

COMMUNITY SERVICES
STANDING SCRUTINY PANEL

Minutes of meeting in County Buildings, Wellington Square, Ayr,
on 21st April 2010 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors John Allan (Chair), Ian Douglas, Ann Galbraith, Hugh Hunter, Elaine Little, Alex Oattes and Philip Saxton.

Apology: Councillor Bill Grant.

Attending: H. Garland, Executive Director – Children and Community; K. Leinster, Head of Community Care and Housing; M. Williamson, Head of Curriculum and Service Improvement; C. Monaghan, Head of Policy, Performance and Communication; J. Cronin, Policy and Strategy Manager; A. MacLeod, Performance and Business Manager; P. Linton, Performance and Change Management Manager; N. Hunter, Manager of Inspection and Quality Assurance; C. Bishop, Performance and Business Change Manager; G. Boyce, Service Planning and Performance Management Officer; and A. Gerrish, Committee Administrative Officer.

Also attending: Councillors Douglas Campbell, John McDowall, Nan McFarlane and Helen Moonie and Paul Riley, Audit Scotland.

1. Item for Call-in – Affordable Housing: Council New Build Bid for Subsidy.

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 13th April 2010 (Page 217 paragraph 7) when that Panel, having considered a report (issued) of 18th March 2010 by the Executive Director – Children and Community, decided to agree

- (1) that the Council submit a bid to the Scottish Government for Council new build subsidy, by 30th April 2010 based on the proposals as outlined in the report; and
- (2) in principle to the proposed sites for Council new build as outlined in paragraph 4.3 of the report.

The Panel was advised that the report had been the subject of a call-in for the following reasons:-

- (a) for an explanation of the site selection process and feasibility study, including options appraisal;
- (b) to what extent had the report to the Leadership Panel of 19th May 2009 “Affordable Housing” been taken into account;
- (c) for an explanation of perceived level of risk of failing to achieve funding, given that information relating to the bid was incomplete and partially assumptive;
- (d) whether any consideration had been given to social integration; and
- (e) what progress had been made in implementing the Council’s Landbanking Policy.

The Chair invited Councillor McDowall to explain his reasons for the call-in and, thereafter, the Panel heard Councillor McDowall seek clarification on the points outlined at (a) to (e) above.

Councillor Moonie similarly expressed her concerns and in particular to:- the high demand for houses in Prestwick and Troon; the work being carried out to ensure that the best bid was being submitted to the Scottish Government; feasibility studies; options appraisal; and social integration.

A full discussion took place on this matter and various questions and comments were raised by Members of the Panel and the Portfolio Holder in relation to the report and the Executive Director – Children and Community and the Head of Community Care and Housing responded accordingly.

Decided: following review, that the decision of the Leadership Panel in respect of this matter be confirmed and implemented.

2. Minutes of previous meeting.

Decided: to note the Minutes of the meeting of 17th March 2010 (issued).

3. Social Work Inspection Agency (SWIA) Performance Inspection – Progress Report.

There was submitted a report (issued) of 14th April 2010 by the Executive Director – Children and Community

- (1) detailing the actions arising from the 2009 Social Work Performance Inspection and the ongoing progress being made; and
- (2) advising that SWIA
 - (a) had completed a performance inspection of this Council's Social Work Services in 2009 and an action plan addressing the 16 recommendations identified by SWIA during the inspection had been developed with key stakeholders and agreed by members of the SWIA inspection team;
 - (b) would scrutinise progress reports submitted by the Executive Director – Children and Community in March, May and August 2010, in relation to progress made against the action plan; and
 - (c) would undertake a short follow-up inspection where they would look to evidence the progress detailed within the final report.

Decided: to note the contents of the report.

4. Remit from the Leadership Panel: South Ayrshire Council Directorate Plans.

Reference was made to the Minutes of the Leadership Panel of 13th April 2010 (Page 219, paragraph 10) when it had been decided, having considered a report (issued) of 31st March 2010 by the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication,

- (1) to approve the Children and Community Directorate Plan for 2010-13;
- (2) to approve the Corporate Services Directorate Plan for 2010-13;

- (3) to approve the Development and Environment Directorate Plan for 2010-13; and
- (4) to agree to remit these Plans to the relevant Standing Scrutiny Panels, to examine those sections that relate to their specific remits.

Having heard the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication in further detail on the process being followed and in particular to the timing of bringing the Directorate Plans into alignment with the budget process, a question was raised by a Member of the Panel into the possibility of having a Seminar for all Members when performance information became available and the Executive Director – Children and Community and the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication responded accordingly.

Decided:

- (a) to note
 - (i) the updated Directorate Plans; and
 - (ii) that a report on performance against the existing Plans would be submitted to the Leadership Panel on 8th June 2010 for consideration; and
- (b) to request that the Head of Policy, Performance and Communication organise a Seminar prior to the Leadership Panel meeting on 8th June 2010 for the Children and Community Directorate Plan.

The meeting ended at 10.45 a.m.