

Commercial Services Committee
12 November 1997

Irvine, 12 November 1997 - At a Meeting of the Commercial Services Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

Thomas Dickie, Peter McNamara, James Clements, Joseph McKinney, Robert Rae, Gena Seales and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

W Cowan, Director of Commercial Services; K Wilson, Head of Catering and Cleaning; A Smart, Head of Works, Roads and Transport; D McCall, Cemetery Services Manager (Commercial Services); J Hair, Principal Officer; W Nicol, Senior Accountant (Financial Services); J Bannatyne and M McKeown, Administration Officers (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr Dickie in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Patrick Browne, Alan Munro, Irene Oldfather and George Steven.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 1 October 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. Grounds Maintenance Operations within Irvine New Town

(Previous Minute Reference: Commercial Services Committee 1 October 1997.)

Submitted joint report by the Directors of Commercial Services and Community and Recreational Services on the level of grounds maintenance service currently provided within the Irvine New Town area.

The Grounds Maintenance Service for the Irvine New Town area is currently operated as four contracts covering ex-Cunninghame District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council areas, Community Related Assets (CRA) and Housing Ballot Areas (HBA). The levels of grounds maintenance operations for each of these areas is specified in the contracts and it was noted that the standard of maintenance achieved by the Council in these areas compares favourably with other Ayrshire local authorities.

Problems have however arisen due to the incomplete information transferred to the Council with the CRA and HBA contracts. It has become apparent that certain operations, necessary to maintain good horticultural practices, were not identified in the transfer, nor was the finance required. Two areas of particular concern relate to the ground maintenance of major roundabouts within the CRA area contract (with an estimated annual maintenance cost of £30,000), and the need for work to begin on the removal/pruning of trees planted in public open spaces in housing areas covered by the HBA area, for which no budget has been identified.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that the report should be remitted to the Housing and Planning, Roads and Environment Committees, highlighting the points that are under their respective Directorates and which require funding within the 1998/99 budget.

3. Cemeteries Section

(Previous Minute Reference: Commercial Services Committee 1 October 1997.)

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on progress being made following the appointment of the Cemetery Services Manager.

In line with the recommendation by the Corporate Strategy Committee in January 1997, a Cemetery Services Manager and Assistant Cemetery Services Manager have now been appointed. The Cemeteries Office is now located at Ardrossan Road, Saltcoats to facilitate a quick response to the needs of the cemetery operations throughout North Ayrshire, although the administration of cemeteries is still currently being carried out in the Area Offices then relayed to the Cemeteries Office. Discussions are ongoing to find a cost-effective and simple means of computerising cemeteries records.

Other developments being pursued relate to the rationalisation of public holiday dates to ensure uniformity of service across North Ayrshire, the introduction of graveside dress and hydraulic shoring of graves. Individual signs will also be installed in each cemetery in the near future.

The report also confirmed slow progress in relation to the purchase of new cemetery grounds in Largs, because of problems in contacting the land owner.

The Committee agreed a) that a demonstration of the proposed computer system would be arranged for members, and b) to receive a report on the new cemetery grounds in Largs at the next meeting.

4. Training Plan 1997/98

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on the proposed Training Plan for 1997/98.

The diverse range of services and responsibilities carried out by staff within the Commercial Services Directorate requires a training programme that is itself diverse and flexible and provision has been made to finance such training requirements within the Directorate.

The proposed Training Plan offers a range of in-service courses for employees in the Directorate's four sections and provides assistance to employees wishing to undertake a range of external courses such as HNC, MBA and Degree level courses, and vocational qualifications, which contribute to the needs of the Directorate. Additionally, due to the range of services where manual work is carried out, health and safety training forms a key element of the Training Plan.

A Safety/Training Officer and a Training Assistant are employed to co-ordinate the training requirements for the organisation's 2,300 employees.

Noted.

5. Personal Development Plans

Submit report by the Director of Commercial Services on proposals to introduce Personal Development Plans.

The Personal Development Review System has been specifically designed by the Council's Central training Unit for the Commercial Services Directorate. The system enables Managers to assess the training requirements of their staff and to measure those requirements against business objectives, while giving consideration to the financial resources available at the same time.

The system involves identifying employee skills and experience; measuring employee skills against organisation requirements; reviewing employee development; and evaluating the personal development process. Evaluation of the overall process will be carried out by the senior management team on a quarterly basis and all employees within the Commercial Services Directorate will participate in the system.

Noted.

6. Tenders for Vehicles Etc. 1997/98

(Previous Minute Reference: Commercial Services Committee 20 August 1997.)

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on tenders received and accepted in respect of the third phase of the replacement vehicles programme for 1997/98.

Noted.

7. Cleaning Contract: Customer Satisfaction Report 13/8/97 - 9/9/97

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on the standards of cleanliness being achieved in the Building Cleaning Contract.

The Customer Satisfaction Report covered the period from 13 August to 9 September 1997 during which the level of building cleaning achieving the acceptable standard or above is 88%.

Noted.

8. Revenue Budgetary Control Report for Period 1 April 1997 to 10 October 1997

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on Revenue Budgetary Control for the period 1 April to 19 October 1997.

Current figures at 10 October 1997 indicate that the Directorate is operating at an underspend of £142,000. However, projections imply that an overspend of £86,000 will arise by the end of the financial year. This figure represents an overspend of 1.06% on the annual budget for the Directorate stemming from under provision for pay awards/superannuation and for cemeteries

The Committee agreed to remit to the Chair, in consultation with the Director of Commercial Services, to identify measures to rectify the situation and to report to the Corporate Strategy Committee on 26 November 1997.

9. Function (Special Catering): The Catering Section

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on the Function (Special Catering) activity operated by the Catering Section of the Directorate.

Special catering for functions is an important element of the Council's catering service. Since April 1996 the Catering and Cleaning Section has established clear goals concerning both operational standards and financial objectives. Turnover has increased from £4,000 to approximately £75,000 in 1996/97 and the anticipated turnover for the current year is expected to be in excess of £90,000, much of it from repeat business.

Members were advised that the future development of this business is crucial to its success, and that a "function pack", promoting the service has been produced to enable potential customers to plan and price out their functions in line with their requirements.

Noted.

10. Re-launch of BS EN ISO 9002: Building Cleaning Contract

Submitted report by the Director of Commercial Services on the re-launch of the BS EN ISO 9002 Building Cleaning Contract.

The Catering and Cleaning Section and the Support Services Section have both successfully undergone an audit of their quality systems by the British Standards institute and both Sections have successfully achieved the ISO 9002 accreditation.

It is the Directorate's goal to ensure that the ISO accreditation is extended to all establishments with a building cleaning function, including all former Cunninghame District Council and Irvine Development Corporation premises.

Noted.

11. Exclusion of Public

The Committee 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 item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 9 of Part I of Schedule 7A of the Act.

12. Irvine: Bogside: Proposed Landfill Site

(Previous Minute Reference: Commercial Services Committee 1 October 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a visit to the proposed landfill site at Bogside, Irvine, which was made on Monday 3 November 1997 by Councillors McNamara, Donn, Munro, Rae and Steven, together with officers from the Planning Roads and Environment, Commercial Services and Chief Executive Directorates. Representatives from ICI, RPS Cairns and Halcrow Crouch also attended. Following the visit a meeting was held in Nobel House at which the proposals were summarised and clarification provided on issues raised by members.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to proceed with a submission for Planning Permission in respect of this proposal, (b) that the Directors of Commercial Services and Planning, Roads and Environment report any significant representations to the Committee prior to referral to the Secretary of State, and (c) that members not present at the visit held on 3 November 1997 be given an

opportunity to view the site at an early date.

The meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.