf Course: Sandy Road

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed acquisition of an area of land adjacent to Bogside Golf Course, Sandy Road, Irvine from ICI.

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

21. Dreghorn: Garden Extension: 5 Cumbrae Court

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a proposed sale of servitude right of access for the construction of a driveway at 25 Cumbrae Court, Dreghorn.

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

22. Irvine: Office Accommodation: 6 North Vennel

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed lease of office accommodation at 6 North Vennel, Irvine.

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

23. Kilwinning: Shop Premises: 35 Main Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a rent review in respect of shop property at 35 Main Street, Kilwinning.

The Committee agreed to approve the terms provisionally agreed by the Legal Services Manager.

24. Kilwinning: Proposed Road Safety Measures: Nethermain Road/Almswall Road/Pollock Crescent, Kilwinning

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed acquisition of land at Nethermain Road, Almswall Road, Pollock Crescent, Kilwinning.

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

25. Kilwinning: 34 Winton Avenue

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed sale of a house at 34 Winton Avenue, Kilwinning.

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

26. Stevenston: Factory Units 8 and 9 Portland Place, Stevenston

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed lease of Units 8 and 9 Portland Place, Stevenston.

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

27. Stevenston: Former Ardeer Primary School: Garven Road

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed sale of an area of land at Garven Road, Stevenston.

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

28. Kilbirnie: 1 Riverside Place: Paddockholm Industrial Estate

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed lease of 1 Riverside Place, Paddockholm Industrial Estate, Kilbirnie.

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

29. Kilbirnie: Former Roads Depot: 3 Bridgend

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed sale of 3 Bridgend, Kilbirnie.

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

30. Beith: Servitude for Surface Water Drain: 81A Kings Road

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on a proposed sale of servitude for a surface water drain at Plot 3, Kings Road, Beith.

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

31. Saltcoats: Dalry Road: Former Burgh Yard

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of land at Dalry Road, Saltcoats.

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

32. Saltcoats: The Ponds Development Site: Winton Circus

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed future letting of The Ponds Development Site, Winton Circus, Saltcoats.

The Committee agreed that (a) the Legal Services Manager advertise the site on the open market for lease as a permanent fairground facility; (b) submit a report detailing any offers received to a future meeting of the Committee.

33. Saltcoats: Office Accommodation: Countess Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on (a) an application for the short-term lease of 16 Countess Street, Saltcoats by the Saltcoats Labour Party for election purposes; and (b) requesting delegated powers to the Chief Executive to dispose of similar applications.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the short-term lease of 16 Countess Street, Saltcoats to the Saltcoats Labour Party at a nominal rent; and (b) to authorise the Chief Executive to dispose of similar applications for short-term lets of vacant Council property for election purposes.

34. Kilbirnie: Shop Property: 19 Main Street

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed lease of shop property at 19 Main Street, Kilbirnie.

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

35. Greenock: Monkton Trunk Road: A78 Fairlie Management Scheme

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed disposal of an area of ground adjacent to the A78.

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

36. Urgent Items

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

37. Irvine: Village Centre, Bourtreehill: Credit Union

Mr. Dewar requested details of Credit Union's application for lease of property at the Village Centre, Bourtreehill, Irvine.

The Principal Estates Officer gave details of current refurbishments being undertaken to the premises.

Noted.

The meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.