

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**GOVERNANCE AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE****MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 1 MAY 2009 AT 1000 HRS
IN THE MEETING ROOM, COUNCIL HEADQUARTERS,
LONDON ROAD, KILMARNOCK**

PRESENT: Councillors Tom Cook, Willie Coffey, John Campbell, Alan Brown, Stuart Finlayson, Jimmy Kelly and Elaine Dinwoodie.

ATTENDING: Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services; Alex McPhee, Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management; Bill Walkinshaw, Head of Democratic Services; Chris McAleavey, Head of Housing; David Mitchell, Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services; Kenneth McKinlay, Principal Officer - Quality Improvement; and Stuart Nelson, Administrative Officer.

APOLOGIES: Councillors Helen Coffey, Maureen McKay, Eric Ross and Drew Filson.

CHAIR: Councillor Tom Cook, Chair.

CHAIR'S REMARKS

1. The Chair welcomed Councillor Jimmy Kelly to this, his first meeting of the Governance and Scrutiny Committee.

PREVIOUS MINUTES

2. There were submitted and approved as a correct record, the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 3 April 2009 (circulated).

MATTERS ARISING UPDATE REPORT

3. There was submitted and noted a report dated 15 April 2009 (circulated) by the Depute Chief Executive/ Executive Director of Corporate Support which provided the Committee with a consolidated response to information requests made by Members at previous meetings.

In this connection, the Chair advised, and it was noted, that a Briefing Note by the Head of Housing had been circulated on Thursday 30 April 2009 to Members of the Committee which had provided information on investment in difficult to let housing.

SCRUTINY**CONCLUDED PROPERTY TRANSACTIONS**

4. There was submitted a joint report dated 17 April 2009 (circulated) by the Executive Head of Finance and Asset Management and the Solicitor to the Council which provided details of disposals and acquisitions by the Council of land and buildings concluded during the six month period from 1 October 2008 – 31 March 2009.

In this connection, the Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services, in response to questions asked by Members, provided clarification in respect of the following matters, namely:-

- those factors which influenced progress with negotiations in respect of acquisitions relating to the Galston Flood Prevention Scheme and the approaches and powers available to the Council in pursuing such acquisitions;
- in general terms, the role of the District Valuer in the negotiation process for the acquisition of land/property; and
- the re-reporting of the disposal at Meiklewood Road, Kilmarnock, and, in this connection, it was noted that the Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services would confirm to members the sale price previously reported to Committee in respect of this disposal.

It was agreed to note the terms of the report and the further information provided by the Head of Legal, Procurement and Regulatory Services.

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL AND SOCIAL SERVICES:
STANDARDS AND QUALITY REPORT FOR 2008**

5. There was submitted a report dated 17 April 2009 (circulated) by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services which advised of the online publication of the Standards and Quality Report for the Department of Educational and Social Services for 2008.

Arising from discussion, and in response to questions asked by Members of the Committee, the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services provided further information in respect of the following matters, namely:-

- the increase in the level of uptake of school meals;
- in respect of school education, the improvement in the levels of attainment by looked after and accommodated children and the continuing efforts which were being made by the Education Service and schools to achieve further improvements;
- the work of the Criminal Justice Team within Social Work in contributing to a reduction in the level of re-offending by clients;
- the proposed development of the use of "Telecare";
- the falling pupil to adult ratio within East Ayrshire schools and the continuing efforts to further reduce this ratio; and
- the projected rate of reduction in school roles in coming years.

It was agreed:-

- (i) to note the positive progress made by the various Services within the Department of Educational and Social Services against previous performance, as indicated in the report;
- (ii) that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services continue to report to Committee on this matter, on an annual basis;
- (iii) that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services convey congratulations on behalf of the Committee to Woodstock School on its second consecutive Green Flag Eco School Award;

- (iv) to note that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services would report back to an appropriate future meeting to update on progress in relation to introduction of the peripatetic team within the Early Years Service;
- (v) that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services advise Members of the Committee, in due course, of the number of visits made to the Standards and Quality Report 2008 on the Council's website;
- (vi) to note that the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services would appropriately report back to Committee on the operation of Parent Councils since their introduction, particularly focusing on the development of meaningful parent involvement/ participation; and
- (vii) otherwise, to note the terms of the report and the further information provided by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services in response to questions put.

The meeting terminated at 1046 hours.