

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**DEVELOPMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE – 16 DECEMBER 2003**

### **SCOTTISH AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE AUCHINCROIVE CAMPUS, AYR**

#### **Report by Director of Development Services**

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1** To advise the Committee of the current situation regarding the proposals of the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) for the future of the Auchincruive campus at Ayr.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1** At its meeting held on 26 August 2003, the Committee noted a report advising of the SAC proposals for the future of the Auchincruive campus of the College and instructed the Director of Development Services to bring a further update report to a future meeting.

## **3 THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

- 3.1** The SAC proposals for the rationalisation of its entire business operation involved consolidating all higher level education and research activity at Edinburgh and thereby reducing the overall level of activity at the campuses at Auchincruive in Ayr and Craibstone in Aberdeen.
- 3.2** Concern about the effects of the proposals on the rural economy and rural education were voiced throughout Scotland. In Ayrshire, an "Auchincruive Working Party" was formed, which comprised a wide cross section of political and industry representation. East Ayrshire Council was represented on the Working Party by Councillor Eric Jackson.
- 3.3** In common with other interests throughout Scotland, representations were made directly to the Board of the Scottish Agricultural College and to the Minister for Environment and Rural Development.

## **4 OUTCOME OF THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

- 4.1** The consultation and review process has been completed and following endorsement of the resulting proposals by the Minister for Environment and Rural Development, announcements were made in early October 2003.

#### **4.2** The main points of the announcements are as follows :

- Education to degree level will be consolidated in Edinburgh;
- Education to diploma level (2-year courses) will continue to be delivered both in Ayr and Aberdeen;
- The rural business consultancy and veterinary services which are both currently operated from Auchincruive will continue to be operated in the Ayr area and may be the subject of future development;
- The poultry research facility currently located at Auchincruive will continue to be operated locally;
- The SAC Board is committed to pursuing the “least –cost” option of retaining the headquarters operation at Kings Buildings in Edinburgh;
- Discussions are now taking place with other local further education providers about the integrated development of this sector, on the basis of the development of a new shared educational campus;
- The SAC Board has commissioned external consultants, who will be supported by a working group of officers from Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, South Ayrshire Council and East Ayrshire Council, to assist in the development of the “estates component” of the Business Plan. This will involve the development of a master-plan for the future use of the Auchincruive Estate. The SAC Board has given a commitment that funds realised from the disposal of a significant element of the Estate will be reinvested in the proposed new educational campus.

It is considered that this announcement represents a significant shift from the original proposals to a programme which meets many of the objectives of the Working Party.

## **5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1** The retention and development of the consultancy, veterinary and rural sector educational services in Ayrshire, accords with the ambitions set out in the East Ayrshire Community plan and also in the economic strategy of the Ayrshire Economic Forum – “Ayrshire : Scotland’s Western Gateway”.

## **6 FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1** There are no immediate implications for East Ayrshire Council, under the above headings.

## **7 RECOMMENDATION**

**7.1** That the Committee notes the terms of this report

**Stephen Chorley**  
**Director of Development Services**

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### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**Nil**

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