

Corporate Strategy Committee  
27 November 1996

**Irvine, 27 November 1996** - At a meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee of North Ayrshire Council at 2.00 p.m.

**Present**

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

**In Attendance**

The Chief Executive; The Directors of Financial Services, Housing Services and Social Work; The Head of Corporate Business; The Legal Services Manager; The Information Technology Services Manager; G Lawson, Principal Officer (Policy/Administration), M Peffer, Principal Officer (Marketing/Publicity) and J Bannatyne, Administration Officer (Chief Executive).

**Chair**

Mr Clements in the Chair.

**Apologies for Absence**

Stewart Dewar.

**1. Minutes Confirmed**

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 22 October 1996, copies of which had previously been circulated, were confirmed.

**2. Local Government Finance Settlement 1997/98**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on the 1997/98 Local Government Finance Settlement. The Settlement is slightly higher than expected and is more than the spending plans previously announced by the Government. Copies of the report were Tabled at the meeting.

Government Supported Expenditure has increased to £6214.3m against the previous year's adjusted figure of £6082.8m, an increase of £131.5m (2.2%). This is broken down by Government Aggregated Expenditure up £116m (2.2%) and Loan Charges up £15.5m (2.2%). Aggregated External Finance has increased to £5343.2m against the previous year's figure of £5283.2m (1.1%). Capping will be retained in 1997/98 and the provisional capping limit allows for only 0.5% increase above the 1996/97 budget (i.e. £0.717m for North Ayrshire). North Ayrshire will also receive additional resources to cover the shortfall in Housing Benefits on the transfer of IDC houses. The rules involving Capital receipts have been altered and from 1 April 1997, 75% of HRA receipts and 50% of Non-HRA receipts will require to be set aside for repayment of debt.

The Committee agreed (a) to write to the Scottish Office and to COSLA to protest in the strongest possible terms against the requirement to set aside 75% of HRA receipts and 50% Non-HRA receipts from 1 April 1997; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

### **3. Loans Fund: Transfer to Repairs and Renewals Fund**

Submitted report by the Director of Financial Services on a proposal for the transfer of £1m from the Loans Fund to the Repairs and Renewals Fund.

A recent mid-term review revealed that the Loans Fund would receive a substantial surplus in 1996/97. £1.2m has already been transferred to the Repairs and Renewals Fund to increase the resources available for the Capital Programme and a further £0.5m was applied to assist in the savings package for the 1996/97 budget. Since the Council faces further substantial cuts in its resources in 1997/98 it is imperative to maximise all resources.

The Committee agreed to approve the transfer of £1m from the Loans Fund Surplus to the Repairs and Renewals Fund to assist the Council's 1997/98 budget.

### **4. FE College Development in North Ayrshire**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the evaluation of the presentations by James Watt, Kilmarnock and Ayr Colleges, for Further Education development in North Ayrshire.

North Ayrshire Council has no Further Education College within its boundaries and 2,500 students are required to travel outwith this area for further education purposes. Market research has shown that 76% of school leavers wish to study locally. Three Colleges viz. James Watt, Kilmarnock and Ayr indicated that they wished to compete for the opportunity which exists to develop further education in North Ayrshire and on 29 October 1996, each College made a presentation on its proposals to a Member/Officer Working Group of the Council. Thereafter Officers considered the detailed submissions, with their evaluation being undertaken on the basis of criteria which, subject to one adjustment, had previously been agreed with Enterprise Ayrshire. Each of the Colleges had received details of the criteria immediately prior to the presentations which were repeated to Enterprise Ayrshire later the same day.

The following priority order had been given to the criteria for a new College as the most relevant to North Ayrshire:-

- (i) Education Factors - including the provision of additional FE Advanced Courses in North Ayrshire;
- (ii) Economic Development; and
- (iii) Inward Investment.

The Directors of Education, Planning Roads and Environment and Financial Services considered the proposals by the Colleges in detail against the selected criteria. Ayr College did not have a specific proposal for development in North Ayrshire in place and therefore as these proposals were not sufficiently detailed it was only possible to evaluate the proposals submitted by the James Watt and Kilmarnock Colleges. Of these two, only James Watt College submitted a full Business Plan. The assessment of the College against all the respective criteria sets this College apart from the other submission and is the only submission which would bring "additionality". James Watt intend to consider a new building at Howgate, Kilwinning. This would be done in two phases which would result in accommodating 6,000 students. They also propose to establish a network of Community Learning Centres across North Ayrshire and establish an initial site within the Three Towns area in the first year of operation. The complex would deliver a wide range of vocational programmes at HNC/HND level and three part-time Degree programmes would be offered in the first year of operation through the College's relationship with Glasgow Caledonian University and The Open University.

Kilmarnock College propose to build a new College on the site of the former St Peter's Primary School Ardrossan, accommodating 1,000 students by 2000/2001. They also propose to build a College at Howgate, Kilwinning by 1999 which would eventually also accommodate 1,000 students, and expand Irvine Community College to provide a Technology Support Centre. This

would provide an extra 200 places by 2002/2003.

Although both Kilmarnock and James Watt Colleges proposals are in line with the Council's Education Strategy, the proposal by James Watt College has certain advantages in that:-

(a) James Watt does not allow entry to either 16-18 year olds (where the courses are already available in local schools) or to students under eighteen unless they have completed six years of secondary education;

(b) The opportunity to progress from non-advanced to advanced courses in a single campus would foster student loyalty, provide the opportunity to raise students educational horizons and provide a wider range of educational, social and recreational facilities which would be significant in recruiting new students from further afield;

(c) it offers a clearer access to Higher National Courses which will be of significant interest to local business and commerce given the opportunity to improve the skillbase of their employees through advanced level courses on either a part-time or full-time basis; and

(d) its flexibility in relation to the capping regulations through participation in the University of the Highlands and Islands can be to the advantage of North Ayrshire students in that those students who currently travel to Greenock could be relocated in Kilwinning and establish a core of Higher National students and courses on the Kilwinning campus which would provide a foundation for the further development of courses at this level.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the evaluation by the Working Group of the presentations by the three Colleges; (b) to approve the full Business Plan and proposals submitted by James Watt College for the development of Further Education in North Ayrshire; (c) to urge Enterprise Ayrshire to give their full backing to the Business Plan and proposals of James Watt College as "inward investors" in North Ayrshire; (d) to encourage Enterprise Ayrshire to provide additional assistance by the steering of resources to the Three Towns and that a further competition/evaluation of the various College proposals for the Three Towns be undertaken when Kilmarnock and Ayr Colleges have had an opportunity of working up their proposals to a Business Plan level; and (e) to authorise the Working Group to pursue all necessary issues relating to this development and report as required.

##### **5. Reorganisation Accommodation Strategy: Implementation of Final Phase**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the options available for the implementation of the final phase of the Council's Accommodation Strategy.

The Council, in approving the Office Accommodation Strategy for reorganisation noted that two further moves would be required at some stage after 1 April 1996 to complete the process from temporary accommodation. This would involve the Financial Services Directorate moving staff from St Leonard's, Ayr to North Ayrshire; Accountancy and other staff moving from temporary accommodation in Cunningham House to Perceton House; and the movement of the Legal Services Department from the temporary leased premises at Drybridge to Perceton House when this was vacated by IDC. The mid-floor of Perceton House was vacated by IDC as at 1 October 1996, and the ground floor will be vacated by 1 January 1997 with the remainder of the House being vacated by 1 April 1997. Although accommodation has now been identified for the Legal Services Department and this move will proceed, the Director of Financial Services has requested that consideration be given to accommodating all his staff within Cunningham House. If this is the case, the office space not taken up at Perceton House would require to be re-allocated to make full and proper use of that asset with a view to reducing the Council's costs elsewhere.

The report set out principles to be examined when authorising work on the final phase of the Office Accommodation Strategy, the public access and various options for consideration.

Having considered the options available to them, the Committee agreed, subject to the negotiations with Land Securities on the lease of Cunningham House being successfully extended to include the renunciation of the lease of Rivergate House Irvine, that the Roads Section

of the Planning, Roads and Environment Directorate who currently occupy the premises at Rivergate House move to the ground floor of Perceton House.

## **6. Compulsory Competitive Tendering**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of CCT as it affects Support Services together with details on proposals for the packaging etc. of contracts for both Roads and Building Repairs and Maintenance.

A CCT Co-ordinating Working Party Chaired by the Chief Executive has been set up to progress the Council's preparation for each of the defined activities to be put out to tender under CCT. A Support Services Working Party has also been set up to progress the activities of Support Services and the Scottish Office have issued further advice and consultation on this matter. A full report will be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee.

Two sub-groups of the CCT Co-ordinating Working Party were set up to consider in detail proposals for the packaging etc. of contracts for both the Roads Contract and the Building Repairs and Maintenance Contract. Both sub-groups have now submitted finalised details on these contracts to the full Co-ordinating Working Party.

The contract for Roads should commence on 1 July 1997 except for small contracts below £25,000 which commence from 1 April 1997. The Government has agreed to allow winter maintenance to be retained by DLOs without competition. The Lighting Maintenance Contract for North Ayrshire is currently held by a private company, BEI, whose contract expires at the end of March 1997. The company carries out the contract efficiently and are eligible for a one-year extension to their contract. The contract for Building Repairs and Maintenance is due to commence on 1 July 1997 except for smaller contracts which, like Roads, should operate from 1 April 1997.

The Government has introduced three transparency conditions for the period when competition is not in place, which relates to the need to have the process of CCT conducted in a transparently fair and open manner. The Head of Roads has placed an article in appropriate journals requesting expressions of interest in the Roads contract and has also sent questionnaires to various companies in this regard. The Architectural Services Manager has also carried out a market research survey on contractors who may be interested in bidding for the Building Repairs and Maintenance contract. Negotiations will require to be held with the Trade Unions and it is proposed that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Support Services Committee, along with appropriate Officers, consult with the Trade Unions to discuss the Council's strategy on CCT.

The Committee agreed (a) to note that a report on Support Services will be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee; (b) that with regard to the contract for Roads Maintenance:- (i) winter maintenance work and 40% of other work up to a value of £25,000 per contract, be awarded to the Council's Commercial Services Directorate; (ii) all other road work be packaged on a project basis subject to the provisions of competitive tendering; and (iii) that the lighting maintenance contract be offered to BEI for a further year i.e. to the end of March 1998 and thereafter the contract for lighting maintenance be put out to tender; (c) that a Seminar be arranged as a matter of urgency to examine the options available for the packaging of the Building Repairs and Maintenance contract with all members of the Council being invited to attend, to be followed by a Special Meeting of the Corporate Strategy Committee to determine the preferred option; and (d) that the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Support Services Committee along with appropriate officers consult with the Trade Unions to discuss the Council's Strategy on CCT.

## **7. Closed Circuit Television**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress made in relation to the development of a pilot Closed Circuit Television Scheme within Irvine Town Centre.

The Scottish Office has given details of the Closed Circuit Television Challenge Competition for 1997/98 and will make £1.5m available for new or upgraded CCTV projects. Bids require to be

submitted by 31 January 1997.

The development of a pilot CCTV Scheme within Irvine Town Centre has been investigated and it is anticipated that the scheme will cost £100,000 to purchase and install, with annual running costs in the region of £60,000. Enterprise Ayrshire have contributed towards schemes in Kilmarnock and Ayr but have refused to make any contribution to North Ayrshire Council's proposal. The staffing implications for the Scheme will also require further consideration.

The Committee agreed (a) (i) that an indicative sum of £50,000 be inserted in the 1997/98 Capital Programme for the development of a pilot CCTV Scheme within Irvine Town Centre; and (ii) that an indicative sum of £60,000 be inserted in the Revenue Budgets for 1997/98 to 1999/2000 for the running costs associated with the system; (b) that the Irvine Town Centre Traders be requested to make a financial contribution towards the development and maintenance of the CCTV Scheme; (c) that a further approach be made to Enterprise Ayrshire seeking funding assistance towards the project; and (d) that a Member/Officer Working Group be established to progress the development of the Scheme including an application for financial assistance to the Scottish Office, comprising the Chair and Vice-Chair along with Councillors Thomas Barr, Jack Carson, Stewart Dewar, John Donn, Elliot Gray, Joseph McKinney and David O'Neill.

#### **8. Community Safety**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the progress of the Community Safety Working Group including details of proposals for the promotion of Community Safety in North Ayrshire and the disbursement of the Community Safety Challenge Budget.

Each of the five Area Committees has considered the report and has recommended approval of the recommendations therein.

The Committee agreed (a) that Police representation at all Area Committees be continued; (b) that Community Development grant applications dealing with Community Safety issues continue to be given a degree of priority; (c) that Community Safety becomes a standing item on the agenda of all Area Committees to allow a programme of reports to be submitted from services and organisations addressing safety issues; (d) that the Community Safety Centre (formerly Safe Strathclyde) be invited to submit a report making proposals for the establishment of a Community Safety Task Group at a North Ayrshire Council wide level to promote Community Safety issues within North Ayrshire; and (e) that the recommendations in respect of the Community Safety Challenge Budget applications as detailed in Appendix CS1 hereto, be approved.

#### **9. North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership Bid for Urban Programme Funding**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the outcome of the North Ayrshire regeneration Partnership Bid for Urban Programme Funding under the Scottish Office Programme for Partnership and on the implications of the Scottish Office decision.

The North Ayrshire Regeneration Partnership bid for a Priority Partnership Area status in respect of Ardrossan/Saltcoats/Stevenston was unsuccessful. The bid for a Regeneration Programme was supported however and it was recognised that the Council might wish to adjust its proposals to include the Three Towns within that programme. The Regeneration Programme award amounts to £1.25m over a three year period to the end of 1998/99 which is to be phased as follows:-

1996/97 £200,000;

1997/98 £350,000; and

1998/99 £700,000.

This is in addition to the £4.2m over the same period for existing Urban Programme Projects, but no indication of funding levels for years four and five of the programme has been

given. Twenty-eight Councils/Partnerships submitted a total of twenty-nine PPA and twenty-one Regeneration Programme bids. Twelve PPAs and ten Regeneration Programmes have been designated. Sixteen Councils out of the twenty-eight have been successful in securing Urban Programme Funding.

The Committee agreed (a) to note the Scottish Office decision to support a Regeneration Programme for North Ayrshire under the Urban Programme but expressed disappointment and regret that the level of resources to be made available is inadequate to meet the needs; and (b) to authorise the Chief Executive to initiate discussions with the other Partners and meet with the Scottish Office officials to clarify details of the decision and report.

#### **10. *Garden Tidy Scheme: Community Service by Offenders***

The Committee on 10 September 1996, in accordance with a remit from the Three Towns Area Committee, requested that the Director of Social Work, in consultation with the Director of Commercial Services examine the feasibility of extending the Garden Tidy Scheme by utilising the Community Service Order Scheme administered by the Social Work Directorate. A feasibility study has confirmed that the work undertaken within the Council Garden Tidy Scheme is largely compatible with the Community Service Order Scheme placements. Notwithstanding this, in accordance with employment conditions and to protect these it was not considered appropriate for the Community Service Order Scheme to undertake work as an extension of the Council Garden Tidy Scheme. An alternative separate, but complementary Community Service Order Garden Maintenance Project is proposed which could accept requests which meet the following criteria:-

- (a) vacant Council property;
- (b) where gardens have been vandalised and require improvement and maintenance;  
and
- (c) where applicants are considered ineligible within the Council Garden Tidy Scheme.

The Community Service Order Scheme has already commenced a preparatory Garden Maintenance Programme following referral from the Housing Directorate and in compliance with Scottish Office guidance. All equipment associated with the project would be supplied by the Community Service Order Scheme and arrangements would be made for the referring Directorate to provide or be charged for materials and costs in the removal of waste, for example, dumping. The project would involve minimal costs to the Council.

The Committee agreed to authorise the Director of Social Work to implement a Community Service Garden Maintenance Project in accordance with the criteria indicated in the report.

#### **11. *Social Work Committee Structure***

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on alterations to the Social Work Committee Structure together with proposals for the establishment of proposed Member/Officer Working Groups on Community Care Planning and Children's Services Plans.

The Social Work Committee on 30 October 1996 agreed that they would now deal with matters previously referred to its Operations and Development Sub-Committees. The Social Work Committee was further advised of major implications for the Council in preparing an updated Community Care Plan by April 1997 and of producing a Children's Services Plan by early 1998.

The Committee agreed (a) to establish a Member/Officer Working Group on Community Care Planning comprising Elliot Gray (Chair) James Jennings, Samuel Taylor, Jack Carson, David Gallagher, Joseph McKinney, Gena Seales, Richard Wilkinson, James Clements, George Steven, Patrick Browne and John Donn; (b) to establish a Member/Officer Working Group on Children's Services Plans comprising Margaret Munn (Chair), James Jennings, Thomas Morris, Stewart Dewar, Samuel Taylor, Ian Clarkson, Jane Gorman, Elizabeth McLardy, Robert Reilly, James Clements, George Steven, John Donn and Patrick Browne; and (c) that matters previously

referred, in terms of the Scheme of Delegation to Committees, to the Operations and Development Sub-Committees now be dealt with by the Social Work Committee.

## ***12. Information Technology Security Policy***

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal by the Support Services Committee for the adoption of an Information Technology Security Policy and associated policies.

The Support Services Committee on 12 November 1996 considered a report by the Information Technology Services Manager on an Information Technology Security Policy, Security Policies for personal computers and a Security Policy for UNIX Systems. Copies of the policy documentation have previously been issued to all Members of the Council. The Security Policy is to be introduced in a modular form to enable Directorates/Departments to comply not only with the main policy but also with the policies relating to their own individual needs.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the Information Technology Security Policy, the Security Policies for personal computers and the Security Policy for UNIX Systems in the terms indicated in the report previously considered by the Support Services Committee; and (b) to instruct the Information Technology Services Manager to introduce these policies throughout all Directorates/Departments of the Council.

## ***13. Almswall Park Changing Accommodation***

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal for the provision of a changing facility at Almswall Park, Kilwinning. This was considered by the Community and Recreational Services Committee on 5 November 1996 and remitted to the Corporate Strategy Committee for further consideration.

The estimated cost of a changing facility at Almswall Park is £195,000. Irvine Development Corporation have agreed to provide £136,000 towards the total costs leaving an outstanding balance of £59,000 which requires to be provided prior to the end of the 1996 calendar year to enable the project to proceed.

The Committee agreed to approve a Capital contribution of £59,000 from the 1996/97 budget towards the development of the changing facility at Almswall Park, Kilwinning to enable the project to proceed.

## ***14. Rural Issues in North Ayrshire***

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals for the future consideration of Rural Issues within North Ayrshire.

The Government's Rural White Paper raised a number of issues which require careful monitoring of progress. These include the aims of promoting economic prosperity, good local infrastructure and quality services, cultural confidence and a conserved and enhanced natural environment. COSLA, through its various rural task groups and Rural Affairs Forum, is already pursuing all issues relating to rural Scotland including the various challenge and strategic funding available through the Scottish Rural Partnership Fund. The present Scottish Office definition of rural Scotland does not designate North Ayrshire as a rural council but does acknowledge seven postcode sectors in North Ayrshire as rural. The Council through its various Directorates is already addressing rural issues within these communities, particularly in relation to the delivery of Council services.

The Committee agreed (a) that a Member/Officer Working Group be established to consider how best the Council can address rural issues within North Ayrshire; (b) that the Group will comprise John Sillars, Jane Gorman and James Jennings along with appropriate Officers; and (c) that the Member/Officer Working Group report to a future meeting of the Committee.

### **15. Scottish TUC: Scottish Family Policy Charter**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the principles of the Scottish TUC Scottish Family Policy Charter.

The Scottish TUC in June 1996, following consultation with a broad range of groups including One Plus, Save the Children and Single Parent Families, Scotland, launched the Scottish Family Policy Charter and are now seeking to gather support from a cross section of Scottish life.

The Committee agreed (a) in principle, to support the Scottish Family Policy Charter; and (b) to contribute £100 to the STUC towards the promotion of the Charter.

### **16. Local Volunteering Development Agency Programme**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on proposals for the establishment of a Local Volunteering Development Agency (LVDA) within North Ayrshire.

The Scottish Office has given support as part of its commitment to the Make a Difference Initiative on volunteering, for the creation of a national network of core funded local Volunteering Development Agencies (LVDAs) effective across a range of functions and operating throughout the local authority area. The Central Government funding available for each area is £30,000 per annum for three years to be matched by at least an equivalent amount of funding from other sources. In addition to local sources of funding, National Lottery funding will also be available. Help in kind will also be regarded as a contribution (for example office accommodation, duplication services, transport, publicity, training etc.). Applications are invited from voluntary organisations with a local Management Committee operating throughout the Council's area. Each organisation must be able to demonstrate matching funding and will be required to carry out an agreed range of functions relating to volunteering. Volunteer Development Scotland has been set up to provide departmental assistance and guidance to potential applicants.

The Committee agreed that the Chief Executive meet with the North Ayrshire Voluntary Organisations Forum (NAVOF) to discuss the implications of an application for funding for a Volunteering Development Agency in North Ayrshire, and report.

### **17. North Ayrshire Redundancy Information Pack**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on a proposal for the production of a Redundancy Information Pack as part of the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy.

A Redundancy Information Pack featuring useful information on Welfare Benefits, Health, Leisure, Training, Legal Rights etc. was produced by the former Strathclyde Regional Council's Social Strategy Section and was widely used by agencies within North Ayrshire. These packs are still in demand but contain information that is now out of date. It is suggested that consideration be given to the feasibility of producing a North Ayrshire Information Pack to meet the specific needs of people within the Council's area.

The Committee agreed that appropriate Officers meet to consider the production of a North Ayrshire Redundancy Information Pack to meet the needs of people within the Council's area and report.

### **18. Nomination of Council Representatives to Serve on Outside Agencies**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive on the nomination of members to serve on outside agencies.

The Committee agreed to nominate the following representatives to serve on the undenoted outside agencies:-

<b>Outside Agencies</b>	<b>Representatives</b>
South of Scotland Electricity Consumers Committee	Alan Munro
APEX Scotland: Local Advisory Committee	Margaret Munn and Samuel Taylor
Zero Tolerance Board of Trustees Consultative Group	Margaret Munn

## **19. Area Committees**

### **(a) North Coast and Arran Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS2) of the North Coast and Arran Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 18 November 1996.

The Committee agreed (a) that the Community Council allocations for 1997/98 be reviewed; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

### **(b) Garnock Valley Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS3) of the Garnock Valley Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 19 November 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

### **(c) Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS4) of the Kilwinning, Dreghorn and Springside Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 20 November 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

### **(d) Irvine Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS5) of the Irvine Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 20 November 1996.

The Committee agreed (a) that Councillor Carson be nominated as the Council's representative to unfurl the Irvine Meadow Football Club Centenary Flag on 4 January 1997; and (b) otherwise to note the report.

### **(e) Three Towns Area Committee**

Submitted the annexed report (Appendix CS6) of the Three Towns Area Committee, being the Minutes of their Meeting held on 21 November 1996.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

## **20. Central Challenge Fund**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business giving details on a proposed bid for Capital funding from the Scottish Office Central Challenge Fund.

The Scottish Office has invited the Council to submit a maximum of two bids for funding towards Capital Projects from a newly created Central Challenge Fund. The services eligible will be within the Single Allocation and relate to Education, General Services, Flood Prevention and Coast Protection, Social Work, Housing (outwith the Housing Revenue Account) and Roads and Transport (other than bids where the main component is for roads and transport). Capital allocations for local authorities from 1997/98 onwards will be determined by a combination of Formula and Challenge Funding and it is anticipated that the resources available from the Challenge Fund over the next three years will total approximately £100m. The submission for bids for the 1997/98 Challenge Fund is regulated by an extremely tight timescale and an outline of the intended bids requires to be submitted to the Scottish Office by 29 November 1996 with final bids being submitted by 17 January 1997. The successful bids will be announced on 31 March 1997. Details of the final bids will be submitted for approval of the Council on 14 January 1997.

An Officers team has been set up to examine bids which could be submitted by the Council. The team has identified "Access" as a possible bid which would aim to reduce disadvantage to those who suffer as a result of exclusion from Council services and facilities. A second bid could also be made in respect of energy efficiency projects for schools and leisure facilities.

The Committee agreed to approve the proposed bids in relation to (a) access to council services information and employment and work opportunities; and (b) energy efficiency projects for schools and leisure facilities.

#### **21. Private Finance Initiative**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on the outcome of discussions on property in terms of the PFI Initiative and the Energy Savings Evaluation Project.

The Committee agreed (a) that officers be authorised to pursue the Energy Savings Project to the next stage; and (b) to note that property developments are unlikely to take place in terms of PFI.

#### **22. Video Project**

Submitted report by the Head of Corporate Business on a proposal to produce a video for North Ayrshire Council as a key element in the Council's corporate promotional strategy and on the outcome of preliminary discussions with other organisations.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the Council's involvement in a joint approach to the Video Project; and (b) to the production of a video for North Ayrshire Council.

#### **23. Requests for Financial Assistance**

Having considered the requests for financial assistance the Committee agreed that the following payments be made:-

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Decision</b>
The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland	Defer
Scottish Opera	£2,020
Scottish European Aid Mercy Corps Europe	Nil

National Association for Bikers with a Disability	Defer
Zero Tolerance	£4,000
The Ayrshire Junior Handling Association	£400
National Gypsy Council (Romani Kris)	Nil
Jobs Action Group (Irvine Unemployed Advice and Resource Centre	£3,000

#### **24. Arran Bus Services**

Submitted report by the Chief Executive confirming (a) the Secretary of State's refusal to meet North Ayrshire Council to discuss additional funding for the provision of bus services on Arran; and highlighting (b) news coverage, much of it inaccurate, which followed acceptance of the sole tender by Stagecoach for the provision of these services despite considerable increases in costs of the contract over previous years.

The Committee was dissatisfied with the Secretary of State's response and felt renewed efforts must be made to impress on him the serious implications which this ongoing monopoly situation has for the Council especially since tenders must be renewed in October of next year.

In conclusion the Committee agreed (a) to ask the Secretary of State to reconsider the Council's request for a meeting; (b) to ask COSLA whether any other local authorities are experiencing similar difficulties; (c) to investigate alternative proposals for future bus service provision on Arran including the possibility of a Council-run transport system; (d) to ask the Commission of Fair Trading to determine whether this case should be referred to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission; and (e) to otherwise note the news coverage including the statements made by Stagecoach and their rebuttal.

#### **25. 1996/97 Revenue Budget Savings Programme: Magnum Leisure Centre: Outdoor Pool**

Submitted report by the Head of Sports and Cultural Services on a proposal for the re-opening of the outdoor pool at the Magnum Leisure Centre on a restricted basis. This matter was remitted by the Community and Recreational Services Committee for further consideration.

As a result of the savings package introduced by the Council in February 1996 across all Directorates the opening hours for swimming pools, were revised and the outdoor pool at the Magnum closed during the winter months from September this year. This resulted in a number of complaints from users. The savings identified by the closure of the outdoor pool for six months were estimated at £20,000. To re-open the pool eight hours per week for the remaining three months of this financial year, allowing for the programmed closure for maintenance would cost approximately £5,000. To offset this cost it is proposed to reduce the marketing budget in the main by the equivalent sum for the current financial year.

The Committee agreed (a) to approve the re-opening of the outdoor pool at the Magnum Leisure Centre for the remainder of this financial year for a period of eight hours per week; and (b) to note the alternative savings identified from the Centre's Marketing budget.

The meeting ended at 3.20 p.m.

