

SERVICE AND PERFORMANCE PANEL.

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 6th February 2018 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Alec Clark (Chair), Laura Brennan-Whitefield, Andy Campbell, Iain Campbell, Chris Cullen, Martin Dowey and Derek McCabe.

Apology: Councillor Hugh Hunter.

Attending: V. Andrews, Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation; L. Bloomer, Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment; D. Hutchison, Director of Educational Services; T. Eltringham, Director of Health and Social Care Partnership; M. Baker, Head of Policy and Performance; J. Johnstone, Economic Development Manager; W. Carlaw, Democratic and Governance Manager; and E Wyllie, Committee Services Officer.

Also

Present: Councillor Brian McGinley, Portfolio-holder for Economic Development, Tourism and Leisure.

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. Minutes of previous meetings.

The minutes of 21st November ([issued](#)) and the Special meeting of 7th December 2017 ([issued](#)) were submitted.

The Chair referred to the minutes of 21st November 2017 (Page 5, paragraph 5) and intimated that since the further report relating to the Review of Residential Services for Older People had still been in draft form at the time of issuing the agenda and reports for this meeting, he had agreed with officers that the report be withdrawn from the agenda with a view to it being submitted to the next meeting of this Panel on 17th April 2018.

The Panel

Decided: to approve the minutes of 21st November and the Special meeting of 7th December 2017.

3. Action Log and Work Programme.

There was submitted an update of the Action Log and Work Programme ([issued](#)) for this Panel.

The Head of Policy and Performance indicated that a number of actions had a completion date of end February 2018 since the previous scheduled meeting and the Special meeting had taken place closely together.

The Panel

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

4. **Local Government Benchmarking Framework 2016/17.**

There was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 30th January 2018 by the Head of Policy and Performance providing an update on the publication of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF) data for 2016/17 and seeking consideration where further scrutiny of this information might be helpful to drive improvement.

The Head of Policy and Performance introduced the report and indicated that the national overview was due to be published soon and would be circulated to members. He also advised that officers would consider the reporting format going forward based on the Council's new Directorates / structure.

The Chair invited questions from Members of the Panel in relation to Appendix 1 of the report which detailed commentaries against LGBF measures.

SO5.1 01.1 – 01.4 LGBF – Percentage of roads requiring maintenance.

A question was asked in relation to Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA), the condition of roads and spending allocations for South Ayrshire Council. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that repair work to improve the conditions of the roads in South Ayrshire was ultimately based on the budget allocation invested for this purpose. The monies allocated were used wisely and stretched as far as possible. She added that there was a clear division in the ARA budget and all South Ayrshire monies were spent in South Ayrshire. Governance arrangements were in place and performance indicators were used to track progress such as street lighting and pot hole target times. It was noted that the inclement weather this winter was also contributing to the deteriorating condition of some of the roads.

A question was asked about recent repair work to a Class B road where the road appeared to be in a worse condition following shutdown and repair. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment indicated that there was a two hour window to undertake a temporary repair with a complete repair carried out at a later date. Officers understood what type of repair dressing was required for the damage and the type of road. In relation to the specific question raised, the Executive Director suggested that the Councillor discussed this matter with her outwith the meeting.

In relation to the condition of the roads in neighbouring council areas and their levels of investment, the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that the condition of South Ayrshire Roads reflected the investment decisions of the last ten to twelve years.

In terms of whether compensation could be claimed for the A77 closure and diversion onto other roads resulting in damage at Crosshill / Dailly, the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment advised that she had written to the Scottish Government Minister for Transport and the Islands on this matter with no success.

CHC 19.1 N, CHC 23.1 N – Homecare Care Costs per hour and Self Directed Support

In relation to a question in respect of the contrary direction of travel in performance for these two performance measures, the Director of Health and Social Care explained that, in respect of Home Care Costs, implementing the Scottish living wage, which had been subject to local negotiation, had increased the home care costs per hour. He added that costs were relatively low compared to East and North Ayrshire Councils. In terms of Self Directed Support (SDS), there had been an improvement to the uptake of Option 1.

It was also noted that the South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership – Integrated Joint Board (IJB) had recently commissioned an organisation (In Control) to review appropriate information to service users and investigate self-directed support models. It was hoped that the findings would provide learning and an opportunity to encourage uptake. A report on findings would be submitted to a future meeting of the IJB and this information could also be reported to elected members, if requested.

In terms of the use made of monies paid out for self-directed support, it was noted that robust monitoring procedures were in place and undertaken by the Council's finance section and also the SDS officer.

SO2.2 06.3 and 06.4 LGBF – School exclusion rates.

A question was asked in relation to school exclusion rates. The Director of Educational Services advised that these were short temporary exclusions of pupils displaying violence and threats of violence ranging from between one and three days imposed by the school. These types of incidents were declining. In relation to Looked After Children, any exclusions were authorised by officers within Council headquarters and could not be imposed by the school. In terms of disruptions within the class, it was noted that this was a balancing act with internal sanctions being implemented in the first instance with exclusion from school being a last resort.

SO2.2 07.3 and 07.4 LGBF - School attendance rates.

It was noted that attendance rates for Looked After Children were better than the Scottish average. The Director of Educational Services indicated that the under performance against the overall measure would be looked at in more detail. He commented that recording of school attendance was done differently across Scotland so it was difficult to know if this was an attendance issue or a recording of absence issue. In terms of South Ayrshire Council, attendance was recorded by the procedures laid down for this purpose. The Director of Educational Services would provide further information on this to members of the Panel in due course.

A question was asked in relation to the policy around parents / carers taking children on holiday during school term and the Director of Educational Services advised that it was parental choice and Scotland did not impose fines but there were guidance leaflets and information circulated to discourage parents from doing this.

SO2.3 05 and 06 LGBF – Percentage of pupils in deprived areas getting 5+ awards.

Although it was recognised that performance in this area was good, the Director of Educational Services advised that work would continue to raise the percentage of pupils in the 20% most deprived areas getting 5+ awards to help narrow the attainment gap.

SO6.4 03 LGBF – Sickness absence per employee (excluding teachers).

In respect of absence, it was noted that appropriate policies were in place and enforced by managers. It was noted that the Employee Absence Annual Report was due for submission to this Panel on 17th April 2018 and would provide the opportunity for members to question the Head of Employee and Customer Services in greater detail.

SO6.4 08 LGBF – Gender pay gap.

In terms of slippage in this performance measure, the Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation reported that it was statistically difficult to explain as it depended on the composition of staff at the time. A request was made for a further breakdown of information to better understand the male and female gender pay gap.

SO1.2 01.2 LGBF – Number of business gateway start-ups.

A question was asked as to what steps were being taken to increase the number of business gateway start-ups up to the Scottish average and the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment referred to the explanation within the report and indicated that the section was now fully staffed and working with a range of partners as well as undertaking outreach activity and it was expected that the number of business start-ups should increase and continue to do so.

In relation to Girvan and Maybole, activity was via Ambition Programme grants for incubator space although a focus on co-workers space rather than start-up space could be more effective to drive activity in both these areas. The Economic Development Manager added that work was being done with partners so that rural areas were being supported and people would not be required to travel to Ayr.

It was agreed that a follow-up report on business support to rural areas should be submitted to a future meeting of the Panel.

SO4.5 05.1 LGBF – Net cost per attendance at sport and leisure facilities.

It was noted that there had been an improvement to this performance measure, this being explained as being due to having greatly reduced costs and having increased income. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment pointed to performance measure SO4.5 06.1 LGBF which showed a continuing increase in levels of customer satisfaction with South Ayrshire leisure facilities. The biggest challenge to achieving further cost savings was suggested to be that South Ayrshire Council did not use a leisure trust to run these facilities and was therefore subject to paying non-domestic rates (NNDR). A discussion then took place in relation to leisure trusts, the review by the Scottish Government of NNDR and rates relief and the opportunity for community run facilities.

SO6.7 08 LGBF – Cost of support services.

The Executive Director - Resources, Governance and Organisation explained that it was difficult to determine why the cost of support services as a percentage of the Council's total gross expenditure had increased from previous years. It was noted that the Council's performance was still good and the trend over future years should be monitored.

SO5.3 02 LGBF – Percentage of dwellings meeting the Scottish Housing Standard.

Following a question in respect of the 138 properties that had failed the Scottish Housing Quality Standards due to energy efficiency standards, the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment intimated that as our housing condition information gets updated, some houses then emerge as not being up to standard which are then programmed for upgrade.

SO5.3 10 LGBF – Rent loss due to houses remaining empty.

In terms of rent loss due to average void time increases for the re-allocation of empty properties, the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment commented that there were challenges in relation to void turnaround mainly due to low demand properties which were hard to let (sometimes over a hundred days) which then skewed overall figures whenever one was let. It was noted that high demand properties could be re-let within 14 days. In terms of rent loss, this equated to 1% and the Executive Director would obtain the monetary value and circulate to Panel members. She advised that officers were continually working on this area.

A question was asked in relation to an age breakdown of people now placing housing requests and the Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment commented that she was not aware of a change in the demographics but that there were a range of differing social factors impacting on housing requests. It was agreed that it would be useful to have a briefing on voids presented to a future Panel meeting.

SO6.2 04 LGBF – Percentage of Council procurement spent on local SMEs.

A comment was made in respect of procurement spend on small and medium enterprises and further information was sought as it was felt that the Council could do more through this to stimulate the local economy. The Executive Director – Resources, Governance and Organisation provided a breakdown of procurement spending levels and the governance arrangements as per legislation. This provided different levels of opportunity. It was noted that, below £10,000, managers had delegation to decide how to spend bearing in mind best value for the Council. A question was then asked whether below this amount would be better used for local businesses and the Executive Director explained that managers were aware of the importance of local spend but also had to balance budgets so it was a complex situation.

It was noted that more detail on these matters would be provided through a forthcoming Members' bulletin and a Members' briefing on Procurement. Also, an updated Procurement Strategy was due to be submitted to the Council on 1st March 2018.

SO5.4 04.1 LGBF – Percentage of adults satisfied with street cleansing services.

In relation to the fall of satisfaction levels for street cleansing, it was suggested that a contributory factor could be the use of street cleaning staff for other duties. The Executive Director – Economy, Neighbourhood and Environment explained the cover arrangements and staffing pool that was used for refuse collection. She added that there was routine street maintenance in place however, if responsive maintenance was required, then this could cause difficulties. It was acknowledged that Neighbourhood Services were a good, hard-working and forward thinking team. The Executive Director committed to reviewing with the team to see what other approaches could be undertaken as public perception in this area was important.

The Panel, having reviewed the data contained within Appendix 1 of the report

Decided: to note the current position.

5. Marketing South Ayrshire.

Reference was made to the Minutes of 21st November 2017 (Page 1, paragraph 3(1)) and there was submitted a report ([issued](#)) of 23rd January 2018 by the Head of Enterprise, Development and Leisure providing an update on South Ayrshire marketing activity and how South Ayrshire had been promoted as a destination for tourism and inward investment.

The Economic Development Manager gave a presentation in relation to South Ayrshire Council and VisitScotland (VS) and commented on the role of VS and what was provided via a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with South Ayrshire Council amounting to £30,000 for 2017/18.

In relation to South Ayrshire having been promoted as a destination for tourism and inward investment, the Chair asked if two separate reports could be presented to a future meeting of this Panel on both of these topics.

A question was asked in relation to marketing at outlets such as the ferry ports and what was being done to promote South Ayrshire's towns and villages. The Economic Development Manager advised that the focus was more on types of activities and events rather than places but a report outlining a changing approach would be submitted to a future meeting of the Leadership Panel.

In relation to this Council's contribution to the Service Level Agreement which was more than East and North Ayrshire Councils, it was noted that officers were satisfied about the benefits derived by South Ayrshire Council from the arrangement.

A question was asked about whether the reduction in the cost of ferry tickets to Arran had resulted in a subsequent increase in visitors to Ayrshire. The Economic Development Manager advised that in relation to Arran's ferry activity, the figures for 2017 were currently awaited and commented that an evaluation of road equivalent tariffs by VS was due. He further added that it looked like the Isle of Arran was benefitting from ferry passengers, since it was the point of entry, but not necessarily the rest of the North Ayrshire area. A further comment was made by a Member of the Panel in relation to advertising at the Cairnryan Ferry terminal to attract visitors to South Ayrshire and it was noted that advertising was not done as it would involve upwards of £10,000 of printing costs.

In relation to the economic impact per visitor and the overall change of 26.4% as contained within Table 2 of the report, the Economic Development Manager indicated that this was based on 2011 figures, taking out inflation.

Councillor McGinley, Portfolio-holder, took the opportunity to address the Panel. He advised that a report would be submitted to a future meeting of the Leadership Panel regarding economic development as part of the Council's new structure relating to the place making agenda. This would look at economic development linked to schools and how the Council could drive this forward as well as maintain local control. He added that there was further work to be done on this approach.

A question was asked whether there was an over reliance on VS and if the Council's team could undertake much of this work via social media certainly with the forthcoming closure of Ayr's tourist visitor centre. The Economic Development Manager commented that, although there used to be, there was no longer an over reliance on VS and the team worked within the guidelines set two years ago. He referred to Councillor McGinley's comments above and indicated that a corporate view was being taken to economic development.

In terms of obtaining tourism figures, the Economic Development Manager indicated that this was done via a multiplier effect.

In relation to a query regarding joint working arrangements with Dumfries and Galloway Council, the Economic Development Manager commented on the partnership working currently being undertaken between both Councils for the Carrick and Galloway Forrest and the Biosphere with further promotional work on cycling and walking routes being explored.

The Panel, having scrutinised the activities undertaken and performance against the delivery of the Ayrshire and Arran Tourism Strategy for 2012-2017 and Invest South Ayrshire -

Decided: to note the current position.

The meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.