

Corporate Strategy Committee
29 July 1997

Irvine, 29 July 1997 - At a Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

Present

James Clements, Patrick Browne, Ian Clarkson, John Donn, David Gallagher, Samuel Gooding, Jane Gorman, James Jennings, Thomas Morris, David O'Neill, Robert Rae, Robert Reilly, John Sillars, George Steven and Samuel Taylor.

In Attendance

The Chief Executive; The Director of Financial Services; The Head of Corporate Business; F. Keddlity, Head of Sports and Horticultural Services (Community and Recreational Services); E. McNaught, Head of Customer Services (Housing Services); G. Lawson, Principal Officer (Policy/Administration); M. McCormick, Press Officer (Marketing); and J. Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

Chair

Mr. Clements in the Chair.

Apologies for Absence

Jack Carson and Thomas Dickie.

1. Minutes Confirmed

The Minutes of the Meetings of the Committee held on 27 May and 26 June 1997, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

2. The Third Report of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life: Standards of Conduct in Local Government in England, Scotland and Wales

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee 10 September 1996.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the findings of the Nolan Report on Standards of Conduct in Local Government including proposed arrangements for its consideration.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Chief Executive include this topic on the agenda of a future Seminar for Members; and (b) to consider a further report at the next meeting with a view to approving a suitable response which requires to be submitted to COSLA by 10 October 1997 and to the Scottish Office by 31 October 1997.

3. Best Value Regime

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee: 26 June 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive providing updated information on the Best Value Regime which has been endorsed by the Secretary of State for Scotland.

The Secretary of State for Scotland has accepted in full the proposals by the Joint Scottish Office/COSLA/Accounts Commission Task Force for a Best Value Regime. Consequently the

Council are required to make a submission on Best Value to the Secretary of State by 26 September 1997. The three main aspects which will require to be addressed by the submission are (i) confirmation that the Council has completed the CCT Tendering Processes in accordance with Paragraph two of SODD Circular 16/1997; (ii) an assessment of the Council's ability to operate Best Value incorporating the self-assessment questionnaire in the Accounts Commission's Management Module 1 (where the Council is currently unable to operate Best Value systems and processes it should provide a plan to upgrade systems and processes to enable it to comply with Best Value criteria); and (iii) a summary of documentary evidence to support any claims that Best Value systems are already in operation.

Prior to submitting the Council's views on this matter to the Secretary of State, the Committee agreed to hold a Seminar on Best Value for Members on 29 August 1997.

4. Revenue Budget Preparation 1998/99

The Secretary of State for Scotland has agreed that three-year budgeting could be an essential element of a Best Value system and this will involve the creation of meaningful budgets over three forward years. As a first step in the budgeting process it is essential that a review be undertaken to critically and objectively examine the current level of expenditure and income generation as an input to the budget setting process covering the three years ending 31 March 2001.

It is proposed that Members will conduct the review with assistance from the Directorates of the Chief Executive and Financial Services. There will be seven service areas to be considered and a review team will be allocated to each. Each service area will be reviewed by a team led by a non-related Committee Chair. The review process will focus on a presentation by each Directorate to the appropriate review team followed by a discussion forum and a briefing paper for Directors will be provided. After all presentations have taken place each team will report its findings to the other Members at a Seminar to be arranged in September 1997.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive proceed with the arrangements for the Budget Strategy Review process on the basis of the terms proposed.

5. Customer Comments Scheme

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee: 22 January 1996.)

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the Council's performance in managing customer comments including proposals for enhancing the role of the Customer Comments Scheme.

The main objective of the Scheme, which was launched on 1 September 1996, is to ensure that the Council has a mechanism for continuously improving services by listening to and acting upon feedback from customers and additionally to ensure an integrated and co-ordinated approach to customer comments. The Scheme, based on the theme of "Listening and Learning" is promoted by posters, explanatory leaflets and freepost forms and the Local Government Ombudsman has commented on both the positive message that the Scheme puts across and on its sound structure.

The report gave statistical information relating to performance indicators covering the period from 1 September 1996 to 31 March 1997. Approximately 90% of customer comments are either cleared immediately or after a stage 1 response (a response by an appropriate Officer). Stage 2 responses (by Directors) and stage 3 responses (by the Chief Executive) are very much in the minority. This reflects a key principle that decisions should be taken at the lowest practical level thus giving staff more responsibility and customers a speedier response.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the performance in handling customer comments for the 1996/97 financial year; (b) to approve a quarterly reporting system for customer comments both for Corporate Strategy and Service Committees; (c) that Customer Comments Scheme training should be included in the induction of all new staff; and (d) that the appropriate officers investigate the

viability of a computerised customer comments management system for the whole Council.

6. Further Education Developments in North Ayrshire

(Previous Minute Reference: Special Corporate Strategy Committee: 26 June 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on correspondence received from the Minister for Education and Industry relative to the proposals for Further Education in North Ayrshire and giving details of the action which requires to be taken as a consequence.

At a Special Meeting on 26 June 1997 the Committee agreed that the Council convey to the Minister for Education and Industry its full support for James Watt College proposals and an expectation that the Council will have a role in the study which has been commissioned. The Minister has since indicated that the Council will be invited to give evidence to the study while appreciating the need for an early completion within a reasonable timescale.

The Committee agreed (a) to remit to the Officer/Working Group in consultation with the Chair of the Corporate Strategy Committee to collate the Council's evidence for submission; and (b) that the Chief Executive write to the Minister for Education and Industry expressing the Council's concern and restating the urgent need to effect an early completion of this study.

7. Ministerial Meeting: Enterprise Zone Special Status for North Ayrshire

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee: 27 May 1997.)

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on arrangements for a meeting with the Minister of State for Local Government and Housing and the Minister of State for Education and Industry on the regeneration of North Ayrshire.

The Council recently wrote to the Secretary of State for Scotland pursuing its case for a special status for North Ayrshire and its interest in the devolvement of Scottish Office functions from Edinburgh to North Ayrshire.

The Minister for Local Government and Housing has indicated that there are some issues he wishes to discuss with the Council in relation to the proposals put to the Secretary of State. An Officer Group of the Council has been working over the past few months to build a case for special status in North Ayrshire and in view of the comments received from the Minister additional work has been carried out in an attempt to meet the requirements of the Scottish Office prior to meeting with them in September.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Council accept the invitation to meet with the Minister for Local Government and Housing; (b) that the Council be represented by the Chair, the Convener, and Councillor Gooding along with the Chief Executive, the Head of Corporate Business and the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment; and (c) that an invitation be extended to the Minister for Local Government and Housing to visit North Ayrshire.

8. Local Agenda 21: Environmental Policy

(Previous Minute Reference: Special Corporate Strategy Committee: 27 May 1997.)

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on an Environmental Policy for North Ayrshire.

Following full consultation all comments received on the Draft Environmental Policy Consultation Document have now been fully considered by the Policy Group of the Local Agenda 21 Officers Team and the Draft Policy has now been revised accordingly. It is intended that the final Environmental Policy Document will have a widespread circulation. The Officers Team will begin the process of framing a programme of action which will entail considerable discussion with all Directorates who will be asked to put forward draft proposals for consideration by the Committee

initially and ultimately for discussion/consultation with the wider community. It is also intended to offer guidance to Directors and Managers on their submissions and the Officers Team will determine and report in due course on the means by which this may be achieved and on the proposals for community involvement.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Environmental Policy be adopted in the terms indicated in the report; and (b) otherwise to note the position meantime.

9. Review of Information and Advice Services

(Previous Minute Reference: Corporate Strategy Committee: 27 May 1997.)

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the final conclusion and recommendations arising from the review of Information and Advice Services covering welfare rights, money advice and client representation.

On 27 May 1997 the Committee agreed to approve in principle the development of a single-funded voluntary agency and, following further research and investigation, that a full and final report on the matter be submitted to this meeting. The Review Team have now completed their programme of site visits, structured interviews with management and front-line staff and research of similar review processes being carried out by other authorities. Details were given on the current provision of services and on the key conclusions arising from the review in relation to the need for services, duplication, gaps, lack of strategic planning, conflicts of interest, choice, the training deficit and lack of co-ordination. Information was also provided on the services of the Consumer Advice Bureau and other voluntary agencies.

The report set out recommendations for the strategic development of information and advice services within North Ayrshire as follows:-

(a) that a new single independent agency be set up with Council financial support with effect from 1 April 1998 to deliver Information and Advice Services to replace those which the Council presently funds on an annual basis;

(b) that the new agency (i) be called "Citizens Advice and Rights North Ayrshire"; (ii) will operate in partnership with the Council on the basis of a Service Level Agreement and three year rolling funding; and (iii) will seek affiliation to Citizens Advice Scotland (as opposed to being an autonomous CAB) to ensure it benefits from the use of unpaid volunteers and the appropriate support from Citizens Advice Scotland;

(c) that a Steering Group be set up to oversee the transition process comprising a Chairperson, CAB (one from Management Committee and one staff representatives), TUWC (one from Management Committee and one staff representative), AIAS (one from Management Committee and one staff representative), Citizens Advice Scotland (one representative), North Ayrshire Council Elected Members (Chairs of the Five Area Committees), Social Work Directorate (one representative), Housing Services Directorate (one representative), Financial Services Directorate (one representative);

(d) that the Chief Executive be authorised to nominate a Chairperson;

(e) that an Officers Sub-Group be formed to provide legal, personnel, architectural, financial and information technology support to guide the transition process and report as necessary to the Steering Group;

(f) that the Steering Group will in due course develop an appropriate Management Committee for the new agency; and

(g) to approve the recommendations in respect of (i) enhancing the role of the Council in the delivery of Information and Advice Services; (ii) more effective working together; and (iii) a medium term feasibility study for integrating benefit, administration and related Information and Advice

Services, in the terms indicated in the report.

The Committee agreed (A) to adopt the recommendations contained in the report; and (B) to approve the release of the second tranche of grant funding for 1997/98 for Cunninghame Citizens Advice Bureau, the Three Towns Unemployed Workers Centre and Arran Information and Advice Service.

10. Urban Programme

(a) North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership: Urban Programme Evaluations: New Partners in Care

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of the evaluation of Urban Programme Project No. 65/93, New Partners in Care whose funding continues until 31 March 1998. Appended to the report was a form giving details of the evaluation.

The Committee agreed (a) to endorse the conclusions of the evaluation at Section 21; (b) to recommend that the supervising Social Work Directorate consider suitable bids under the process for determining Regeneration Programme spending for 1998/99 in respect of those "stand alone" elements of the project i.e. 'Careline' and 'Befriending Scheme' targeted on the eligible areas and linked to any other complementary existing projects; and (c) submit these recommendations to the Regeneration Partnership as the position of North Ayrshire Council.

(b) North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership: Urban Programme Termination: Irvine Befriend a Child

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a revised termination date for the funding of the Urban Programme Project No. 2/93, Irvine Befriend a Child including proposed arrangements for its continued funding.

The Committee agreed (a) to note that the Scottish Office has indicated a termination date of 31 August 1997 rather than the date of 30 June 1998 which appeared in all Council records; and (b) that representation be made to the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership to extend the funding to 31 March 1998 to allow a full evaluation and subsequent recommendation to be made within the agreed process for Urban Programme evaluation.

(c) Urban Programme Terminating Project: Rape Counselling and Resource Centre C74/90

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a project for which Urban Programme funding terminates in 1997/98 together with recommendations for action based on an evaluation report.

The Committee agreed (a) to endorse the findings of the Evaluation Panel; (b) to note that funding for the Rape Counselling and Resource Centre Project terminates on 31 August 1997, that East Ayrshire Council is the lead authority in supporting this project and that no budgetary provision has been made for continued funding from North Ayrshire Council; (c) to instruct the Director of Social Work, with the appropriate involvement of other Directorates and voluntary organisations, to consider alternative means of responding to the needs of those people who have previously used the Rape Counselling Service and to report to a future meeting; (d) as a matter of urgency, to instruct the Director of Social Work to report to the Social Work Committee on 6 August on interim arrangements for the continuation of a basic service within North Ayrshire; and (e) to communicate this decision to East Ayrshire Council.

(d) Urban Programme Terminating Project: Strathclyde Credit Union Development Agency (SCUDA) C829/89

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a project for which Urban Programme funding terminates in 1997/98 together with recommendations for action based on an evaluation report.

The Committee agreed (a) to endorse the findings of the Evaluation Panel; (b) to note that funding for Strathclyde Credit Union Development Agency terminated on 30 April 1997; (c) that no funding should be made available to the project after the termination of Urban Programme funding as no budgetary provision for this has been made; (d) to continue to support the development of local Credit Unions through the Council's Community Grants Schemes and a Section 10 Grant to SCUDA; and (e) to communicate this decision to Glasgow City Council.

11. North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership Annual Report 1996/97

Submitted report by the Chief Executive along with the Annual Report of the North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership 1996/97. The Annual Report contained details of a proposed structure for the Partnership. Each Partner Organisation has been asked to approve this structure.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the proposals for Partnership structure in the terms outlined in the report; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

12. Homeless Persons Individual Needs Accommodation Strategy: Implementation Plan

Submitted joint report by the Directors of Housing Services and Social Work on the implementation of the Homeless Persons Individual Needs Accommodation Strategy.

The Homeless Persons Individual Needs Accommodation Strategy is designed to meet the needs of certain categories of homeless persons who require support to enable them to sustain a tenancy. Details were given on the categories of applicants identified as possibly requiring such support together with details of a proposed priority list of future projects and potential sources of funding. It is proposed that a new supported lodging scheme for North Ayrshire with appropriate built in support by Social Work be established and promoted in an effort to make the necessary number of placements available for use as intended within the Strategy. It is further proposed that one unit of temporary accommodation be established during 1997/98 which can be used to house homeless applicants who require emergency specialised support and that agency agreements be entered into with support agencies in relation to the provision of appropriate support. The location of such a unit would be established in conjunction with the support agency and local Member for the area identified. Project management would require a detailed feasibility study to be undertaken for each proposed future project. Some work in this regard has already been done but additional work is required on how the project will be managed, support provided and the need to consult and inform local communities.

Funding will be provided for the necessary alterations from the HRA Capital Programme. An allocation from the Capital Programme would require to be committed for future years to meet the cost of the other proposed projects. Funding for the support element would be met by the rental charges for each property and additional funding will be sought from other sources.

After discussion, the Committee agreed (a) to approve the priority list of projects identified in the report and to authorise the Director of Housing Services to proceed with implementation; (b) that the Director of Housing Services (i) ensure an adequate level of supervision of the properties at Donaldson Avenue, Stevenston is provided; and (ii) review the mix and concentration of tenure at Cornmill House, Kilwinning; (c) to approve the establishment of a new supported lodging scheme and to authorise the Director of Social Work to proceed with implementation; (d) to approve the establishment of one unit of temporary supported accommodation and to authorise the Director of Housing Services to proceed with implementation; and (e) to approve the funding and project management proposals.

13. Millport: Garrison House

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of discussions with Bute Estates, Argyll and the Isles Enterprise and Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust in relation to their possible participation in a partnership with the Council to save Garrison House, Millport.

The extension of the insurer's deadline for the vacation of Garrison House to the end of August 1997 has enabled further consideration to be given to the options available for the relocation of the existing library and museum. Negotiations for the purchase of the Harbour Restaurant have been suspended due to several factors. As a result of the extension of the insurer's deadline the museum can now close virtually as normal at the end of its season with further consideration being given to a new location before the 1998 season. It is proposed to relocate the library to the Town Hall and the administrative offices to Cunninghame Housing Association's Offices at 49 Stuart Street as originally planned under a six month lease and a month to month thereafter.

Discussions have been held with the Argyll and the Isles Enterprise and Bute Estates on a framework in which the principle parties could co-operate in the shared aim of preserving Garrison House, if possible, with the assistance and support of the local community. The Chief Executive has also discussed the matter with the Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust.

It is proposed that the principle parties form a Steering Group with a feasibility study being undertaken by Officers of the three bodies to produce a report on the options available, costs and realistic funding packages. The three partners will have assistance from Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust as well, perhaps, as Historic Scotland.

Pending receipt of the study the Group will require to consider appointing a Chairman and also the means of consulting the local community on the outcome of the study.

In view of the temporary nature of the Council's arrangements to relocate their services on the island it will be a pre-requisite that the feasibility study, the Steering Group's initial consideration of it and the subsequent community consultation on it will require to be completed and the partners secured agreement on a way forward achieved within six months. Details of the Council's initial policy considerations for submission to the Garrison House Steering Group were provided in the report.

The Committee agreed (a) to work in partnership with Argyll and the Isles Enterprise and Bute Estates assisted by Historic Scotland and the Strathclyde Building Preservation Trust to consider options for saving Garrison House; (b) to remit to the Officers of the partner organisations to submit a feasibility study to the partnership within two months for consideration by the Steering Group and thereafter island consultation; (c) to (i) enter into a temporary lease with the Cunninghame Housing Association for their premises at 49 Stuart Street; (ii) relocate the library to the Town Hall; and (iii) store the artefacts of the museum at the completion of the 1997 season; (d) to suspend negotiations for more permanent accommodation pending the Council's consideration of the Steering Group's Final Report; and (e) to submit the Council's initial observations to the Steering Group on the range of facilities and services which the Council could resource on the island.

14. Irvine: Trinity Church

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the action taken to deal with the emergency situation arising from the structural deterioration of the Trinity Church steeple, Irvine.

The Protective Services Committee on 12 June 1997 homologated the actions taken by Officers of the Council to deal with an emergency relating to the structural deterioration of the Trinity Church steeple and authorised the appropriate Officers to take any further steps to ensure public safety and contain the deterioration.

Further meetings have since been held with the emergency services, Ravenscroft Properties and Land Securities, Historic Scotland and the Trinity Trustees to appraise them of the up-to-date position

and to advise them on proposed action with a view to obtaining their continued co-operation.

A scaffold has been erected at the steeple and a full video survey was undertaken, the results of which have been shown to Historic Scotland with whom agreement has been reached on the steps which require to be taken. Historic Scotland have confirmed the availability of a 50% grant payable through the Trustees and consequently further works have been authorised. Comparative costings including timetables were submitted for (a) selective demolition, (b) repair and engineering brick or alternatively (c) like for like repair, the only option which would qualify for grant. Taking into account the Historic Scotland grant, the like for like repair option represented Best Value and the contractor was authorised to proceed on this basis to stabilise the steeple at the 30 metre mark. This work is estimated to take eight weeks following which additional scaffolding will require to be erected to stabilise the steeple at the higher level which will take a further two weeks. The Council has taken all appropriate steps timeously to protect the public and render safe the dangerous structure of the Trinity Church steeple.

The Committee agreed (a) to homologate the actions authorised by the Chief Executive to deal with the emergency situation; and (b) to authorise the Chief Executive to take such further steps as may be necessary to ensure public safety and contain the structural deterioration of the Trinity Church steeple.

15. Highlands and Islands Enterprise: Membership of Board

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a request from the Scottish Office to identify possible candidates for the likely vacancies on the Board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

The Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) is a government funded economic development agency for the highlands and islands of Scotland established in terms of the Enterprise and New Towns (Scotland) Act 1990. It consists of a Chairman, ten appointed Members and a Chief Executive.

The Committee agreed to advise the Scottish Office that the Council wish to nominate Councillors George Steven and John Sillars, and Mr. Alan Johnston, Arran, as candidates for the Board of Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

16. Draft Proposals for the Nomenclature of Territory Units for European Purposes

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on proposals by the Office for National Statistics on the draft proposals for the Nomenclature of Territory Units for European purposes (NUTS).

In July 1996 the Office for National Statistics issued a Consultation Document on behalf of the Government's Statistical Service in relation to their proposals to alter the way in which statistics are gathered throughout the UK, the structure of which took account of Local Government re-organisation in Scotland.

The document stated that with regard to the NUTS structure, Arran and Cumbrae should be moved from the Highlands and Islands Area to the West Central Scotland Area. Apart from the Highlands and Islands Area the rest of the UK is based on local government boundaries and the National Statistics Office propose that the Highlands and Islands should now follow suit.

At present, Arran and Cumbrae's connection with the Highlands and Islands makes them eligible for European Funding as at NUTS 2 level. This is the basis on which Objective 1 Areas are defined. If both islands were to move to the West Central Scotland Area this could affect their ability to access Objective 1 funds. The Convener has gained the support of the Convener's group of the Highlands and Islands for maintaining the status quo and COSLA and the West of Scotland European Consortium also support this view.

Arising from discussion, the Chair reported that Members consider that the post of European Liaison Officer currently located within the Planning, Roads and Environment Directorate should be

relocated within the Directorate of the Chief Executive to co-ordinate to best advantage all European matters in accordance with the Council's overall European Strategy.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Council write to the Member of Parliament for Cunninghame North, the MEP for West of Scotland, the Secretary of State for Scotland, COSLA, WOSSEC and the National Statistics Office advising them that the Council wish Arran and Cumbrae to remain within the Highlands and Islands Enterprise Area; (b) that the post of European Liaison Officer be relocated within the structure of the Directorate of the Chief Executive and Corporate Support Services; and (c) that the Chief Executive undertake discussions with the Director of Planning, Roads and Environment on the arrangements for the implementation of this structural change.

17. Article 10 Trans-National Programme

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the opportunities presented by the Trans-National Programme in relation to IT developments on Arran and Cumbrae.

There is a possibility that a programme under Article 10 of ERDF and the Interreg-IIC Initiative in respect of IT projects for community information may be supported. Such a programme should be part of the Trans-National programme approved by the EEC. The Northern Periphery Programme covers the Highlands and Islands Area and the Council could therefore take part.

The Council has already been involved in developing IT information for rural areas within North Ayrshire and other authorities within the Highlands and Islands area have been carrying out similar initiatives. At the recent visit by the Highlands and Islands partnership to North Norway, this matter was raised and discussions have taken place with the Cabinet Office who may offer support by way of assisting with any application for such a project. The project should ensure that it is used to simplify interaction between local government and its customers, and provide services, as far as possible, when the customer requires them. The project should also aim at ways of streamlining processes and assisting persons or organisations dealing with local authorities in obtaining near instantaneous responses.

Through the Highlands and Islands Group, North Ayrshire Council has offered to act as lead authority in pursuing this objective. If the Council were to take the lead in this, discussions will require to be held with the Scottish Office on funding.

The Committee agreed (a) that the appropriate officers pursue this matter; and (b) that North Ayrshire Council should act as a lead authority on behalf of the Highlands and Islands.

18. Local Authorities (Property Transfer) Order 1995: The Caird Centre, Caird Street, Hamilton

Submitted report by the Legal Services Manager on the proposed withdrawal of the Referral submitted to the Property Commission in respect of the Caird Centre, Caird Street, Hamilton.

On 30 July 1996 the Committee approved the withdrawal of Referrals made to the Property Commission in respect of a large number of properties with the exception of the Caird Centre, Caird Street, Hamilton which is the central facility for the Information Technology Services of the former Strathclyde Regional Council. The majority of Unitary Authorities/Boards have now withdrawn their Referrals made in respect of this property on the basis of the costs involved in bringing the property into a generally marketable condition.

From an IT operational point of view it is considered that the requirements of North Ayrshire Council are adequately covered by the existing Service Level Agreement and the Council's requirement for access to the Caird Centre will cease by the end of the existing two year Service Level Agreement period.

The Committee agreed (a) to the withdrawal of the Referral made to the Property Commission in respect of the above property; (b) to instruct the Chief Executive to advise the other relevant

Authorities/Boards of this withdrawal; and (c) to advise the Property Commission similarly.

19. Arran: Bus Service Provision

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of the tender process for the renewal of the local bus service and school bus contract on Arran.

On 27 September 1996 the Committee was advised of a substantial increase in the costs of bus service contracts on Arran and agreed to award the contracts to Stagecoach for a twelve month period only to allow alternative options to be examined in an effort to reduce costs. A Member/Officer Working Group was established to investigate these options in consultation with Strathclyde Passenger Transport. The SPT published an invitation to tender on 3 June 1997 requesting tender documents for the local and school bus contracts on the island by the closing date of 24 June 1997. Specifications were prepared with minor revisions to the current services being provided and tenders were invited on the basis of two separate fare scales, details of which were given in the report. Western Buses Limited, a subsidiary of Stagecoach, tendered for all of the 15 contracts and C.R. Henry tendered for 1 school contract only.

On 25 July 1997 the Member/Officer Working Group considered the bids received taking into account issues in relation to cost, quality, duration of contract, fare scale, overall package and late ferry arrival arrangements. After a full discussion the Working Group were of the view that the package offered by Western Buses Limited represents the best value for the Council on the basis of the five year contract and a rural fare scale.

The Committee agreed (a) to accept the optional vehicle package submitted by Western Buses Limited for local and school bus services on Arran over a five year period from 12 October 1997; (b) in principle, that a rural fare scale should apply which would result in a cost of £411,500 per annum; (c) to accept the tender submitted by Western Buses Limited for the service required for the late arrival of the ferry at Brodick Pier at £0.77 per mile with a £30 call-out charge; and (d) that the Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) negotiate the award of the contracts on the above basis.

20. Travelling Costs for Rural Community Councils

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the extra travelling costs incurred by members of rural Community Councils and proposals to address this issue.

In recognition of the high costs of rural transport the North Coast and Arran Area Committee made a payment of £400 towards Community Councils for travelling expenses in Arran during the financial year 1996/97 and recommended that this issue be addressed in any adjustments to the Community Council administration scheme. Details were given of the basis on which Community Councils are currently funded under the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils. Given that Arran Community Council covers an area of 165 sq. miles, almost 50% of the North Ayrshire area, there would appear to be a case for making additional funds available to meet the high costs of travel for rural Community Councils.

The Committee agreed (a) that rural Community Councils be eligible for additional Administration Grant funding to meet the costs of members' travelling expenses to authorised meetings; (b) travel costs at fifteen pence per mile up to a maximum of £500 in total be met initially from within the existing Administration Grant with additional grant funding available if required; and (c) the high cost of travelling expenses for rural Community Councils be considered in the review of the Council's Scheme for the Establishment of Community Councils in North Ayrshire due to be undertaken in the near future.

21. Cunninghamhame District Council: Final Accounts 1995/96

Submitted certified accounts for Cunninghamhame District Council for the year ended 31 March 1996 in terms of the Local Authority Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1985 and the Local Government (Transitional) Financial Provisions (Scotland) Order 1996.

Noted.

22. West of Scotland Water Authority: Nomination of Council Representatives

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on nominations for two representatives to serve on the West of Scotland Water Authority.

There are five vacancies in the West of Scotland Water Authority and each Local Authority within the Water Authority's boundaries has been asked by COSLA to submit the names of two Members to be considered as candidates to serve on the Authority.

The Committee agreed (a) to nominate James Jennings and David Munn as candidates to serve on the West of Scotland Water Authority; and (b) that COSLA be advised of these nominations.

23. Conferences: Seminars Etc.: Invitations

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on invitations to attend the following conferences:-

- (a) The Scottish Accident Prevention Council 48th Annual Conference to be held in the Hospitality Inn, Irvine from 1 to 3 September 1997; and
- (b) The Rural Forum Scotland's Money Conference to be held in the Caledonian Hotel, Oban on 30 and 31 October 1997.

The Committee agreed to authorise any Members interested to attend (a) and that John Sillars be authorised to attend (b).

24. 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 23 June 1997.

Arising from the Minutes the undernoted matter was brought to the attention of the Committee:-

(i) Agenda Item 7(a) Challenge Budget 1997/98

The Committee agreed that all schools within North Ayrshire be invited to submit proposals for Community Safety Initiatives against this year's Challenge Budget in addition to local organisations.

The Committee otherwise 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 24 June 1997.

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 25 June 1997.

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 its Meeting held on 25 June 1997.

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 26 June 1997.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

25. Requests for Financial Assistance

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

(a) The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Road Safety)

The Committee agreed to award the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (Road Safety) £229.13;

(b) Council for Scottish Archaeology

The Committee agreed to award the Council for Scottish Archaeology £100;

(c) Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations

The Committee agreed to award the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations £250;

(d) Scottish Environmental Education Council

The Committee agreed to award the Scottish Environmental Education Council £50;

(e) The West of Scotland Community Relations Council

The Committee agreed to award the West of Scotland Community Relations Council £500;

(f) The Fawcett Society

The Committee agreed to award the Fawcett Society £50;

(g) North Ayrshire Voluntary Organisations Federation

The Committee agreed to award the North Ayrshire Voluntary Organisations Federation £200;
and

(h) Scotland Forward

The Committee agreed to continue consideration to the next meeting.

26. Urgent Items

The Chair agreed to deal with the following item as a matter of urgency.

27. Caledonian MacBrayne Limited: Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers Union: Industrial Dispute

Mr. Sillars expressed concern over the potentially serious consequences for Arran of any strike action arising from the current industrial dispute between Messrs. Caledonian MacBrayne Limited and the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union.

The Committee agreed that the Council write to Messrs. Caledonian MacBrayne Limited and to the Rail, Maritime and Transport Union emphasising the serious consequences for Arran and Cumbrae of any industrial action and requesting that an urgent meeting be arranged between the two parties concerned to resolve the dispute.

The meeting ended at 2.45 p.m.