

PUBLIC PROCESSES PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 7th December 2016 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Brian McGinley (Chair), Alec Clark, Peter Convery, Ian Douglas, Hugh Hunter, Helen Moonie and John Wallace.

Attending: R. Riddiough, Head of Legal and Democratic Services; D. Burns, Head of Housing and Facilities; M. Newall, Head of Neighbourhood Services; C. Monaghan, Head of Communities; K. Dalrymple, Manager (Neighbourhood Services); P. Wilkes, Co-ordinator (Registration, Records and Information); V. Stewart, Co-ordinator (Community Planning); C. McGarva, Community Engagement Officer; and L. Sands, Committee Services Officer.

Also Attending: Councillors Bill Grant & Alec Oattes (in attendance for item 5 (b) only).

1. Declarations of Interest.

In terms of Council Standing Order No. 17 and the Councillors' Code of Conduct, Councillor Clark declared an interest in Item 5 (b) of this Minute entitled 'Petition relating to Charges for Facilitating Galas' as he was supporting the petition, however as he did not perceive there was a conflict of interest, he would not leave the room when this item was being considered and would take part in discussions on this matter.

2. Call-ins from Leadership Panel.

The Panel noted that there had been no call-ins from the Leadership Panel meeting which had taken place on 29th November 2016.

3. Minutes of previous meeting.

The Minutes of the Public Processes Panel of 29th September 2016 (issued) ([link attached](#)) were submitted and approved.

4. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted the Action Log and Work Programme (issued) ([link attached](#)) as a guide for the Panel.

Decided: to note the current status of the Action Log and Work Programme.

5. Public Petitions.

(a) Free School Meals During School Holidays.

There was submitted a petition containing a sufficient number of signatures, in the following terms, namely:-

"We, the undersigned, respectfully request that South Ayrshire Council provide meals free of charge in local communities during the holiday period for children who are entitled to free school meals based on their deprived circumstances".

Under the provisions of Council Standing Order No. 31 for Meetings, the Chair then invited the lead petitioner, Kathleen Campbell, to come forward to present the case to the meeting.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services referred to the petitions protocol and indicated that the petitioner addressing the meeting would be limited to ten minutes in total which included an opportunity to sum-up.

The lead petitioner addressed the panel. Her main points were as follows:

- (1) the petition was put forward to try and ensure some form of sustenance during school holidays;
- (2) that North and East Ayrshire Councils provided some form of service;
- (3) previously bagged packed lunches were provided and the finance for this came from third party sources, including Children in Need. Why could this service not be provided again, especially as it was felt it was not an expensive thing to do and people had already been providing some form of service voluntarily; and
- (4) that there was considerable deprivation in South Ayrshire.

The lead petitioner concluded by advising that she was happy to discuss ways in which this service could be provided and by suggesting that a trial period could take place during the summer holidays in the first instance.

The Head of Housing and Facilities then spoke to his report and advised that this petition was a call for action by the Council, however, if any action were taken this would have a cost implication.

The discussion was then opened to the Panel and the following additional points were discussed:

- (a) that the options for funding a holiday meals service be explored;
- (b) it was likely that there was a demand for the service during school holidays;
- (c) it was felt that Community Planning could look into the issue further because it was effectively a multi-agency issue and that the voluntary sector and the Integration Joint Board may have a role;
- (d) the logistics of how the service could be provided, including location and staffing, should be considered;
- (e) that if a holiday meals service were to proceed then the views of communities could be sought; and
- (f) it was felt that further information should be secured prior to a decision being made.

Clarification was sought on procedure as to where the Public Processes Panel could remit reports to and who was responsible for carrying out further investigation into the matter and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services responded accordingly with the Head of Communities advising that she would ask the Community Planning Executive to input to the consideration of a holiday meals service and would bring back further information to the Panel as soon as she was able.

The petitioner summed up her case before the meeting moved to its decision.

Having given due consideration to all submissions, the Panel

Decided:

- (i) by consensus, to request officers to engage with the Community Planning Executive Group on how partners, particularly the third sector and the Integration Joint Board, could contribute to the delivery of free school meals during holiday periods and to report back to a future meeting of the Public Processes Panel on further options; and
- (ii) to invite the lead petitioner to attend that meeting.

(b) Petition Relating to Charges for Facilitating Galas.

There was submitted a petition containing a sufficient number of signatures, in the following terms, namely:-

“We the undersigned are concerned citizens who urge our leaders to act now to reinstate financial support for our events and galas”.

Under the provisions of Council Standing Order No. 31 for Meetings, the Chair then invited David Girvan, Linden Hunt and Sharon Robertson to come forward to present their case to the meeting, as lead petitioners.

The Head of Legal and Democratic Services referred to the petitions protocol and indicated that petitioners addressing the meeting would be limited to ten minutes in total which included an opportunity to sum-up.

The three petitioners addressed the Panel and the main points were as follows:

- (1) galas were essential in rural areas for supporting the local economy and providing opportunities to residents who may not be able to go elsewhere to attend events;
- (2) galas may be the only events in rural areas, and taking these away could see rural areas go into rapid decline;
- (3) communities were disappointed with the lack of consultation and engagement from the Council before the decision was taken to cut funds;
- (4) although the proposal from Grounds Maintenance to facilitate community transfer of gala equipment to communities for them to organise and co-ordinate future events themselves seemed a sensible solution it was actually problematic to them as they did not have facilities to store such equipment;
- (5) there were larger events run in Ayr that Grounds Maintenance did not charge for the use of equipment;
- (6) galas were run by volunteers who could withdraw their service if not supported by the Council;
- (7) Girvan Gala Day was already running at a loss before funds were cut;
- (8) communities felt they were not given enough notice of the removal of funding to allow for alternative arrangements to be made for the following year's events, which start being planned as soon as the current year's events finish.

The Head of Neighbourhood Services then spoke to his report, with the Manager (Neighbourhood Services) also attending to assist with any questions. Clarification was sought and provided on how much of the overall £155,000 Grounds Maintenance

savings were related to Galas/events and how much of the cost related to labour and if an Equalities Impact Assessment had been carried out prior to the cuts being made.

Local Members addressed the Panel in support of the petition and made the following points:

- (a) that communities trying to help their local areas should not be targeted for funding cuts because the events they held helped raise funds for local causes and encouraged tourists to the areas who would then spend money in the local area;
- (b) that there was no consideration of rural poverty taken into account and no consultation with communities prior to the decision being taken. Due to these funding cuts future years events were at risk;
- (c) that partnership working was important between the Council and communities but needed to extend both ways as the community engagement process did not happen prior to funding being cut; and
- (d) that other larger events in the towns received subsidy from the Council and in budget terms the amount cut for Galas was not considerable but had been very damaging to morale in communities.

The Portfolio Holder for Economic Development, Tourism and Leisure addressed the Panel stating that every Elected Member had agreed the proposed budget when this decision was taken, although took no pleasure in doing so, and due to the current climate finances were reducing while demand was increasing. He also advised that the Council could not approve all requests made for events, including events in Ayr. He congratulated rural villages in South Carrick for their successful events.

The discussion was then opened to the Panel and the following additional points were discussed:

- (i) it was agreed that there was a requirement to look at ways to help and support communities to become self-funding and, therefore, it was suggested that the Council work with local communities to explore how they could fund events in the future through external funding with the help and advice of the Council's External Funding Co-ordinator, as this was only the beginning of cuts for local government;
- (ii) it was noted that communities, especially the rural communities, had been disproportionately affected by these cuts and that Elected Members may have underestimated the impact of this decision; and
- (iii) that it may be preferable for the Communities service to look into ways to resolve the issues rather than Neighbourhood Services.

The lead petitioner summed up their case before the meeting moved to its decision.

Having given due consideration to all submissions the Panel

Decided:

- (A) to request that the Head of Communities undertake further investigation in relation to funding options, recognising the short timescale, and bring a report back to a future Public Processes Panel; and
- (B) to invite the lead petitioner, together with the other two petitioners in attendance, to attend the above meeting.

Councillors Hunter and Wallace left the meeting at this point.

6. Records Management Plan.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 25th November 2016 by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services providing an update on steps the Council must take in relation to the Public Records (Scotland) Act 2011 ('the Act').

Decided:

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) to request that a further report be submitted to the next meeting of this Panel providing an updated work plan.

7. A Strategic Approach to Community Engagement: Update Report.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 28th November 2016 by the Head of Communities providing an update on the Council's work on Community Consultation and Engagement.

A full discussion took place on the work currently being carried out by the Community Engagement Team and comments were noted in relation to how well the Troon Locality Planning Group was working and the success of the Charrette held in Girvan. A Member of the Panel requested information on the web-based tool and the Co-ordinator (Community Planning) advised that this was something currently used in Fife and South Ayrshire Council were hoping to roll this out in the new year, with offline testing due to start within communities.

A Member of the Panel raised concerns regarding the lack of policy in relation to Community Engagement, including the issues around not having this in place; and issues that were raised by Audit Scotland around Community Engagement and the Head of Policy and Performance advised that the Best Value Working Group were meeting the following week to discuss a policy and respond to the comments made by Audit Scotland.

Decided: after scrutinising the report, to note the contents of the report.

8. Six monthly update on Participatory Budgeting.

There was submitted a report (issued) ([link attached](#)) of 28th November 2016 by the Head of Communities providing a six monthly report on participatory budgeting within the Council.

Concerns were raised regarding ensuring that the Council were not disproportionately funding localities; and that multi-agency funding and support were also provided. The Head of Communities advised that there was a high level of support in place, however, this was something that should be closely monitored to ensure that the shared funding and resources of Community Engagement and the Health and Social Care Partnership continued to integrate well.

Decided: after scrutinising the report, to note the contents of the report.

The meeting ended at 12.55 p.m.