

DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 7th May 2014 at 2.00 p.m.

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

Attending: L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; V. Andrews, Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs; M. Newall, Head of Neighbourhood Services, J. Rodden, Facilities Manager, W. Andrew, Property, Repairs and Maintenance Manager; C. Gardner, Senior Strategic Planning and Performance Manager; S. Alexander, Principal Accountant; and D. Knight, Democratic Services Administrator.

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 25th March 2014 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

The Chair advised the Standing Scrutiny Panel that she was discussing the possible use of Action Logs being included as a standard item on the agendas of Standing Scrutiny Panels with the Executive Directors – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment and Resources, Governance and Organisation.

4. 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 30th April 2014 by the Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs requesting that the Standing Scrutiny Panel consider the first of three Service and Improvement Plans (SIPs) which have been remitted to them for consideration and revision as required, namely the SIP for Property and Facilities Service.

The Head of Policy, Community Planning and Public Affairs advised that the Leadership Panel had agreed that the SIPs would be considered at the next three meetings of the Standing Scrutiny Panels and that Members of the Leadership Panel would forward any comments on the SIPs to the Chief Executive so that these comments could be submitted for discussion by the relevant Standing Scrutiny Panel and that a report on the outcome of the considerations at the Standing Scrutiny Panels would be submitted to the Council on 3rd July 2014 for final agreement.

She further commented on general observations that had been made at the Standing Scrutiny Panel that had taken place that morning as follows:-

- more detailed information on budgets would be helpful, to allow greater connection between resources and outcomes;
- benchmarking information against the Scottish average would be helpful, with an explanation if adrift from the average, together with the Scottish ranking;
- looking for performance indicators to be more analytical, to support the scrutiny process;
- the use of the self-evaluation process and the role of validation;
- whether targets were challenging enough, should they be more ambitious; and
- on the six month reporting, tracking of progress against the key actions that are due for delivery within the early stages of the plan and exception reporting of the others.

The Executive Director, Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment, in her role as Acting Head of Service for Property and Facilities Service provided updated information for Members in relation to their consideration of the SIP, as follows:-

- the benchmark figures for average time to complete voids was 33 days; for percentage uptake of paid school meals was 47.1% and for percentage uptake of free school meals was 75.0%; and
- the cleaning productivity measure was square metres, rather than square footage.

The Members of the Panel then scrutinised the Plan in detail, raising the following matters:-

- questioned the suggested drop in target satisfaction levels relating to building cleaning and heard that this was anticipated due to a 20% reduction in the resource employed;
- queried why no benchmarking figures had been included for cleaning provision and heard that there was no national data available for this;
- questioned the frequency of reporting of the performance information to the Standing Scrutiny Panels, given the mixture of quarterly and annual measures set out in the Plan, and heard that how this might be delivered was still under consideration;
- queried the absence of any satisfaction levels for school, meals, and heard that this was not currently measured, but that a figure of 70% was anticipated;
- discussed the need to monitor variances in more detail, for example across the school estate, to ascertain patterns when the delivery of any services was changed;

- discussed the implications of the new food waste regulations, particularly the challenges in dealing with food waste in schools, and the greater clarity that will be achieved when refuse vehicles can weigh food waste from individual establishments;
- discussed the implications of the closure of production kitchens, the arrangements for the pre-ordering of school lunches, and whether it was reasonable to expand this provision at the same time as managing this significant change;
- queried the time taken to deal with void properties and the lack of benchmark figures within that section of the plan, in response to which detailed figures were given as to the 2013/14 performance, an explanation was offered of how void properties were dealt with, the improvements that had been delivered through revised working practices and statistics were reported that 700 properties were re-let during the course of each year, with around 90 such properties currently being worked on by Property Services;
- considered whether the performance in respect of void times might be an area that the Panel would wish to scrutinise further, the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment gave an undertaking to discuss the issue of voids with the Head of Community Care and Housing, and report back to the Panel with detailed information on the different categories and stages in relation to voids to consider this additional information before agreeing the proposed Target relating to the “key to key” PI - ie average time to relet voids in the SIP; and
- noted that the efficiency measures identified in Appendix 3 of the report included some very substantial savings to be achieved within Facilities Management, the overall achievement of such measures across the Council being tracked and kept under review through Covalent.

Decided: having reviewed the Property and Facilities Service and Improvement Plan,

- (a) to request the Chief Executive to make recommendations to the Council that it adopted the SIP as presented to the Leadership Panel, with the addition of the updated benchmark figures; and the updated cleaning productivity measure; and
- (b) to note that the Panel would consider further the targets for voids following consideration of further detailed information to be provided to the Panel by the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment to one of the June meetings of this Panel.

5. Community Involvement in Grounds Maintenance.

With reference to the minutes of 25th March 2014 (Page 2, paragraph 5), there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 29th April 2014 by the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment updating the Panel on progress of a Review this Panel had undertaken relating to Community Involvement in Grounds Maintenance.

A full discussion took place in relation to “In Bloom” and “Best Kept Garden” initiatives and how these initiatives could be taken forward including partnership arrangements and community involvement.

The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment indicated that due to staffing resources being deployed to Members' Priorities in relation to Play Areas and Allotments, this proposal had still to be developed in detail and that work would be undertaken throughout the coming months to ensure that proposals were presented to the Leadership Panel after the summer recess for its consideration. Subject to resources and partnership arrangements being confirmed, and subject to approval from a future Leadership Panel, it was hoped that the proposed "In Bloom" and "Best Kept Garden" initiatives could be fully implemented for the summer of 2015.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services advised that full cost analysis was currently being undertaken to determine resource requirements.

Decided: to note the background, circumstances and the approach being adopted to developing activity in relation to Community Involvement in Grounds Maintenance.

Councillor Cochrane left the meeting at this point, the time being for 3.30 p.m.

6. Town Centres Business Support Progress.

With reference to the minutes of 25th March 2014 (Page 1, paragraph 4), there was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 30th April 2014 by the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment updating the Panel on the activities of the two Town Centre Business Support officers of this Council.

A Member of the Standing Scrutiny Panel expressed his concern that there seemed to be a lack of progress in relation to regeneration within Maybole town centre, and the Head of Neighbourhood Services advised that work in Maybole was focussed on a longer term view as a town post-bypass and he outlined the development work that was delivered by the Architecture and Design for Scotland Team for the Maybole community.

The Standing Scrutiny Panel noted the number of activities that were currently being developed to improve the town centres.

Decided: to note the background circumstances and the approach being adopted to developing activity in relation to Town Centre Businesses, including the specific summary for each town, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the report with further progress to be reported through the Service Improvement Plans.

Councillor McGinley left the meeting during consideration of the above item, the time being 3.35 p.m.

The meeting ended at 3.40 p.m.