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CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting, held in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB on Wednesday 9 December 2009 at 6.45 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor J Beattie
(in the chair)

COUNCILLORS: Mrs A Beattie
Mrs J Cochrane (from 7.50 p.m. until 9.25 p.m.)
M Copeland (from 6.55 p.m.)
D Drysdale (from 6.55 p.m.)
Mrs S Duncan
B Hanvey
T Jeffers (from 7.00 p.m.)
G Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Administration & Community Services,
Human Resource Manager, Senior Accountant,
Economic Developer Manager, Client Manager
and Assistant Members' Services Officer

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors
Bunting, Hall and Walker

F&GP/2009/332 : PRESENTATION BY SOUTH & EAST BRANCH COMMITTEE OF UNISON RE: PROPOSALS FOR THE REDUCTION OF SERVICES AT KNOCKBRACKEN HEALTHCARE PARK

Councillor J Beattie welcomed to the meeting Mr Seamus Young, Branch Secretary of South & East Branch Committee of Unison.

Mr Young outlined that a decision had been made to amalgamate the Dorothy Gardiner and Rathlin wards, without any consultation with unions, staff, patients and patient families. He added that it was the government's policy that single sex wards were much more preferable for the dignity of female patients. He stated that both these wards were of the latest design and forerunners of single rooms for individual patients.

He indicated that consultation had been carried out with regard to a proposal to close Windsor House at the Belfast City Hospital, but the closure was rejected by the Belfast Trust Board, despite the fact that various health & safety reports had deemed Windsor House unfit for purpose.

Councillors Copeland and Drysdale arrived at 6.55 p.m.

Mr Young advised that the proposal to close the Singing Kettle activity area on 31 December 2009 was particularly concerning, given that it was the only area of social contact outside the wards. He added that it provided regular games nights, movie nights and various other activities.

He stated that other cuts included:

- the creation of a mixed sex ward for older people with mental illness or dementia by amalgamating Innishfree ward and Knockbracken Male Clinic.
- the closure of Valencia and one other ward for people with dementia and the creation of an assessment unit

Councillor Jeffers arrived at 7.00 p.m.

Mr Young outlined that unfortunately it was the vulnerable elderly, mental health patients and young people that suffered as a result of these serious health cuts. He added that although work had commenced in respect of some of the cuts in service, he felt that there was still time to do something about the closure of the activity centre, Valencia Ward and the creation of a mixed sex ward by amalgamating Innishfree ward and Knockbracken Male Clinic.

Councillor Copeland outlined that he was aware that a meeting had been convened at Knockbracken Healthcare Park but only the patients had been invited. He added that he understood that, if the Council wished, it could send a delegation to visit the Healthcare Park.

Councillor Robinson expressed his full support for Unison's campaign, particularly given the serious implications these cuts would have on the most vulnerable within society.

He proposed that a strongly worded letter be forwarded to the Minister outlining the Council's total opposition to these cuts in service, and that Mr Young liaise with the Officer responsible for drawing up the letter.

Councillor Copeland seconded the proposal.

Councillors Mrs Beattie, Mrs Duncan and Jeffers expressed their full support for this action.

Members agreed that the Director of Administration & Community Services should liaise with Mr Young when drawing up the letter. It was further agreed that, given the urgency of the matter, the Director should forward the letter to the Minister as quickly as possible, rather than waiting for the decision to be ratified by full Council.

Councillor Hanvey outlined that within any course of patient treatment was the need for care planning and risk assessment. He hoped that the decision to have mixed sex wards would be subject to risk assessments and that

management would accept responsibility in the event of any incident occurring.

Mr Young thanked Members for their support, and outlined that he would write to the Council inviting Members to visit the Knockbracken Healthcare Park.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that

- (a) the Director of Administration & Community Services liaise with Mr Young from Unison in order to draw up a letter to the Minister, outlining the Council's total objection to the proposed cuts in services at the Knockbracken Healthcare Park
- (b) given the urgency of the above matter, the Director of Administration & Community Services be authorised to forward the letter as quickly as possible, rather than waiting on the Minute being ratified by full Council

**REPORT FROM THE CLIENT MANAGER
(copy previously circulated)**

F&GP/2009/333 : PRIORITISATION OF CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Client Manager outlined that the Council's Senior Management Team had been giving consideration to a scheme for the prioritisation of Capital Projects. He added that it was hoped that the scheme would assist Members in prioritising capital projects so that they could be progressed appropriately and that Capital Projects Officer support could be measured and sourced.

The Client Manager referred Members to his report detailing the criteria and the scoring matrix that had been applied to determine the relevant ranking of the projects.

Councillor Copeland returned to the meeting.

Following discussion, Members were of the view that consideration of the matter should be deferred to enable the Client Manager to provide the following information:

- cost of each of the projects
- where applicable, how much funding had been obtained
- finances that had been included in the 2010/2011 estimates for capital projects

RESOLVED : That consideration of the prioritisation of capital projects be deferred to the January 2010 Committee meeting to enable the Client Manager to provide Members with the following information:

- cost of each of the projects

- where applicable, how much funding had been obtained
- finances that had been included in the 2010/2011 estimates for capital projects

**TABLED : MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 NOVEMBER 2009**

MATTERS ARISING

**F&GP/2009/334 : PAYMENT OF PROFESSIONAL FEES (Minute No.
F&GP/2009/293 refers)**

Councillor Drysdale outlined that at the last Council meeting, an amendment had been requested to the resolution of the above Minute, but he noted that this had not been made.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the amendment requested by Members at the last Council meeting be made to the resolution of Minute No. F&GP/2009/293 in respect of Payment of Professional Fees. The resolution to now read as follows:

“That the Council be recommended to grant approval for payment of GUI membership fees for the Golf Professional, to be met by Castlereagh Hills Golf Club”.

The Senior Accountant, Economic Development Manager and the Assistant Members' Services Officer left the meeting.

Councillor Cochrane arrived at 7.50 p.m.

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

HEALTH AND SAFETY MATTER

F&GP/2009/336 : FIRST AID TRAINING

The Human Resource Manager sought approval for an Officer within the Technical & Environmental Services and an Officer within the Leisure Services Departments to attend a four-day course, at a cost of £190.00 per delegate.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that an Officer within the Technical & Environmental Service Department and an Officer within the Leisure Services Department attend a full four day first aid training course.

HUMAN RESOURCE MATTERS

F&GP/2009/337 : ADDENDUM TO VACANCY CONTROL FROM THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION

The Human Resource Manager outlined a number of changes to the Vacancy Control System which came into effect from 1 October 2009. He reported that the posts currently at risk of redundancy were as follows:

- Chief Executive
- Directors
- Heads of Services
- PA's to Chief Executive
- Member Services

He advised that the pool of potential applicants should be taken from:

- (i) Council
- (ii) Cluster Council
- (iii) 26 Councils
- (iv) all Northern Ireland RPA affected groups

Noted.

Cleansing Foreman to attend a Frontline Development training programme being organised by the Local Government Association. He advised that this was a four-day course (one day per week over four

REPORT FROM THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (copy previously circulated)

F&GP/2009/342 : DEBTS ARISING FROM UNITS AT BALLYORAN

Councillor Jeffers declared an interest.

The Economic Development Manager reported that at the last Finance & General Purposes Committee, it had been agreed that funds and assets arising from the voluntary liquidation of Ballyoran Company Ballybeen Ltd be used for the benefit of Ballyoran. He asked Members to note the detail within his report in respect of two bad debts accrued since November 2007 to April 2008. He reported that a debt collection agency had pursued the arrears, without success.

The Economic Development Manager outlined that he had thought that the Council had been collecting rent on behalf of the Ballyoran Company and the debts belonged to Ballyoran. He added that he had since learned that this was not the case and the debts belonged to the Council. He advised that the

amount therefore would not be written off from funds received via the Ballyoran liquidation.

He recommended that the Ballyoran debts be written off.

In response to a query from Councillor Copeland, the Economic Development Manager confirmed that procedures were now in place to avoid such debts accruing in future.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree to write off the Ballyoran debts totalling £1,375.00, and that the amount would not be written off from funds received via the Ballyoran liquidation.

F&GP/2009/343 : MINUTES OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 DECEMBER 2009 (copy circulated at the meeting)

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the Economic Development Sub Committee meeting held on 7 December 2009 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING

F&GP/2009/344 : PHYSICAL REGENERATION (Minute No. EDO/2009/65 refers)

In response to a query from Councillor Robinson, the Economic Development Manager advised that funding of £10,000.00 had been set aside in the 2009/2010 budget, under Priority 6 of the Economic Development Strategy. He added that it had been intended to submit an application to Lagan Rural Partnership for 75% funding towards a village improvement in the following areas:

- Moneyreagh
- Rural Carryduff
- Crossnacreevy

He outlined that as the Rural Development Programme 'Village Renewal and Development' would not be open for applications until the 2010/2011 financial year. He added that Economic Development Services had liaised with Community Services Officers to encourage usage of the Ballyoran units and he was recommending that the £10,000.00 be used to carry out improvement work to the units. He added that this would be in line with the requirements of the Economic Development Strategy and reported that although the cost of carrying out the work had initially been estimated at £12,000.00, he would ensure that the project costs would not exceed £10,000.00.

Councillor Robinson stressed the importance of ensuring that the Ballyoran Centre User Groups and Councillors for the area had an input into project options for utilising the remaining monies, following liquidation of Ballyoran.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to

- (a) grant approval for the refurbishment of the business units at Ballyoran at a cost of £10,000.00, under the physical renewal theme of the Economic Development Strategy
- (b) agree that the Ballyoran Centre User Groups and Councillors for the area had an input into community project options for utilising the remaining monies, following liquidation of Ballyoran.

**F&GP/2009/345 : CHRISTMAS AT THE COTTAGE – FAMILY FUN DAY
(Minute No. EDO/2009/68 refers)**

Councillor Copeland outlined that the Fun Day had been a very enjoyable event and had been well attended.

Following a query from Councillor Duncan, the Economic Development Manager confirmed that photographs had been taken on the day.

In response to a query from Councillor Robinson, the Economic Development Manager advised that a number of schools had been invited to participate in the event, but only one had responded.

Councillor Robinson indicated that letters of invitation to local schools should be seen by the Chairman of the Committee before being issued.

Noted.

F&GP/2009/346 : HANWOOD TRUST COMPANY LTD - MANAGEMENT

Councillors Drysdale and Robinson declared an interest.

The Economic Development Manager advised that he would be reporting further on the above matter to the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting in January 2010.

Noted.

LEISURE SERVICES MATTER

F&GP/2009/347 : ROBINSON CENTRE ECONOMIC APPRAISAL (Minute No. LS/2009/162 refers)

The Senior Accountant referred Members to a copy of the above Minute relating to the discussion at the November Leisure Services Committee, where the Committee had recommended to Council that the remaining restrictive covenants be lifted at the Robinson Centre site. The Committee had further recommended that in order to determine the long-term future of the Robinson Centre an economic appraisal be carried out.

He reported that at the Council meeting held on 26 November 2009, the Council had approved, in principle, the Committee's recommendations but the matter had been referred back to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for clarification on funding, before progressing.

The Senior Accountant advised that the Acting Director of Leisure Services had confirmed that the costs would be met out of Leisure Services Capital provision for this year.

Councillors Robinson and Copeland left the meeting at 8.50 p.m.

Councillor J Beattie referred to the revised Terms of Reference and expressed the view that the option for a public/private partnership should be included.

A detailed discussion ensued in relation to the following:

- implications of the final report from the Local Government Boundaries Commissioner
- potential for the Housing Executive to obtain a further valuation of the land in question

At this point, Councillor J Beattie asked Members to vote on the matter, and with 5 voting in favour and one abstention, it was agreed that the restrictive covenants be lifted and an economic appraisal be carried out at the Robinson Centre site.

RESOLVED : That,

- (a) given that it had been clarified that the costs would be met out of Leisure Services Capital provision, the Council be recommended to agree that the Council proceed with the economic appraisal and lifting of the covenants at the Robinson Centre site.
- (b) the Terms of Reference be extended to include a public/private partnership

TABLED : MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING OF 11 NOVEMBER 2009 AND SPECIAL FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2009

MATTERS ARISING - FINANCE

F&GP/2009/348 : PRICEWATERHOUSECOOPER REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Senior Accountant reported that the response to the above had been approved by Members at the Council meeting held on 26 November 2009.

Noted.

F&GP/2009/349 : MINUTES OF THE IT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 NOVEMBER 2009

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the IT Sub Committee meeting held on 20 November 2009 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

MATTERS ARISING

F&GP/2009/350 : ADDITIONAL OFFICE SPACE – LOUGH MOSS (Minute No. ITWG/2009/40 refers)

Councillor Drysdale sought clarification as to why the IT Manager had not been in attendance at the last Leisure Services meeting to present the various options and IT set up and ongoing costs involved in locating a number of staff at the Lough Moss Centre, as stated in the above Minute.

Councillor J Beattie outlined that the costs of this work would be met out of Leisure Services' budgets as it was additional to the projects included in the IT Strategy.

Following discussion, Members were of the view that this matter could not be considered further the following information was available:

- whether it was existing staff being relocated or new employees being located at the Lough Moss Centre
- details on IT requirements and all relevant costs
- amount of office space required

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the issue of additional office space at the Lough Moss Centre be referred back to the Leisure Services Committee to obtain clarification on the following matters, and that the IT Manager be in attendance with regard to IT requirements.

- whether it was existing staff being relocated or new employees being located at the Lough Moss Centre
- details on IT requirements and all relevant costs
- amount of office space required

**REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
(copy previously circulated)**

F&GP/2009/351 : SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS (circulated at the meeting)

The Senior Accountant took Members through the detail of the summary of the Council's management accounts for the period 1 April 2009 to 30 October

2009. He reported that there was currently an underspend across the five directorates and he advised Members of the opportunities and risks within the year to date Management Accounts.

He outlined the need to see budget profile month by month for Leisure, and addressed a number of Members' queries in this respect.

Councillor Hanvey referred to the monthly budget meetings that had previously been held with Chairmen, and it was agreed that it was important that these meetings be convened in the final financial quarter.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that the monthly budget meetings with Chairmen be convened during the final financial quarter.

F&GP/2009/352 : TREASURY MANAGEMENT– BANK INTEREST, GOVERNMENT BORROWING AND LOAN RESCHEDULING

The Senior Accountant advised Members of the amount of interest earned on investments for the period 1 April 2009 to 30 November 2009. He added that there had been no government borrowing or loan rescheduling in the year to date.

Noted.

F&GP/2009/353 : VAT CLAIM (Minute F&GP 2009/202 refers)

The Senior Accountant referred Members to a copy email from PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) detailing the amount the Council could expect in respect of its VAT claim. He advised that it was anticipated that the claim would be received within the next two to three weeks. He circulated for Members' information an update from Her Majesty's Customs & Excise confirming the proposed payment of VAT plus simple interest. He outlined that the payment would be subject to PWC fees.

He outlined that Members would need to give consideration to accounting issues and how the exceptional income was to be treated.

Members asked for their appreciation to be forwarded to the Director of Finance and the Senior Accountant.

Noted.

F&GP/2009/354 : AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE – CONSIDERATION OF MEMBERSHIP

The Senior Accountant outlined that, given difficulties experienced in the past in obtaining a quorum, he asked Members to consider increasing the current membership of the Audit Sub Committee.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That Councillor J. Beattie determine the current make up of the Audit Sub Committee and liaise with the other political parties, with a view to appointing three substitute Members.

F&GP/2009/355 : BELVOIR PLAYERS

The Senior Accountant reported that Belvoir Players had obtained funding from the Arts Council towards the costs involved in providing a one-way traffic system and additional car parking facilities at their studio in Belvoir Drive. He added that a request had been received from Belvoir Players asking if the Council would meet the shortfall.

He referred to a report from the Arts Officer which had been tabled at last month's meeting. He asked Members to note that Belvoir Players had suggested that in an attempt to formalise the strong and long-standing link that already existed between Belvoir Players and the Council, it was offering the Council the use of the studio for 5 events a year at a reduced rate, over a five-year period. He advised that the Council had used the studio on four occasions this year, and this offer represented a saving of over the five year period. He added that, if approved, Belvoir Players were willing to have the arrangement formalised within a contract, and the Arts Officer would liaise with them in this respect.

Councillor J Beattie outlined that there were a number of land and mapping issues in respect of this site.

RESOLVED : That, subject to the land issue being resolved, the Council be recommended to agree that a grant be awarded to Belvoir Players towards the costs of providing a one-way traffic system and additional car parking facilities at their studio in Belvoir Drive. The funding to be met out of the Contributions to Voluntary Bodies budget, with any event savings being reflected in the departmental events budget.

Councillor Cochrane left the meeting at 9.25 p.m.

F&GP/2009/356 : ESTIMATED PENNY PRODUCT (EPP) 2010-2011

The Senior Accountant referred Members to a copy letter from Land & Property providing details of the Council's estimated penny product for the 2010/2011 year. He added that Members would be updated further at the January 2010 Committee meeting.

Noted.

CORRESPONDENCE

F&GP/2009/357 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT RE: THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (CONTRACTS)

REGULATIONS (NI) 2010 (referred by Members at the Council meeting held on 26 November 2009)

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance liaise with the Senior Accountant, with a view to preparing a draft response on the Department of the Environment Local Government Contracts Regulations. The response to be tabled at the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting.

F&GP/2009/358 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE RE: FILLING OF COUNCIL VACANCIES ARISING IN DISTRICT COUNCILS DURING TERM (referred by Members at the Council meeting held on 26 November 2009)

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Whips liaise with their Party colleagues in order to obtain their views on the correspondence from the Northern Ireland Office in relation to the filling of Council Vacancies arising in District Councils during Term. The matter to be considered further at the next Committee meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.35 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this _____ day of
_____ 2009 with the exception of
Minute Nos. _____

MAYOR