

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

REORGANISATION COMMITTEE - DECENTRALISATION SUB-COMMITTEE

**Minutes of meeting held on Friday 26 May 1995 at 10am
in the Council Chambers, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock**

PRESENT: Councillors David Fulton, Robert Beattie, James Boyd, Tom Farrell, Katherine Hall, James Kelly, John Knapp, Kim Nicoll, Jim O'Neill, David Sneller and Robert Taylor.

CHAIRMAN: Councillor David Fulton, Convener, in the Chair.

1. QUORUM

The quorum was set at five.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

There was submitted the terms of reference in respect of the Decentralisation Sub-Committee which stated that all matters relating to the decentralisation arrangements which the Council is required to establish in terms of S.23 of the Local Government Etc (Scotland) Act 1994.

3. SEDERUNT AND APOLOGIES

The sederunt was taken and apologies submitted in respect of Councillors Jane Darnbrough and Andrew McIntyre.

4. DECENTRALISATION REPORT

Councillor Fulton made reference to S.23 of the Local Government Etc (Scotland) Act 1994 and outlined the salient points relating to the requirement that every Council shall have a duty to prepare a draft Decentralisation Scheme for their area in accordance with legislation.

Thereon, there was submitted a report (tabled) which set out various forms of decentralisation, detailed strength and issues to consider linked to each and began the process of constructing a scheme of decentralisation for the East Ayrshire unitary authority by making some preliminary suggestions.

The report stated that there were many kinds of decentralisation ranging from officers exercising control over delegated budgets, to groups of elected members "running" the services development within local areas. In order to explore the concept further, four forms of decentralisation were highlighted.

- (a) Officer Decentralisation;
- (b) Political Decentralisation;
- (c) Budgetary Decentralisation; and
- (d) Access to Information

It was accepted that none of those concepts were mutually exclusive and indeed any new unitary authority could build a decentralisation strategy which embodied elements from each.

The report was presented by Mr Fraser and Mr McVicar, who in outlining the content, paid particular reference to the guidance document produced by the Scottish Office which listed a number cogent questions which, if addressed effectively, would aid the process of the Sub-Committee developing a scheme of decentralisation.

Finally, as an aid to making further progress, the following issues be investigated:

- (i) the definition of decentralisation that the Sub-Committee want developed;
- (ii) the likely structure and accompanying operation of procedures which might be established and the organisational changes that may be required;
- (iii) the role of the voluntary and community sectors in the formulation of the decentralisation process;
- (iv) the resourcing of the process of decentralisation; and
- (v) the review system that will be required to ensure progress.

Following the presentation and in answer to members' questions and comments including:

- A. that visits take place to the locations where information technology has been installed;
- B. the failure of local Committees to take account of ward boundaries;
- C. the fact that the report had referred to political/budgetary decentralisation but did not mention service decentralisation;
- D. the importance of information technology was emphasised.

Councillor Sneller then advised the meeting that the report presented was purely for information purposes and that public consultations would take place in June with possible draft structure being prepared for the next meeting.

In addition, reference was made to:

- (I) the possibility of utilising existing premises within the East Ayrshire Council area;
- (II) the cost of decentralisation; and
- (III) that the responsibility for decentralisation of departments will become the responsibility of the new Directors following their appointment.

Councillor Fulton then submitted five principals and objectives for consideration:

- (1) to establish a decentralisation scheme which would be operational by 1 April 1996;
- (2) to establish the broad principals of a proposed scheme which could be built on and finalised by 1 April 1996.