

**From:** Richard M Davidson [<mailto:r.m.davidson@btinternet.com>] **Sent:** 26 March 2008 19:31 **To:** '[bdocherty@north-ayrshire.gov.uk](mailto:bdocherty@north-ayrshire.gov.uk)' **Subject:** Analysis & Comments on current status on "The Decision"

Dear Ms Docherty,

I am writing in the hope that you or a member of your staff will be able to clarify the situation as there seems to be a fair amount of claims and counter-claims. I would greatly appreciate it and thank you in advance for your consideration on this matter.

It has been claimed that the voting on dismantling the Warden Service could have been construed as being devious, underhanded and illegal as evident by the surreptitious circumstances and manner in which the matter has been handled.

However, the counter-claim is that the decision was made with absolute propriety and integrity; and, there was nothing untoward about the events leading up to the voting on 6 February with regard to the removal of the warden service. In fact, the need for the secrecy was simply to comply with standard Council policy on how budgetary matters are discussed and voted upon, i.e., the non-disclosure and utmost secrecy is to prevent any leaks which could cause serious repercussions.

Of course, there are those who tend to be cynical about politics in general and politicians in particular. These doubting cynics would have quickly assumed that the NAC was well aware the removal of the wardens would be highly emotive, extremely contentious and an unpopular decision. Accordingly, the cynics would take it a step further by suggesting it would be logical to handle the item as a budgetary issue in order to swathe it in the cloak of total confidentiality!

Now, it is kind of hard to give the benefit of the doubt on how the voting to remove the wardens could be strictly construed as a budgetary action. Is it any wonder then the way in which the whole matter was handled has made the public think it was kept secret under the guise of being a "budgetary matter" so that the decision making process would go unhindered. Then once it was passed, the public would have the distinct impression that the decision was not only "a done and dusted deal" but also sacrosanct and irreversible.

Mind you, it can also be argued that if it was such a logical and correct decision, why did some of the councillors ask during the fateful 06/02 meeting for the decision to be delayed in order that the matter could be thoroughly investigated? Equally, why was the voting along party lines amid claims the decision only passed as a result of purported pressures to do so or face the consequences?

With reference to what little substance has been made available in statements to the public and the press, a key question remains as to be how could the financial committee and then the full council vote on a decision in which only three factors were clearly identified, i.e., there would be a savings of £233,000 per year with the removal of wardens service; the mean age of the county's population is rising; and, however commendable but seriously financially debateable, increase support of the county's older people in addition to those already in sheltered housing, nursing/care homes, et al.

Surely, prior to there being any vote, the councillors should have been provided with the full details including the results of the feasibility study, the number of alert systems considered along with justification for the recommended one, the implementation plan with projected stage completion dates, Cost Assessment including detailed analysis of capital expenditures and operating costs in terms of identifying the redundancy and related costs; the cost of removing the existing alert system; the cost of buying the new alert system, installing it and training both the staff and tenants; the cost for scheduled and unscheduled maintenance of the new alert system; the cost of leasing the 3 (or 6) local offices (if council property is not available); the cost for fixtures and fittings, office furniture, communications equipment, vehicles; etc, etc, etc.

Under the circumstances, it seems both surprising and worrying when several councillors subsequently were asked questions by the concerned citizens during the meeting held in Saltcoats Town Hall. These councillors simply could not or would not give any details other than repeating (1) £233,000 would be saved annually by removing the warden service, (2) the rising old age population in North Ayrshire, (3) how the new measures will benefit the entire older population in North Ayrshire and (4) Glasgow and Kilmarnock/East Ayrshire did away with their wardens and the replacement is proving successful. They could not even offer any explanation as to where and how the NAC would obtain the additional funding to cover the direct and indirect costs that will be incurred for the installation, operation and maintenance for an increasing client base in the years to come?

They could not even offer any explanation as to how both the new alert system and mobile alert-care team projects could be implemented in such an incredibly short period of time. Maybe they couldn't give any details because, inexplicably, it hadn't been considered necessary to prepare any such sufficiently detailed information at that time or even now?

As it is, one can only surmise that, inexplicably, they just might have actually only voted on the concept itself under the guise of a budgetary item in the expectation, presumably, that they would work out the fine details afterwards. Surely, it would have made more sense to have identified the "replacement system" for the warden service as a major project. Equally, it stands to reason, there should have been substantial information obtained in the minutest details to enable the NAC's councillors to examine the whole "project" closely? In this way, the councillors would have gotten a full and accurate understanding of the details in order to fully assess the overall project's viability before voting to approve the project itself including the implementation time scale and authorising the necessary funds to complete the project!

Thus, can anyone among the NAC councillors, Directors, management and staff explain to the public and their constituents how anyone could decide on a budgetary item of such major importance without the applicable NAC departments having first completed a full project feasibility and implementation study that included a comprehensive analysis of the projected capital and operating costs that should have been made available and extensively reviewed by the NAC's various committees, directors, et al?

Has it not occurred to the NAC that because the tenants and the public have been unable to get any straightforward answers. they have the distinct impression that decisions are being made as they go along rather than through using a cohesive “Master Plan”?

For instance, first we were led to believe there would be three local offices and now we are being told there will be six of them. Then, that the local offices would be located in ex-wardens’ flats and now they seemingly won’t be. Surely the decision on how many local offices are needed and whether they would be sited in ex-warden flats should have been decided earlier than now to facilitate getting them prepared to support the new Alert system? Equally, has the “Master Plan” allowed for the time it could take, for example, to vet the entire mobile alert-care team members as well as get the alert system and local offices ready?

Now, is it any wonder what people are left to think when they observe the “Master Plan’s” implementation as exemplified by what can only inconceivably be described as “last minute decisions”. Again, it beggars the question how does anyone justify what can only be described as something akin to lackadaisical and haphazard management? Is it really possible to expect, under the circumstances, someone, anyone, being able to establish then achieve realistic and achievable dates for implementing both the new alert system and new mobile alert-care assistant teams on time - and to do so without compromising the quality of life for the tenants?

Still not convinced? Then consider this: Originally, everyone was led to believe the wardens would be replaced by the new fully operational alert system and mobile alert-care teams not later than 01/04/08. However, in accordance with the just issued redundancy notices, the actual date for the last remaining warden is 09/06/08.

Lets take into consideration that the mandatory vetting process alone for every one of the new (mobile Alert) “Care At Home Assistants” will likely take a fair amount of time. Now if we allow for the slippage to complete the vetting and any other potential causes for delays, can anyone rationally explain just how the NAC will cope from 09/06/08 onwards when the defunct wardens will no longer be available to “cover” for the absent/incomplete replacement “systems”?

It does not bear thinking what will potentially happen to the vulnerable who will suddenly find them selves without any effective and realistic support for an indeterminate period of time?

I know it is stating the obvious but did anyone use, much less consider project management including critical path analysis to determine each stage completion date? It is the only way one could ever aspire to achieve a neat, timely and orderly completion of the project in a situation where the timing is so critical!

For example, the US Navy was able to successfully implement the entire Polaris Submarine project on time and within budget using proper Project and Critical Path Management techniques. Is it not time such techniques were used to the benefit of management, the councillors and, more specifically, their constituents – including the vulnerable tenants?

I would like to clarify something repeatedly stated by councillors and senior staff including Councillors D O'Neill, Councillor P McNamara and others who have repeatedly stated that "60% of the Scottish Councils" have removed their warden services and, in doing so, the alternatives to the wardens are working very well.

So why do we keep hearing contradictory stories suggesting someone is being "uneconomic with the truth". By any chance, does that "60%" figure for warden-less services include both Glasgow City and East Dunbartonshire Councils? What do you think the reaction by the public will be when it is discovered that both these two councils have **not**, in fact, eliminated their Warden Services but simply transferred them along with their sheltered complexes to their respective Housing Association?

Bear in mind that statistics in themselves are absolutely meaningless if they fail to include the details that enable them to be readily substantiated? Is it any wonder, under these circumstances, that what makes this whole escapade difficult to fathom, much less to grasp is how any one can keep proclaiming they want to ensure the older people will still be able to have the quality of life they so heartily deserve? All this contradictory information, vaguest of details and seemingly last minute actions makes it even less likely the older people within Northern Ayrshire will get the promised substantial "Quality of Life" any time soon!

Respectfully submitted,

For & on behalf of the Save the Wardens Committee

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