

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE****Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 14 September 1995 at 2.00pm
in the Council Chambers, Lugar, Cumnock**

- PRESENT:** Councillors J Boyd (Chair), R Beattie, R Brailsford, G Cree, J Darnbrough, E Jackson, J Kelly, D Macrae, R McDill, J O'Neill, I Reeves and J Smith.
- ATTENDING:** F Lees (Depute Chief Executive); D McVicar (Chief Executive's Department); J Dickie (Director of Social Work); and D Campbell (Head of Public Relations and Marketing).
- APOLOGIES:** Councillors D Coffey, W Doyle, T Farrell, A McIntyre, E Ross and D Sneller.

1. MINUTES OF SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE OF 16 AUGUST 1995

The minutes of the Social Work Committee of 16 August 1995 (issued) was submitted and noted.

2. CROSS BOUNDARY SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

There was submitted a report (issued) by the Director of Social Work setting out the areas in which social work services are provided across unitary authority boundaries in Ayrshire and setting out the approach which will be adopted in order to ensure continuity and adjustment of these arrangements.

The Director explained that the primary objectives of continuity of service provision, appropriate co-operation across unitary boundaries and authority autonomy should be effectively addressed by dealing with these cross boundary issues. Further work is required to determine the precise sharing, charging and management arrangements for these areas of service activity and that the Committee will be informed about options, as the services are reviewed and agreement reached with colleagues in other authorities.

After further explanation by the Director the Committee agreed to:

- (a) request the Director of Social Work return with specific proposals in each of the service areas; and
- (b) otherwise note the contents of the report.

3. DISAGGREGATION OF REGIONAL SOCIAL WORK SERVICES

There was submitted a report (issued) by the Director of Social Work itemising the main service areas in which existing Regional Council Social Work Services have to be considered in terms of continuity and disaggregation and noting the need for arrangements to ensure continuity.

The Director explained that as part of the overall disaggregation exercise in relation to social work services a number of areas have been identified in which services are currently managed from a Strathclyde Region base. These services will continue to be required post 1 April 1996 and each unitary authority has to consider options for continuity.

After further explanation by the Director the Committee agreed to:

- (a) request the Director of Social Work to return with specific proposals in each of the itemised service areas in due course; and
- (b) otherwise, note the contents of the report.

4. LOCAL AUTHORITY COMPLAINTS PROCEDURES

There was submitted a report (issued) by the Director of Social Work outlining the comments which have been submitted by the Director to the Scottish Office and to CoSLA in response to the consultative paper on local authority complaints procedures.

After hearing the Director in explanation that:

- (a) the timing of the draft guidance caused some difficulty;
- (b) despite the above, there was an opportunity for East Ayrshire to move from a historical arrangement to one in which new approaches to the handling of complaints would be developed;
- (c) the particular difficulties which child care matters cause for complaints procedures need to be more clearly addressed and acknowledged in the guidance;
- (d) it needs to be acknowledged that the vast bulk of complaints are likely to be dealt with short of consideration by the Complaints Review Committee;
- (e) the convening of a Complaints Committee is often tantamount to an admission of failure; and
- (f) East Ayrshire will wish to establish its own complaints procedures and Complaints Review Committee but will seek to draw in the best practice and promote collaboration with other neighbouring authorities in preparing the ground work and resources for dealing sensitively with complaints;

it was agreed to note the contents of the report.

5. MEMBERS' BRIEFING - VISITS TO SOCIAL WORK UNITS

There was submitted a report (issued) by the Director of Social Work setting out the framework for visits by members to social work units as part of the briefing programme.

The Director explained that the paper intended to take further the proposals which were considered by the Social Work Committee of 16 August 1995 for the briefing of elected members on social work matters. Recognising the demands on members' time, it was proposed that each group should make at least five visits during the period to January 1996.

Having heard the Director in further explanation, it was agreed to approve the proposals for the first stage of the members' briefing programme.

6. RESPONSE TO STUC RESOLUTION ON COMMUNITY CARE

There was submitted a report (issued) by the Director of Social Work advising the Committee that a request had been received from the STUC for comments on a Resolution passed on the 98th Annual Scottish Trade Union Congress held in Perth in April this year and recommending the terms of a response from the Council to that Resolution.

The Director explained that the implementation of the National Health Service and Community Care Act on 1 April 1993 had generated several major controversies, in particular the difficulties which had been highlighted in relation to the reduction of National Health Service beds for people with mental health problems, elderly people, people with learning disabilities and a shift to provision of services by the independent sector based on means testing of individuals' ability to pay.

After hearing the Director in further explanation, it was agreed that the proposed response be vigorously supported by East Ayrshire Council and thereafter passed to the STUC.

7. FORMAL CONSULTATION ON THE CLOSURE OF RAVENSPARK HOSPITAL, IRVINE

There was submitted a report (issued) by the Director of Social Work seeking the Committee's approval of a response to the formal consultation process on the proposed closure of Ravenspark Hospital, Irvine.

After hearing the Director in explanation outlining his comments, the Committee agreed:

- (a) the terms of this report as the Council's response to the formal consultation on the closure of Ravenspark Hospital;
- (b) to request the Director of Social Work to indicate to both Ayrshire and Arran Health Board and the Scottish Office Management Executive the Council's dissatisfaction with the consultation process in respect of replacement facilities;
- (c) to seek urgent assurances from Ayrshire and Arran Health Board that it will work to continue its current commitment to joint working and strengthen this with new unitary authorities;
- (d) to express its hope that the past breakdown in joint planning between the Health Board and other statutory agencies, which resulted in the unilateral decisions on the replacement of Ravenspark, will not recur; and
- (e) otherwise, to note the contents of the report.