

COMMUNITY SERVICES STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
30th January 2013 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors John Hampton (Chair), Ian Cavana, Hywel Davies, Nan McFarlane and Corri Wilson.

Apologies: Councillors Andy Campbell, Kirsty Darwent and Hugh Hunter.

Attending: H. Garland, Executive Director – Children and Community; V. Andrews, Head of Legal and Administration; H. Carswell, Head of Children’s Services; M. Williamson, Head of Curriculum and Service Improvement, D. Burns, Acting Manager (Strategic Service Planning); P. Linton, Performance and Change Management Manager; and A. Gibson, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending: Councillor Margaret Toner (Portfolio-holder).

1. Declaration of Interest.

There were no declarations of interest by Members in terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.

2. Item for Call-in.

The Panel noted that there had been no call-ins for this meeting.

3. Minutes of previous meeting.

Decided: to note the Minutes of the previous meeting of 12th December 2012 (issued).

4. Remit from Leadership Panel - Children and Community Annual Report 2011/12.

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 22nd January 2013 (Page 108, paragraph 2) when that Panel, having considered a report of 7th January 2013 by the Executive Director – Children and Community in relation to the Annual Report for Children and Community relating to the financial year 2011/12, had agreed

- (1) to approve the publication of the Annual Report for Children and Community for 2011/12;
- (2) to refer the Annual Report for Children and Community to the Community Services Standing Scrutiny Panel for further consideration; and
- (3) to request that a briefing session with workshops be arranged for all Elected Members, to take place in approximately one month’s time to further consider the Annual Report and to examine how the successful elements and aspects of this document could be extended across other services.

The Chair, in response to queries from Members of the Panel, explained that this Report had been submitted to this Panel by the Leadership Panel to consider whether the information contained in the Report was being presented in the best way, whether there was scope for using the information in the Report for other purposes than simply reporting and whether other Services across the Council could follow this style of reporting in future years. Members of the Panel commented favourably on both the format of the Annual Report and its contents.

Members of the Panel noted

- (a) the need for the information contained in the Report to be used to make a difference to the various communities within South Ayrshire; and
- (b) how this Authority was performing in relation to other Scottish local authorities with regards to education, with particular discussion relating to head teachers' recruitment, curriculum development and school buildings improvements.

Arising from discussions, and in response to questions raised, the Executive Director - Children and Community and other Officers present, advised and clarified:-

- (i) that there was a statutory duty to provide information relating to Education and Social Work which in turn could be used by Inspectors and Audit Scotland;
- (ii) that the Annual Report was treated as "working document", and part of the self-evaluation process for Officers within Children and Community with the performance data informing performance improvements going forward;
- (iii) that the data in the Report was used for benchmarking performance against the other relevant local authorities in Scotland;
- (iv) that whilst due to legislative requirements for statistical reporting, Education and Social Work had data available for the Children and Community Annual Report, other Services might not have equivalent data available for a Report of this nature;
- (v) that in future years, reporting would reflect the new organisational structure; and
- (vi) the general matters raised in relation to performance could be addressed through the Council's general performance reporting mechanisms.

Clarification was sought and provided in relation to the following specific matters referred to in the Report:-

- the apparent decrease in numbers receiving psychological service support;
- provision of intensive support and crisis care;
- the Lochside Maisonettes in Ayr;
- deprivation in South Ayrshire; and
- the impact of Welfare Reform.

Members noted that it would be helpful when any statistical data was provided in table or chart format and the interpretation was unclear, an annotation be included to ensure that it was not misconstrued.

The Panel, requested and was provided with an up-date relating to the progress of the Marr College, Troon and Ayr Academy projects, and the Executive Director – Children and Community confirmed that the projects were on track to meet timescales with the intention to run both projects together.

Following discussion, the Panel decided:-

- (A) to note that the Panel considered the Council's Annual Report for Children and Community for 2011/12 to be an excellent Report;
- (B) to note that the Briefing Session with Workshops for all Elected Members would be arranged in the near future, which would allow further discussion to take place; and
- (C) to note that in future the Panel would welcome greater clarity and guidance from the Leadership Panel when remitting a Report to this Panel for further consideration as to the purpose of that remit.

The meeting ended at 11.10 a.m.