

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 1st August, 2008 - Minute of Meeting of the URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Dean, Convener; and Councillors Allan, Cassie, Clark, Crockett (substituting for Councillor Ironside), Dunbar (substituting for Councillor Kiddie), Farquharson (substituting for Councillor Wisely), Fletcher, McDonald, May, John Stewart, Kevin Stewart, Kirsty West (substituting for Councillor Fletcher for part of the meeting) and Young.

DETERMINATION OF URGENT BUSINESS TO BE CONSIDERED

1. In terms of Standing Order 28(3)(vi), and in accordance with Section 50(B)(4)(b) of the Local Government Scotland Act, 1973, the Committee was informed that it had to determine (1) that the items on the agenda were of an urgent nature; and (2) that the Committee required to consider the items and take a decision thereon.

The Committee resolved:-

to agree that the items were of an urgent nature and required to be considered and a decision taken thereon.

DOONIES FARM - FUTURE OPERATION

2. (A) The Committee was informed that a request for a deputation had been received from the Friends of Doonies Farm in accordance with Standing Order 10.

The Committee resolved:-

to agree to hear the deputation prior to the consideration of the relevant item.

(B) The Committee heard John Sleigh as Chairman of the Friends of Doonies Limited, update the Committee on developments which had taken place since its meeting on 18th July 2008 in relation to the provision of sponsorship and financial support to the company; the company's plans for the future operation of Doonies Farm; and negotiations which were ongoing with the Council. Mr Sleigh was accompanied by Mr John Findlay and Mr Mark Brown. Members of the deputation thereafter responded to questions put to them by members of the Committee.

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

The Committee resolved:-

to thank the deputation for their contributions.

(c) With reference to Article 2 of the minute of its meeting of 18th July 2008, the Committee had before it for consideration (1) the business plan submitted by the Friends of Doonies Farm more particularly referred to in said Article; and (2) a report by the Head of Resources Development and Delivery providing supplementary information detailing the market value and rent of Doonies Farm; highlighting development opportunities; clarifying the extent of the farm; and advising on complex property issues which the Committee might wish to consider as part of its deliberations on the overall future of Doonies Farm.

The Committee heard from the City Chamberlain, the City Solicitor and the Head of Resources Development and Delivery who expressed concerns as to assumptions which were being made regarding short and long-term funding, and future income and revenue, uncertainty as to how much of the land attached to the farm would be required to support the company's business plan, and that whilst the creation of an agricultural lease might be advantageous to the company in utilising its charitable status to obtain grants from external organisations, it might be prejudicial to the interests of the Council in seeking to develop the land in question should the proposed enterprise fail.

The report recommended:-

- (a) that the Committee consider the options available to, and the consequential implications for the Council identified by Ryden and Council officials prior to its deliberations on the overall future of Doonies Farm; and
- (b) that the sites identified within the report with development opportunities be excluded from any deliberations of Doonies Farm and that the Head of Resources Development and Delivery be instructed to report to future Council Committees on the future use of the specific sites.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to instruct the City Solicitor, with immediate effect, to enter into a transitional services agreement and licence with the Friends of Doonies for a period of six months, to enable the business plan, lease and formal agreements to be finalised and implemented between the Council and the Friends of Doonies;
- (ii) that the sites identified within the aforementioned supplementary information with development opportunities be excluded from any deliberations of Doonies Farm and that the Head of Resources Development and Delivery be instructed to report to future Council Committees on the future use of the specific sites; and

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

- (iii) that the present arrangements for payment of the running costs of Doonies Farm by the Friends of Doonies on a monthly basis be continued for the period of the licence.

THE DUTHIE PARK - RESTORATIVE WORKS FOR THE BANDSTAND

3. The Committee had before it for consideration a report by the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services (South Area) requesting that the Committee fund restorative works for The Duthie Park Bandstand in time for the celebration of the 125th Anniversary of The Duthie Park on 14th September 2008.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee agree a one-off budget of £15,000 from the General Property Expenditure Budget within the 2008/09 City Improvement Fund for restorative works to the Bandstand in the Duthie Park as set out in the report.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendation contained in the report.

LEADERSHIP BOARD UPDATE

4. With reference to Article 4 of the minute of its meeting of 18th July 2008, the Committee had before it for consideration a report by the Chief Executive summarising the progress which had been made in implementing the eight recommendations made by the Accounts Commission following the hearing on 13th and 14th May 2008.

With reference to Article 1 of the minute of meeting of the Scrutiny Panel held on 31st July 2008, the Committee had before it for approval the draft remit of the Scrutiny Panel. The Committee noted that approval of the draft remit would necessitate consequential adjustments to the remit of the Continuous Improvement Committee.

The report by the Chief Executive incorporated, as an appendix, the draft Improvement Plan which the External Support Group had requested be added to the list of matters to be reported on at joint meetings. It was noted that the Improvement Plan would now require to be reported to the External Support Group and thereafter to the next meeting of the Council on 13th August 2008.

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note the progress to date in addressing the findings and recommendations of the Accounts Commission for Scotland on *Aberdeen City Council: Reports by the Controller of Audit on the Audit of Best Value and Community Planning and on the Property Sales Investigation*;
- (ii) to agree the necessary next steps in connection with each of the recommendations as detailed within the report;
- (iii) to instruct the Chief Executive and other appropriate officers to proceed with the necessary actions, reporting as required to the Leadership Board;
- (iv) to approve the draft remit of the Scrutiny Panel subject to the removal of the words "(including Conveners)" in the fifth bullet point thereof; and
- (v) to note the draft Improvement Plan.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

The Committee resolved in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of the following items of business so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the classes described in the relevant paragraphs of Schedule 7(A) to the Act, namely:- Article 5 (paragraph 8), Article 6 (paragraph 1); Article 7 (paragraph 6); Article 8 (paragraph 6) and Article 10 (paragraphs 1 and 6).

TENDER ACCEPTANCE - INSURANCE SERVICES

5. The Committee had before it for consideration a report by the City Chamberlain advising of the tender exercise undertaken to recommend the successful bidder to provide insurance services for the Council.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee approve the tender, with a total annual premium of £1,196,152.74 based on the following figures from bidders for a period of five years, starting 1st October 2008, taking advantage of a 5% package discount and a 10% Long Term Agreement (LTA) discount:-

- Zurich Municipal for the provision of property interruption insurance at a yearly premium of £603,069.15;
- Risk Management Partners for the provision of engineering inspection at a yearly premium of £45,405.00;

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

- Zurich Municipal for the provision of motor insurance at a yearly premium of £246,945.98;
- Zurich Municipal for the provision of liability insurance at a yearly premium of £192,522.02;
- ACE European Group Limited for the provision of personal accident insurance at a yearly premium of £27,915.59; and
- Zurich Municipal claims handling fees on behalf of the Council at a yearly cost of £80,295.00.

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the recommendations contained in the report.

INTELLIGENT TRANSPORT SYSTEMS UNIT

6. The Committee had before it for consideration a business case by the Head of Shelter and Environment, Neighbourhood Services (South Area) highlighting difficulties in recruiting staff within the Council's Intelligent Transport Systems Unit which was primarily responsible for the design, installation, operation and maintenance of the city's traffic signal infrastructure and which played a vital role in the daily management of the road network in addition to being responsible for the bus Real Time Passenger Information System, bus lane camera enforcement and variable message signs.

The report explained that in the past ten years the unit had seen a reduction in staff resource from five to three persons and an increase in the extent of its roles and responsibilities to the level where the unit's ability to effectively carry out daily operations was being compromised.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee approve -

- (a) the advertisement of the recently vacated posts of Engineer and Technical Officer;
- (b) that a Traffic Engineer be seconded from Halcrow for two days per week to provide cover and assistance until permanent staffing appointments could be made; and
- (c) the re-advertisement of the vacant posts of Principal Technical Officer and Technical Officer.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve recommendation (b) contained in the report for a period of three months;

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

- (ii) that a service redesign exercise be carried out and a report be submitted to the Resources Management Committee within a period of three months;
- (iii) that dependent on the outcome of the report to the Resources Management Committee, to note that tenders may have to be invited for the provision of the service as a whole;
- (iv) that the report requested also cover the possibility of increasing charges for the provision of the service to neighbouring authorities; and
- (v) that a further report be submitted to a future meeting of the Resources Management Committee on specialist staff leaving the authority's employment and returning as consultants.

REVISED JANITORIAL COVER FOR LETS IN SCHOOLS

7. The Committee had before it for consideration a report by the Head of Shelter and Environment, Neighbourhood Services (North Area) confirming that as a result of work instigated through the Corporate Management Team, Neighbourhoods had been asked to investigate the feasibility of moving all lets from feeder schools into the academies in order to make substantial savings in janitorial overtime.

The report confirmed that preliminary work undertaken by the Facilities Managers based in each Area indicated that this could potentially deliver a saving of £330,000 per annum, and if implemented from August 2008 could potentially deliver a saving of £215,000 during the current financial year but that this would be dependent upon successful and early implementation and might have a significant impact on users of feeder schools and the image of the Council.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee approve the moving of all feasible lets from feeder schools to academies unless full costs of the let were covered by the users.

Councillor John Stewart moved, seconded by Councillor McDonald:-

that the recommendation contained in the report be implemented with immediate effect, that any difficulties experienced by users as a result be reported to the Area Committees in September for determination, and that local members be consulted as part of the process.

Councillor Allan moved as an amendment, seconded by Councillor Young:-

that consideration of the matter be deferred to permit further consultation with Head Teachers and Trade Unions.

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

On a division, there voted:- for the motion (10) - the Convener; and Councillors Cassie, Clark, Dunbar, Farquharson, Fletcher, McDonald, May, John Stewart and Kevin Stewart; for the amendment (3) - Councillors Allan, Crockett and Young.

The Committee resolved:-
to adopt the motion.

DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

Councillors Clark and Crockett declared interests in connection with the matter referred to in the following Article as members of the Board of Governors of the Royal Aberdeen Workshops for the Blind and left the meeting prior to the Committee's deliberations on the matter.

Councillor Fletcher advised that he was not a member of the Board of Governors of the Royal Aberdeen Workshops for the Blind, as had previously been suggested, and requested that this be recorded. Councillor Fletcher therefore remained in the meeting during the course of the Committee's deliberations.

The Convener declared an interest as the Council's nominated representative to Grampian Society for the Blind but considered that the nature of her interest did not preclude her from remaining in the meeting during the course of the Committee's deliberations.

GLENCRAFT

8. The Committee heard Andrew Stephen, Senior Business Development Executive, Strategic Leadership, deliver an oral report, accompanied by the Corporate Director for Resources Management, on developments with regard to the future of the Royal Aberdeen Workshops for the Blind (Glencraft) and in particular the attempts being made to relocate their business from their present site at West Tullos Industrial Estate, subject to a sustainable business plan being produced.

The Committee noted that it had taken Glencraft slightly longer than anticipated to produce their business plan for various reasons.

The Committee resolved:-

to agree to provide Glencraft with £50,000 in revenue grant funding immediately to allow them some additional time to produce their business plan, to be met from

URGENT BUSINESS COMMITTEE
1st August, 2008

contingencies, and that a further £100,000 be made available by way of a loan if required.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

9. The Convener made reference to correspondence which had been received from Councillor Pat Watters, President of COSLA, in relation to the Council's process for the appointment of a new Chief Executive, and explained that there could be a requirement for a further meeting of the Committee on 6th August 2008 to deal with the matter.

The Committee resolved:-

to agree to hold a further meeting of the Committee to deal with the matter if it was considered necessary.

APPOINTMENT OF INTERIM CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

10. The Convener updated the Committee on the progress to date in appointing an interim Chief Executive Officer, wherein it was advised (a) that two candidates, sourced by Munro Consulting, had been interviewed on 30th July 2008; (b) that the Leadership Board was recommending the appointment of 'Candidate A', who would undertake the combined role of interim Chief Executive and External Finance Adviser; (c) that the precise details of the proposed contract were still to be finalised, however the costs would be in the region of £800 to £1,200 per day (plus expenses), with the appointment for a period of up to six months and costs to be met from contingencies; (d) that the interim Chief Executive would have the line management responsibilities undertaken by the current Chief Executive until the new Chief Executive was in post, and would also undertake the role of External Financial Adviser; (e) that in the event that 'Candidate A' did not accept the appointment members were asked to authorise the appointment of 'Candidate B'; (f) that it was envisaged that the appointed candidate would take up post during the week commencing 11th August 2008; and (g) that the Committee would require to invoke Standing Order 69(3)(i) in respect of the appointment.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to approve the appointment as outlined by the Convener - Candidate A whom failing Candidate B; and
 - (ii) to invoke Standing Order 69(3)(i) in respect of the appointment.
- **KATHARINE DEAN, Convener.**