

**Office Accommodation, North Ness – Decision to Proceed**

The Committee considered a report by the Executive Director – Education and Social Care.

Mr A J Cluness reported on the poor quality of the buildings currently occupied by Social Work staff. He said that the site at North Ness had been purchased specifically for the purpose of developing office accommodation, and would allow staff to move to more suitable accommodation. Mr Cluness moved that the Committee approve the recommendations in the report. Mr F A Robertson seconded.

Mr C L Smith reported that the Social Work inspectors had criticised the number of buildings occupied by Social Work staff, and it had also been stated that the buildings were not suitable for staff and visitors.

Mr R C Nickerson referred to Recommendation 7.1(b) in the report, and said that the statement was a contradiction in terms.

In response to a question from Mr R C Nickerson, the Chairperson advised that, as far as he was aware, the minute from meetings of the Accommodation Working Group was presented to Council for approval.

In response to comments from Members, the Executive Director, Education and Social Care reported that office accommodation was the responsibility of the Council, and she agreed that funding for the project would be a challenge for the Council. She advised that the proposed funding option would impact on the revenue account, otherwise the project could be funded directly by the Council through the Council's Capital Programme.

The Executive Director highlighted that the energy strategy/carbon footprint requirements combine to a significant capital cost of £1.3 million, and she said that the ongoing running costs on energy would never recoup that in financial terms.

*[Mr L F Baisley left the Chamber].*

Dr J W G Wills stated that there was already a shortage of car parking spaces available at the North Ness, and he enquired whether Planning staff and officers were content with the proposals for car parking. The Chairperson said that the earlier suggestion for a multi-level car park to be built had been scrapped, however he proposed that the multi-level option should be looked at again. Mr A S Wishart advised on a possibility of reclaiming an area of seabed at the North Ness for car parking.

During the discussion, Mrs E L Fullerton commented that it was important that the green initiatives do not overtake the Council's financial constraints. Mr G Robinson said that all the options, including the green initiatives, should be fully explored to find ways to mitigate the cost of this project. The Executive Director reported that on staffing costs, an earlier decision had been to change from offices having

dedicated receptionists, and that only one office to relocate to the new accommodation has a receptionist.

*[Mr Cooper returned to the meeting].*

Dr J W G Wills moved that no further action should taken, and that a further report be presented to Committee outlining proposed savings for the project and addressing the car parking issue. Mr G Robinson seconded.

After summing up, voting took place by a show of hands, and the result was as follows:

Amendment (Dr J W G Wills)	2
Motion (Mr A J Cluness)	14
Abstention (Mr R C Nickerson)	

The meeting concluded at 12.15pm.

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L Angus  
Chairperson