

ANGUS COUNCIL

MINUTE of MEETING of the **ENVIRONMENTAL AND CONSUMER PROTECTION COMMITTEE** held in the Town and County Hall, Forfar on Tuesday 12 November 2002 at 4.00pm.

Present: Councillors SHEENA WELSH, IAN ANGUS, BILL CROWE, FRANK ELLIS, ALISTAIR GRAY, IAN MACKINTOSH, PETER MURPHY, ROBERT MYLES and BILL ROBERTON.

Apologies: Apologies were intimated on behalf of Councillors STEWART McGLYNN, JOY MOWATT and PETER NIELD.

Councillor WELSH, Convener, in the Chair.

1. MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The [minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 October 2002](#) was approved as a correct record and signed by the Convener.

2. 2003/2004 REVENUE BUDGET

There was submitted [Report No 1317/02](#) by the Director of Finance advising the Committee of the latest position with regard to the preparation of the Environmental and Consumer Protection department 2003/2004 revenue budget and associated issues. Appended to the Report was a summary of the departmental provisional base budget for 2003/2004 as submitted to, and subsequently reviewed by, the Director of Finance.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report for its interest at this stage of the budget process; and
- (ii) to note that more detailed reports with specific recommendations would be brought forward later in the budget cycle.

3. 2002/2006 FINANCIAL PLAN AND 2003/2004 CAPITAL BUDGET

There was submitted [Report No 1318/02](#) by the Director of Finance advising the Committee of the latest position with regard to the preparation of the 2002/2006 Financial Plan (incorporating the 2003/2004 capital budget) for the Environmental and Consumer Protection department. Appended to the Report were the departmental Financial Plan submissions for 2002/2006 as returned to the Director of Finance and subsequently reviewed by the Capital Budget Sub-Group.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report for its interest at this stage in the Financial Plan process; and
- (ii) to note that more detailed reports with specific recommendations would be brought forward later in the Financial Plan cycle.

4. FOOD STANDARDS AGENCY - AUDIT REPORT - END OF YEAR 1

With reference to Article 5 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 October 2002, there was submitted [Report No 1308/02](#) by the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection advising the Committee that the Food Standards Agency had now issued a Year 1 report on their audit findings following the audit programme examining Scottish Local Authority Food Law Enforcement. Such audits were a key mechanism by which the agency could raise national food safety standards by improving the effectiveness of local authority performance.

The Report indicated that the programme had commenced at the end of June 2001 with the aim of auditing all 32 Scottish Local Authorities by March 2002. All audits had been completed to this timescale. Angus Council's Audit Report for both year 1 and year 2 had been reported to this Committee. All 32 Scottish Local Authority Year 1 Reports were available on the Food Standards Agency website for public scrutiny and a copy of the full report had been placed in the Members' Lounge.

The audit process was overviewed by an Audit Advisory Committee with membership drawn from interested groups. Currently the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection was a member of this Committee representing the Chief Officers of Environmental Health in Scotland. All local authorities had accepted the non-conformances found in Year 1 and had produced an Action Plan which, in all cases, had been agreed by the Agency. An appeals procedure was currently under development and a Scottish proposal from the Audit Advisory Committee was being considered by the Food Standards Agency Board.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

5. REGULATIONS TO PREVENT THE DIVERSION OF UNFIT MEAT INTO THE HUMAN FOOD CHAIN

With reference to Article 13 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 13 August 2002, there was submitted letter dated 1 October 2002 from Stephen Hendry, Meat Policy Team, Food Standards Agency, Scotland in response to the concerns expressed by this Committee regarding the implementation of the Animal By-Product (Identification) (Scotland) Regulations 2002.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (i) to instruct the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection to advise the Food Standards Agency of its disappointment at the failure to include a requirement to stain "low risk" meat by-products in the amended Regulations; and
- (ii) to further instruct the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection to advise the Food Standards Agency of its support regarding the suggested amendments to the Regulations which were intended to enhance public health by removing the option to sterilise as a method of identifying "high risk" animal by-products and also to introduce a requirement to stain blood where it had been originated from an animal deemed unfit for human consumption.

6. CLEANSING AND WASTE MANAGEMENT SERVICES ARRANGEMENTS - CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR HOLIDAY PERIOD

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 6 November 2001, there was submitted [Report No 1309/02](#) by the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection proposing arrangements for refuse and wastepaper collection over the Christmas and New Year holiday period.

The Report advised that, due to staff holidays within Contract Services (Cleansing), the arrangements for the various cleansing services, including refuse collection, required to be altered. The Report highlighted, however, that although re-cycling centres would be closed on 25 December and 1 and 2 January, they would be open on 26 December 2002 from 11.00 am to 3.00 pm.

The Committee agreed to approve the adjusted rotas for refuse and waste paper collections and other cleansing services over the festive period, as detailed in the Report.

7. COSLA FIREWORKS TASK GROUP REPORT

With reference to Article 10 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 1 October 2002, there was submitted [Report No 1310/02](#) by the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection advising the Committee of a response from the Government to concerns about Fireworks and that a copy of the COSLA Fireworks Task Group Report had been placed in the Member's Lounge.

The Report indicated that the COSLA Fireworks Task Group Report contained eleven recommendations for action and included the call for a new licensing regime for fireworks and greater control over the noise effects of fireworks. The recommendations from the COSLA Report were outlined in Appendix 1 to the Report.

The Report further indicated that, prior to the publication of the COSLA Report, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) Minister had announced a new package of measures to tackle fireworks misuse. These measures included making small cheaper "pocket money" fireworks illegal (i.e. air bombs); a crackdown on illegal markets in fireworks; improved co-ordination between enforcement agencies; a drive to encourage local Councils to use powers to curb noise nuisance; a pilot (in England) for fixed penalty notices for youngsters throwing fireworks in the street; and a new hard-hitting national safety campaign. A copy of the DTI press release outlining the above measures was attached to the Report as Appendix 2.

Following a full discussion, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the Report.

8. PAYMENT OF SERVICES VIA ACCESS LINE

With reference to Article 11 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 10 April 2002, there was submitted [Report No 1311/02](#) by the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection advising the Committee of the outcome of the trial of the payment of services for pest control and bulky waste uplifts using credit or debit cards via the ACCESS line.

The Report indicated that, since April 2001 as part of the modernisation of local government agenda, the customers of Angus Council Environmental and Consumer Protection Department had been able to pre-pay for pest control and bulky items uplift services via the ACCESS line or Environmental and Consumer Protection counters using credit or debit cards. The system had operated on a trial basis for a fifteen month period to gain experience and assess customer reaction.

Over the trial period, a total of 3366 customers had made use of the credit or debit card pre payment service provided by ACCESS line. For bulky item uplifts, this was now the preferred system for customers in terms of numbers of people ordering service. The pre-payment nature of the ACCESS line facility also minimised bad debt/non-payment. Customers using the ACCESS line service were given a unique reference number for each service request and any further query on the service could be traced by the ACCESS operator through the system to establish the position of any request in the priority sequence. Environmental and Consumer Protection and ACCESS line staff were not aware of any major flaws in the pre-payment by card system nor had there been any consistent area of complaint from customers.

The Committee agreed to approve, on a permanent basis, the continuation of the ACCESS line facility for customers to pre-pay by debit or credit card for a range of Environmental and Consumer Protection services provided by the Council.

9. MADE TO MEASURE? - A REVIEW OF TRADING STANDARDS SERVICES IN SCOTLAND

With reference to Article 8 of the minute of meeting of this Committee of 19 February 2002, there was submitted [Report No 1312/02](#) by the Director of Environmental and Consumer Protection advising the Committee of the publication of an Accounts Commission Report on the Trading Standards service in Scotland (a copy of which had been placed in the Members' Lounge) and seeking support to set up a COSLA Task Group.

The Report indicated that the Accounts Commission Report highlighted both good and poor practice within the service nationally and made recommendations as to how performance could be improved. One of the recommendations highlighted by the Accounts Commission was that there was a strong case for joining up smaller services (Local Consortia) to better deliver the service in Scotland. One reason for this approach was the finding that small authorities were underperforming whilst larger ones were providing high quality services. The Report revealed that ten Scottish local authorities employed eight or less staff in their Trading Standards Sections.

The Scottish Retail Consortium had called for the establishment of a national Trading Standards Service if present inconsistencies in performance could not be adequately addressed. The Society of Chief Officers of Trading Standards in Scotland, of which Jim Matthew, Head of Consumer Protection was secretary, were to write to COSLA and the Accounts Commission proposing that a task group be set up to look at the issues highlighted in the Report, with a view to moving matters forward. The remit for the Task Group would include evaluating options for the future structure of the service and to report back to COSLA. A further report would be submitted to this Committee on developments and further responses to the recommendations in the Report as appropriate. Meantime, support was sought from the Committee for the setting up of a COSLA Task Group.

The Committee agreed:-

- (i) to note the contents of the Report; and
- (ii) to support the setting up of a COSLA Task Group to evaluate the options for the future structure of the Trading Standards service in Scotland.