

**CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY PLANNING**  
**STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.**

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,  
on 18th February 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillors Brian Connolly (Chair), Sandra Goldie, Bill Grant, John Hampton, Mairi Low, Helen Moonie, Alec Oattes and Mike Peddie.

**Attending:** E. Howat, Executive Director – Corporate Services; V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Performance and Communication; R. Macdonald, Head of Community Development; A. Wilson, Head of HR and Organisational Development; J. McQuillan, Head of Property and Neighbourhood Services; H. McLaughlin, Audit Services/Programme Review Manager; P. Linton, Performance and Change Management Manager; D. Sherlock, Improvement Manager; C. Bishop, Performance and Business Change Manager; A. MacLeod, Business and Performance Manager; A. Greenwood, Asset Co-ordinator; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Management Officer; G. Boyce, Service Planning and Performance Management Officer; M. McCulloch, Quality Improvement Officer; and E. Wyllie, Committee Administration Officer.

**Also Attending:** Councillors John McDowall; Bill McIntosh and Robin Reid (Portfolio-holder of Resources and Performance); Anne Cairns, Senior Auditor, Audit Scotland; and I. McMurdo, Solace Consultant.

**1. Item for Call-in – Council Policy on Leases of Council Land and Property.**

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 9th February 2010 (Page 109, paragraph 25) when that Panel, having considered a report (issued) of 3rd February 2010 by the Depute Chief Executive and Executive Director – Development and Environment, had decided to approve a revised Policy and to agree that it be implemented with immediate effect for new leases and upon renewal for existing leases on the basis set out within the report.

The Panel was advised that the report had been the subject of a call-in for the following reasons:-

- (1) further information on the policy position for Community Groups who currently utilised Council premises without a formal lease including the details of any such Community Groups;
- (2) further information and details of lease holders and expiry / renewal dates of existing leases;
- (3) further information relating to community processes and consultation;
- (4) further information regarding dilapidations;
- (5) further information on power of discretion granted to the Depute Chief Executive and Executive Director – Development and Environment; and
- (6) further information relating to proposed community business plan.

The Chair invited Councillor McDowall to explain his reasons for the call-in and, thereafter, the Panel heard Councillor McDowall seek clarification on the points outlined at (1) to (6) above.

Councillor Moonie similarly expressed her concerns and her support for the Call-in.

Following a full discussion, various questions and comments were raised by Members of the Panel in relation to:- current lease arrangements, rent reviews and engaging with groups; condition of buildings at time of lease and dilapidations; how would groups be able to provide business plans; how would issues be resolved if groups could not afford rent and needed to vacate premises; equity and transparency issues; legislative requirements pertaining to any lease at a rental less than market value; discretions and when applied; the use of facilities by local communities; would groups be able to afford increases and would they be eligible for assistance; why no formal consultation had been undertaken with communities; the availability of other funding options out-with the Council to support health and fitness initiatives; whether this was a statutory function; risk management issues; and input from the Council's Community Development section and the Head of Property and Neighbourhood Services responded to the various issues raised.

The Chair invited Councillor McIntosh to explain further the decision made by the Leadership Panel and he responded accordingly.

Councillor Grant, seconded by Councillor Hampton, moved that this Panel agree with the decision of the Leadership Panel.

By way of Amendment, Councillor Moonie, seconded by Councillor Goldie, moved that this Panel should refer this matter back to the Leadership Panel with the recommendation that, prior to implementation of this Policy, the Depute Chief Executive and Executive Director – Development and Environment should seek to undertake further consultation with all tenants and Community Councils likely to be affected by this Policy within the next five year period.

There was a request that the vote be taken by calling the roll.

The Head of Legal and Administration took the vote by calling the roll as follows:-

Brian Connolly	Amendment
Sandra Goldie	Amendment
Bill Grant	Motion
John Hampton	Motion
Mairi Low	Amendment
Helen Moonie	Amendment
Alex Oattes	Amendment
Mike Peddie	Amendment

Six Members voted for the Amendment and two for the Motion. The Amendment was accordingly declared to be carried.

**Decided:** that this matter be referred back to the Leadership Panel with the recommendation that, prior to implementation of this Policy, the Depute Chief Executive and Executive Director – Development and Environment should seek to undertake further consultation with all tenants and Community Councils likely to be affected by this Policy within the next five year period.

**At this point, the time being 11.10 a.m., the Panel was adjourned for ten minutes and resumed business at 11.20 a.m.**

**2. Minutes of previous meeting.**

**Decided:** to note the Minutes of the previous meeting of 21st January 2010 (issued).

**Matters Arising – Improvement Agenda Strand 3: Leadership Capacity.**

Councillor Moonie referred to the previous Minutes of 21st January 2010 (Page 59, paragraph 4) and asked if a written response in relation to Adaptive Training was forthcoming and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication advised that she was currently processing such a response.

**Decided:** to note the position.

**AUDIT FUNCTION:-**

**3. Audit Scotland – South Ayrshire Council 2009/10 Audit – Review of Internal Audit.**

There was submitted a report (issued) of January 2010 by the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager

- (1) reporting on the findings of the Audit Scotland Review of Internal Audit in relation to their 2009/10 audit;
- (2) advising
  - (a) that Audit Scotland had been appointed as external auditors to this Council for the financial years 2006/07 to 2010/11;
  - (b) that Audit Scotland's Code of Audit Practice required local authority external auditors to assess and report on the adequacy, strengths and weaknesses of internal audit in order to form an opinion on the extent to which they could place formal reliance on the work which had been carried out by internal audit; and
  - (c) that a full copy of the report for 2009/10 was attached as Appendix 1 of the report; and
- (3) highlighting
  - (a) that Audit Scotland had concluded that they could place formal reliance on specified areas of internal audit work, both in relation to their work on financial statements and in relation to the wider scope of their audit responsibilities;
  - (b) that, in respect of the work on financial statements, they intended to place reliance on specific internal audit work on Capital Accounting – Budget Control, Debtors Account Collection and Education Maintenance Allowances; and
  - (c) that, regarding the wider scope of their audit responsibilities, they would place reliance on internal audit work on an agreed selection of Statutory Performance Indicators.

A question was raised by a Member of the Panel in relation to Statutory Performance Indicators within the Performance Management Framework and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication and the Audit Services / Programme Review Manager responded accordingly.

**Decided:** to note the contents of the Audit Scotland report, attached as Appendix 1 of the report and the fact that Audit Scotland would place reliance on internal audit work for 2009/10.

**4. Internal Audit Service – Follow-up of Internal Audit Reports – Progress Report - Golf Course Management Summary.**

Reference was made to the Minutes of 21st January 2010 (Page 58, paragraph 3) and the Golf Course Management Summary (issued) when it had been agreed that the Head of Community Development be invited to attend the next scheduled meeting of this Panel to discuss this issue.

Thereon, the Head of Community Development referred

- (1) to the Golf Course Management Summary and updated the Panel on the Directorate action being undertaken to address the thirteen recommendations arising from this particular Audit; and
- (2) to the Minutes of the Council of 7th October 2009 (Page 549, paragraph 7) and advised of the ongoing work in developing a strategy for golf in partnership with the Strategic Group for Golf Development in South Ayrshire.

**Decided:** to thank the Head of Community Development for his update on this matter.

**WIDER SCRUTINY PANEL BUSINESS:-**

**5. Strategic Review of Absence.**

There was submitted a report (issued) of 12th February 2010 by the Head of HR and Organisational Development

- (1) advising of the absence statistics for the Council for the period from 1st October to 31st December 2009 based on each Directorate and which included long and short term absence, reasons for absence and pressure points, occupational health reports and monthly and quarterly comparisons as outlined within the Appendices to the report; and
- (2) informing that progress continued to be made with the strategic review of absence and reporting on the various approaches being undertaken.

Various questions were raised by Members of the Panel in relation to:- the pro-active approach and if this was targeted at specific groups; the 'fit note'; industrial injuries; alcohol and drug abuse issues; and the number of employees per directorate; and the Head of HR and Organisational Development responded accordingly and advised that she would provide the total number of employees for each Directorate in future statistical submissions.

**Decided:** to note the contents of the report and the absence statistics as detailed within the Appendices attached to the report.

## 6. Improvement Agenda

### (1) Remit from the Leadership Panel of 9th February 2010 – Improvement Agenda: Third Progress Report.

Reference was made to the Leadership Panel of 9th February 2010 (Page 98, paragraph 14) when that Panel, having considered a report of February 2010 (issued) by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication advising of the third progress report arising from the Council's agreement on 9th July 2009 to the South Ayrshire Council Improvement Agenda, had agreed

- (a) to note the current status of each improvement strand and the detailed information provided;
- (b) to note that two improvement strands had been graded as 'amber'; and
- (c) to remit this report to this Standing Scrutiny Panel for its further consideration.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Communication

- (i) reported on the current position in relation to the two Improvement Strands with an amber status and commented on the colour coding of the Customer Care Strand and the reasons for this;
- (ii) informed of a forthcoming meeting with Audit Scotland concerning the Best Value follow-up audit;
- (iii) advised of a Breakfast Briefing meeting with Elected Members over the Council's new Best Value submission which would be submitted to the meeting of the Council on 2nd March 2010; and
- (iv) commented on the eight weekly reporting format and indicated that, as there was a great deal of repetition, consideration would be given as to how best to present this information.

**Decided:** to agree with the recommendations of the Leadership Panel and to note the update provided by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication.

### (2) Improvement Agenda Strand 5: Performance Management.

With reference to the Minutes of 21st January 2010 (Page 59, paragraph 4), there was submitted a report (issued) of 11th February 2010 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication outlining progress being made on developing the Council's approach to performance management to support the Panel's scrutiny of Improvement Agenda Strand 5 including South Ayrshire Planning Hierarchy; Performance Management System; self evaluation; reporting arrangements; scrutiny arrangements; resource planning; and improvement and forward planning.

Various questions and comments were raised by Members of the Panel concerning the relationship between the various plans; the alignment of resources to priorities; and the option of a standalone scorecard module and joint working with NHS Ayrshire and Arran over the procurement of a performance management system and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication responded accordingly on the various issues raised.

**Decided:** to note the progress that had been achieved to date in relation to Improvement Agenda Strand 5 – Performance Management and the reporting arrangements as outlined within the report.

## **7. Panel Work Programme – Scrutiny Review of Communications.**

There was submitted a report (issued) of 11th February 2010 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication

- (1) advising
  - (a) that Communication had been identified as a key area for improvement in South Ayrshire Council's Best Value Audit in 2009, which included a recommendation that the Council put in place a communication and engagement strategy in relation to customers, partners and staff;
  - (b) that improving and delivering effective proactive communication channels, both internally and externally, would ensure customers, partners and staff had a clear understanding of what the Council did and would also help employees feel more valued and become genuine advocates for the Council which combined, could help improve reputation and help inform strategic and service planning; and
  - (c) that this Panel at its meeting on 3rd December 2009 had agreed to carry out a review of the Council's communications strategy, with a view to providing any agreed recommendations to the Leadership Panel; and
- (2) highlighting that the proposed scope of the scrutiny review was outlined in Appendix 1 of the report, including a reporting timescale, and had been structured to facilitate the Scrutiny Panel leading on consideration of the detailed aspects of the communications provisions within Strand 11 of the Improvement Agenda.

Various points were raised by a Member of the Panel in relation to:- an engagement strategy and the timescales involved; and the need for interim provision of community engagement during the budget process.

The Chair suggested that Councillor Grant's Sub-Group should have interim informal meetings with the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication in relation to the production of the draft communications strategy.

The Head of Policy, Performance and Communication referred to the proposed reporting timescales for the communications strategy and indicated that community engagement was a later stage in the process.

### **Decided:**

- (i) to approve the proposed scoping paper for the review of communications as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report and that a draft communications strategy would be submitted to the meeting of this Panel on 22nd April 2010;
- (ii) that the Sub-Group led by Councillor Grant would meet with the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication in relation to the draft strategy; and
- (iii) to recognise the need for community engagement during the 2011/12 budget process.

The meeting ended at 12.30 p.m.