

## **CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the proceedings of the Finance & General Purposes Committee held, in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Wednesday 12 December 2007 at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Councillor J Beattie  
(in the chair)

**ALDERMEN:** M Copeland MLA (from 7.10 p.m.)  
J Norris MBE

**COUNCILLORS:** Mrs A M Beattie  
Mrs M Chambers  
Mrs J Cochrane (from 7.25 p.m.)  
Mrs S Duncan (from 6.55 p.m.)  
T Jeffers (until 8.27 p.m.)  
G Robinson  
J Spratt MLA

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Director of Administration & Community Services,  
Director of Finance, Human Resources Manager and  
Assistant Members' Services Officer

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors  
Bunting, Drysdale, Hanvey, Henderson and Long

**F&GP/2007/330: DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2007 (copy previously circulated)**

Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED :** That the following amendments be made to the Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 20 November 2007:

- (i) Minute No. F&GP/2007/294 – Resolution  
Delete “the Health & Safety Executive”
- (ii) Minute No. F&GP/2007/292 – third paragraph  
Delete “blueberries” and insert “blackberries”

### **MATTERS ARISING**

**F&GP/2007/331 : REFERRAL FROM MANAGEMENT TEAM – LEVEL OF JOB RELATED COURSE/SEMINAR APPROVAL (Minute No. F&GP/2007/299 refers)**

The Director of Administration and Community Services sought clarification as to whether the financial ceiling of £150.00 for staff attending courses/seminars, as agreed at last month's Committee meeting, also applied to urgent Management led requests for staff training.

She explained that essential work was required to be carried out on the roof of the Civic Offices, and in order to advance this work it had been necessary for three employees within the Client Services section to attend training on the use of Mobile Elevated Working Platforms. She added that the costs of the training was £170.00 per person, plus £25.00 licence fee, totalling £780.00.

Councillor Spratt indicated that Management should always have discretion to determine when training was required urgently, particularly when it related to health & safety issues. He added that Directors should therefore proceed to arrange for essential training to be provided, and thereafter seek retrospective approval.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to

- (a) grant retrospective approval for total training costs of £780.00 for three employees within the Client Services Section on the use of Mobile Elevated Working Platforms, with the costs being met from the Corporate Training budget
- (b) agree that Directors be granted with approval to organise urgent management led requests for staff training, with retrospective approval being sought

**F&GP/2007/332 : COUNCILLOR LONG**

Councillor Robinson outlined that it was disappointing to learn that Councillor Long had arrived at the Civic Offices this evening, had eaten the meal provided and immediately left the building. He added that it was a disgrace that Councillor Long had went to the press with ridiculous accusations about Council finances, but as a Member of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, he could not attend the meeting where the Council's finances were being discussed.

He continued by stating that it was also interesting to note that so far only DUP Members had arrived at the meeting. Members expressed their full support for Councillor Robinson's comments.

Noted.

**REPORT FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER  
(copy previously circulated)**

**F&GP/2007/333 : DRAFT NEW TOIL POLICY**

The Human Resources Manager outlined that, as requested at the last Committee meeting, the following edits had been made to the above document:

- 1.5 the inclusion of:  
“Any additional accumulation of more than 2 days is at the discretion of the manager in line with operation requirements”
  
- 2.1 the inclusion of:  
“Requests for lieu time must not adversely affect the effective running of the department as assessed by the Sectional Managers/Directors on each occasion”.

She sought approval of the revised draft policy.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to approve the TOIL Policy, and any edits thereafter requested by the trades unions to be tabled at Committee at a future date.

**F&GP/2007/334 : CAREER BREAK – LGV DRIVER/LABOURER – REFUSE**

Following deferment from last month’s Committee meeting, the Human Resources Manager advised of a career break request from an LGV Driver/Labourer within the Refuse section for a period of 1 year, commencing in January 2008 in order to travel abroad.

She outlined that Members were being asked to note this request, as approval had initially been granted by the Technical & Environmental Services Committee at its December meeting. She added that, as with all career break requests, the employee would be advised in writing of the associated risks including the possible impact of the Review of Public Administration.

Noted.

**F&GP/2007/335 : FEEDBACK FROM NIJC JOINT SECRETARY RE:  
CORRESPONDENCE FROM OFMDFM, DATED 16 OCTOBER 2007 - PUBLIC  
SERVICE COMMISSION GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

The Human Resources Manager outlined that, following a request from Members at the November Committee meeting, contact had been made with the NIJC Joint Secretary regarding the above correspondence. She outlined that the main elements of the correspondence relates to the following guiding principles:

- location of staff
- equality
- capacity building

She outlined that the Joint Secretary did not have a particular problem with equality or capacity building, but Members should be aware of a number of issues in relation to location of staff. She advised that the HR Cross Sector Forum was currently working on a code of practice and would be making a recommendation that a business case should be submitted in relation to the re-location of staff. She advised that he was currently lobbying the Cross Sector Forum in order to clarify to which body the business case was to be submitted.

Councillor Chambers expressed the view that Councils needed some form of guidance from the Local Government Reform Unit. She added that one of the reasons for re-organisation was to achieve savings for the ratepayers, but as time went on she was beginning to doubt whether savings would be made.

Councillor Spratt outlined that the Minister for Finance & Personnel had made it clear that there would be a major overhaul in order to achieve savings in relation to shared services such as procurement, HR and IT.

Noted.

### **F&GP/2007/336 : ACTION CANCER BIG BUS**

The Human Resources Manager advised Members that Action Cancer provided a 'Big Bus' cancer screening service which was also available to workplaces. She outlined that three other Councils had previously used the facility and it had resulted in a staff member being diagnosed and early medical intervention occurring.

She outlined that the cost of the facility was usually £995.00 per day but Officers were currently discussing a discounted price of £1,800.00 for two days. She advised that Eastern Group would be contributing £250.00 towards the cost and she was therefore seeking approval for £1,550.00.

She referred Members to her report outlining a number of facts about cancer in Northern Ireland, and the benefits of this facility to Council Members and staff. Councillor Robinson outlined that he was totally in favour of supporting this project, and he proposed that all Councillors and staff be written to in advance

advising them of this service. He urged management to make sure that time was given for staff in other Council premises to attend.

The Human Resources Manager confirmed that operational concerns would be taken into account by Management when considering releasing staff who wished to avail of this service.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to

- (a) approve two days of the "Big Bus" cancer screening service in March and April 2008 which would be available to both staff and Members, with the total cost of £1,550.00 being charged to the Corporate Health & Safety budget.
- (b) agree that Human Resources staff writes to each Councillor and staff member in advance advising them of this service
- (c) Management ensure that staff within all Council facilities be given the opportunity to attend the screening service

#### **F&GP/2007/337 : RETROSPECTIVE APPROVAL**

The Human Resources Manager outlined that the Group Chief Environmental Health Officer for Eastern Group was seeking retrospective approval for planned overtime carried out in the month of October 2007 for the following;

Mr Wesley Rowley	6.5 hours
Mr Alan Hudson	25.5 hours
Mr Leo McGlinchey	18 hours

She advised that the overtime had been approved by the Group Chief Environmental Health Officer and the work could not have been performed within normal working hours.

Councillor Robinson sought clarification as to why such significant overtime appeared to be accruing on a regular basis, particularly 25.5 hours which was almost an additional week's hours. He asked if the three Officers were based in the civic offices and how this overtime was budgeted for.

Councillor Jeffers stated that as a Member of the Eastern Group Committee, he would raise these queries at the next meeting.

RESOLVED : That

- (a) retrospective approval be granted for the payment of planned overtime within the Eastern Group Environmental Health Service during October 2007, as follows:

Mr Wesley Rowley	6.5 hours
Mr Alan Hudson	25.5 hours
Mr Leo McGlinchey	18 hours

- (b) as a member of the Eastern Group Committee, Councillor Jeffers to refer the queries raised by Councillor Robinson in relation to the overtime at the next meeting and report back to the Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Assistant Members' Services Officer left the meeting.

### **STAFF IN COMMITTEE**

Councillor Duncan arrived during the Staff in Committee part of the meeting at 6.55 p.m., Alderman Copeland at 7.10 p.m. and Councillor Cochrane at 7.25 p.m.

The Assistant Members' Services Officer returned to the meeting.

### **REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE (circulated at the meeting)**

#### **F&GP/2007/343 : SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS**

The Director of Finance took Members through the detail of the summary of the Council's management accounts for the period 1 April to 31 October 2007.

Noted.

#### **F&GP/2007/344 : TREASURY MANAGEMENT**

The Director of Finance advised Members of the amount of interest generated on the Council's investments for the period 1 April 2007 to 30 November 2007. He added that there had been no government borrowing or loan rescheduling in the year to date.

Noted.

#### **F&GP/2007/345 : HANWOOD PROJECT – PHASE II ENTERPRISE UNITS**

The Director of Finance outlined that he was delighted to report that following intensive efforts to secure all funding agreements, the Hanwood Project Phase II Enterprise Units had now commenced. He added that he would like to thank Councillor Gareth Robinson and the staff acting up for the Economic Development Manager namely, Paul Millar, Nicola Ferguson and Philip Taylor for all their assistance.

Having finalised all the necessary documentation, he asked Members to note the following matters:

Castlereagh Borough Council funding.

He outlined that at the last meeting he had explained how the Council and DETI agreed to reduce the £400,000.00 match funding to £300,000.00 in an effort to meet the 31 December 2007 deadline. He added that by doing so there had to be a re-distribution of funding between the Council and DETI to the effect that the Council increased its contribution under Hanwood from £400,000.00 to £500,000.00 and DETI increased the funding to the Lockkeeper's Cottage project by £100,000.00.

He advised that the total funding package for the Enterprise Units was as follows:

	£
Castlereagh Borough Council	980,126
IFI	870,000
DSD	800,000
DETI	300,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2,950,126</b>

He explained that the Council's funding of £980,126.00 was made up from the £500,000.00 plus the deficit funding of £480,126.00 which had been agreed at a recent Special Council meeting.

DETI – Pre-condition to Funding

The Director of Finance advised that a pre-condition to the DETI funding was that should the £600,000.00 of vouched expenditure not be met by the 31 December 2007, the Council would have to underwrite the shortfall i.e. £600,000.00 less eligible vouched expenditure up to 31 December 2007. He explained that in order to protect the Council against this pre-condition he had requested a letter from the Architect stating that the builder could now meet the required deadline. He referred Members to the copy correspondence from the Architect confirming that the deadline could be met.

Memorandum of Understanding

The Director of Finance advised that the above document was to agree the mechanics of funding and to ensure that proper procedures were followed when administering the finance. He outlined that the document would be considered by the four funding bodies on Friday 14 December 2007 at the Hanwood Centre.

Members were in agreement to the Director representing the Council at this meeting.

Following a query from Alderman Copeland, the Director of Finance advised that all the figures were net of VAT as both organisations were VAT registered.

Councillor Spratt outlined that on behalf of his DUP colleagues he would like to pass on his appreciation and thanks to the Director and the other three Officers involved in the Hanwood Project for all their hard work over recent weeks.

Councillor J Beattie concurred with Councillor Spratt's comments.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance to report back on the outcome of his meeting with the four funding bodies in relation to the Memorandum of Understanding in respect of the Hanwood Project.

The Assistant Members' Services Officer left the meeting.

### **STAFF IN COMMITTEE**

#### **F&GP/2007/347 : MOBILE PHONES SCHEDULE**

The Director of Finance referred Members to the above schedule which had been prepared by the Council's Senior Financial & Management Accountant, recommending that Vodaphone be awarded the contract for the provision of mobile phones.

It was proposed by Councillor Chambers, seconded by Councillor Robinson, and

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that Vodaphone be awarded the contract for the provision of mobile phones for a two year period.

#### **F&GP/2007/348 : PHOTOCOPIER LEASING**

The Director of Finance attached to his report a schedule of quotations for the renewal of the photocopier lease within the Finance Department. He added that the existing lease would end on 31 January 2008, and it was being recommended that the quotation from IBS at a total cost of £8,756.00 per annum for a five year period be accepted.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that the quotation from IBS for the renewal of the photocopier lease within the Finance Department be accepted at a total cost of £8,756.00 per annum for a five year period.

#### **F&GP/2007/349 : MINUTES OF THE AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2007 (copy previously circulated)**

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the Audit Sub Committee meeting held on 19 September 2007 be accepted as a true record of the proceedings.

**F&GP/2007/350 : COUNCIL'S DRAFT IT STRATEGY TOGETHER WITH QUOTATION FROM CONSILIUM**

Councillor Chambers referred to the start date of September 2008 for roll out of the procurement system, and she expressed the view that this should be rolled out by 1 April 2008.

The Director of Finance explained that he was attempting to phase this system in to ensure that staff were properly trained in every aspect.

Councillor Chambers outlined that as the Officer with responsibility for procurement, the phasing in of this system should be led by the Director of Administration & Community Services and the matter therefore tabled at the Central Services Committee for consideration.

Councillor J Beattie stated that the introduction of new IT systems would have implications for all Council departments, in terms of payroll, purchasing, budget control, etc. He added that the new IT Strategy had been dealt with by the Members of the IT Sub Committee and all Members would not have had the opportunity to peruse the document. He proposed that the Strategy be tabled at the December Council meeting.

Following a detailed discussion, Mr Jim Uprichard from Helm arrived at the meeting to provide Members with an overview of the proposals within the Council's draft IT Strategy.

He then addressed a number of Members' queries.

Councillor Jeffers left the meeting during the above discussion at 8.27 p.m.

Following a query from Councillor Robinson in relation to recruitment of the new IT Administrator, Mr Uprichard confirmed that a representative from Consilium had been involved in the interview and selection process. He added that a number of very in-depth questions had been put to each candidate and the successful candidate had all the necessary qualifications.

Councillor Chambers proposed that the Committee approve the IT Strategy, and this was seconded by Councillor Spratt.

Councillor Chambers advised that she had recently attended a meeting of the Local Government Reform Team where there had been discussion on the use of telephony systems. She outlined that given the funding available from the Local Government Division, she asked Mr Uprichard if he would recommend the introduction of a telephony system.

Mr Uprichard advised that he would refer this query to Brendan McAnerney at Helm, and report back on the findings.

The Director of Finance outlined that there had been some discussion at Single Status meetings in relation to the introduction of a staff clocking-in system. He asked if Members wished to have this included in the IT Strategy.

Following discussion, it was agreed not to include this system in the IT Strategy at this stage, but that Officers obtain costings for possible future consideration.

Councillor J Beattie thanked Mr Uprichard and the other Officers within Helm for all their assistance and advice in drawing up the IT Strategy.

Councillor Spratt passed on his appreciation to Councillor Beattie, the Members of the IT Sub Committee and the Director of Finance for the amount of time and effort they had devoted to producing this document, with the assistance of the consultants.

Councillor Chambers expressed the view that the Strategy had represented excellent value for money for the Council.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That

- (a) the Council be recommended to approve the IT Strategy and payment to Consilium (quotation ref 8162) in relation to Budget Modelling and e-Purchasing in the total amount of £12,590.00 plus £2,520.00 annual maintenance
- (b) a copy of the IT Strategy document be tabled at the next Council meeting for Members' information
- (c) the Director of Finance arrange to obtain costings for a clocking-in system and report back to a future Committee meeting
- (d) the issue of phasing in of the procurement system, as outlined in the Council's IT Strategy, be referred for consideration to the Central Services Committee

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

**F&GP/2007/351 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL AND LISBURN CITY COUNCIL RE: RURAL DEVELOPMENT CLUSTERS 2007-2013 (copy previously circulated)**

Councillor Spratt outlined that there had been a lengthy debate at the last Council meeting in relation to the above and it was his view that a number of unfair criticisms had been expressed. He added that he would like to thank Officers for all their work in progressing this matter, and he proposed that the Council form a rural development cluster with Lisburn and Belfast City Councils.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree to form a rural development cluster with Lisburn and Belfast City Councils.

**F&GP/2007/352 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER RE: BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE – PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON DRAFT PROGRAMME FOR GOVERNMENT 2008-2011, DRAFT BUDGET 2008-2011 AND DRAFT INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2008-2018 (copy letter previously circulated)**

Councillor Spratt declared an interest.

Councillor J Beattie asked Members to note that the deadline for submissions was 4 January 2008. He proposed that the document be referred to the December Council meeting, and in the meantime he would ascertain NILGA's response.

RESOLVED : That consideration of the consultation document from the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister re: Building a Better Future – Public Consultation on Draft Programme For Government 2008-2011, Draft Budget 2008-2011 and Draft Investment Strategy 2008-2018 be deferred to the December Council meeting.

**F&GP/2007/353 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM GUIDE DOGS REQUESTING THE COUNCIL TO CONSIDER THE ORGANISATION AS “CHARITY OF THE YEAR” (copy previously circulated)**

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the correspondence from Guide Dogs requesting that the Council consider the organisation as “Charity of the Year” be referred to the Mayor's Office.

**F&GP/2007/354 : EVALUATION REPORT OF PLATO BELFAST PROGRAMME MAY 2007**

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That consideration of the Evaluation Report of Plato Belfast Programme May 2007 be deferred to the next Committee meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.

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**CHAIRMAN**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

**Adopted by the Council this \_\_\_\_\_ day of**  
**\_\_\_\_\_ 2007 with the exception of**  
**Minute Nos. \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**MAYOR**