

DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 24th June 2014 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Kirsty Darwent (Chair), Andy Campbell, Peter Convery, Ann Galbraith, William J. Grant, Mary Kilpatrick and Brian McGinley.

Apology: Councillor Ian Cochrane.

Also

Present: Councillors John McDowall and Philip Saxton, Portfolio Holders

Attending: L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs; J. Cronin, Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure; M. Alexander, Housing Operations Manager; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Manager; C. Bishop, Performance and Business Change Manager; M. Hastings, Enterprise Manager; M. Burns, Co-ordinator (Community Learning and Development); P. Wilson, Co-ordinator (Sports and Leisure); M. McClelland, Development, Management Team Leader; N. Feggans, Development, Planning and Customers Team Leader; and J. McClure, Committee Services Officer.

1. Declarations 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. Items for Call-in.

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

3. Minutes of previous meeting.

The Minutes of the previous meeting of 3rd June 2014 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

4. Voids Performance.

With reference to the minutes of 7th May 2014 (Page 1, paragraph 4) there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 13th June 2014 by the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment, detailing information on the current voids process.

The Panel heard the Performance and Business Change Manager outline the definition of a void and the process followed in re-letting voids and a discussion then followed and questions were raised on:- the process for testing for asbestos and the removal of the asbestos if required; the timescales for testing for asbestos and the subsequent delay in re-letting the property leading to a rise in the average time to re-let properties and the targets not being met; whether more Council workers were being trained in the testing of asbestos; the reasons for tenants vacating properties; the process followed should a tenant not surrender the keys to their property; the rise in the number of voids for the period July to August and whether this created an increase in the time to re-let the properties due to annual leave commitments of workers and affected the target figures; and the reasons why certain properties were proving difficult to let.

Decided:

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to congratulate the officers concerned on the significant improvements made to all areas except asbestos testing/removal where external contractors were employed to carry out this work;
- (3) to request further information in two months on the length of time taken by external contractors in testing and removing asbestos and the methods of addressing these delays; and
- (4) to request that further updates on progress against the identified improvement actions be brought back before Members as part of the Service and Improvement Plan reporting regime, to ensure that progress was still being made.

5. Service and Improvement Plans – 2014-17.

With reference to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 29th April 2014 (Page 11, paragraph 16), there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 16th June 2014 by the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs requesting that the Standing Scrutiny Panel consider the third and final Service and Improvement Plan (SIP) which had been remitted to them for consideration and revision as required, namely the SIP for Community, Enterprise and Development.

The Members of the Panel scrutinised the Plan in detail and information was requested and provided and comments made as follows:-

- (1) enquired about the progress made in relation to the business incubators at Heathfield and the Enterprise Manager advised that five businesses had signed up as permanent residents and two businesses were hot desking and using the facilities occasionally and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure further advised that the business incubators were proving successful and that a further marketing strategy would be carried out shortly in relation to these;
- (2) praised the excellent service the Planning Service was providing in significantly beating the Scottish average target time for turning round planning applications;

- (3) queried the extent to which work to promote economic development was joined up, suggesting the need to provide more context for the Council's own contribution and role, for example in relation to social enterprises. The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs advised that this was an example of where commitments were fragmented at an individual SIP level, a broader picture of activity being captured by the Council Plan, with the contribution of partners being integrated at the Community Planning level. When questioned as to whether the Council was doing well in relation to economic development and building evidence to demonstrate this, the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure confirmed that this was the case;
- (4) asked whether the town centre development plans were on target for preparation by September 2014 and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure advised that they were;
- (5) enquired whether the £10,000 spend allocated for the five towns had been expended and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure advised that she would investigate what monies remained and report back to the Panel Members;

Chair

The time being 11.10 a.m., Councillor Darwent left the meeting at this point. Councillor Galbraith took the Chair and the Panel considered the remainder of the report.

- (6) asked what was being done to increase the number of visitors to museums and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure advised that a great deal of work was being undertaken to make Rozelle and the MacLaurin Art Gallery more attractive to visitors, however, due to there only being two museums in South Ayrshire, it was difficult to increase this Council's ranking in Scotland as other, larger authorities had many more museums for tourists to visit;
- (7) queried what was viewed as a "cultural activity" for young people and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure advised that cultural activities encapsulated all activities that were arts, music or performance based and that young people will be able to put forward their ideas for future programmes and initiatives;
- (8) asked how the cost of sports facilities compared against the benchmark comparators as the costs appeared high and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure advised that the costs appeared higher due to the inclusion of the costs associated with the eight golf courses in South Ayrshire, without the corresponding usage data. The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs further advised that this inconsistency had been raised nationally but that with the removal of the golf figures (as previously reported to the Leadership Panel), it presented a more realistic picture;
- (9) enquired whether it was also intended to record the percentage of young people taking part in physical activities to reflect the work to reduce obesity rates and the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs advised that this was captured in the Single Outcome Agreement, to reflect the work of the Council and the Health Board to tackle obesity problems in young people;

- (10) queried the confidence in being able to deliver stage 1 of the work to investigate alternative ways of delivering sport and leisure services by August 2014 and the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure advised that she was confident at present about being able to deliver against the stated timescales;
- (11) queried how this work related to the development of the Golf Business Plan and heard that the Plan would complement the exercise by providing up to date base information; and
- (12) to congratulate the officers involved in the Queens Baton Relay which had been very well co-ordinated.

Decided: having reviewed the Community, Enterprise and Development Improvement Plan 2014-17, to request the Chief Executive to make recommendations to the Council that this Panel adopted the SIP as presented to the Leadership Panel.

The meeting ended at 11.30 a.m.