

## **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 June 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

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

**ALDERMEN:** J White (until 9.30 p.m.)

**COUNCILLORS:** Mrs A Beattie  
Mrs M Chambers  
M Copeland  
D Drysdale  
Mrs S Duncan  
C Hall from 7.10 p.m.  
T Jeffers  
Mrs V McCoy until 8.20 p.m.)  
G Robinson (until 9.15 p.m.)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Director of Administration and Community Services,  
Director of Finance, Human Resource Advisor,  
Assistant Members' Services Officer and Councillor  
Skillen

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors  
Cochrane, Hanvey and Walker

### **HUMAN RESOURCE MATTERS**

**TABLED : MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2010 (copy previously  
circulated)**

The Director of Administration & Community Services outlined that any matters arising would be covered within her report.

**REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION &  
COMMUNITY SERVICES  
(copy previously circulated)**

**F&GP/2010/155 : FIRST AID AT WORK TRAINING COURSE**

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that the Director of Technical & Environmental Services was seeking approval for a Garage Mechanic to attend a four-day first aid training course, at a cost of £190.00.

She advised that a request had also been received from an Officer within the Members' Services Section to attend the course.

She confirmed that there were sufficient funds within the Corporate Training budget to cover the above two requests.

Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED** : That the Council be recommended to approve the attendance of a Garage Mechanic within the Technical & Environmental Services Department and an Officer within the Members' Services Section to attend a four-day first aid training course, at a cost of £190.00 per person.

Councillor Hall arrived at 7.10 p.m.

**F&GP/2010/156 : CLARIFICATION ON STAFFING MATTERS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that clarification was being sought as to whether staffing matters from other Committees go to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for approval or simply for noting, subject to there being no policy implications. She asked Members to note the content of a previous Minute in this respect, as follows:

**F&GP/2007/217 : PROCEDURE FOR TABLING STAFFING MATTERS AT FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Human Resources Manager sought re-affirmation of the current procedure to table staffing matters at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting. She outlined the current procedure as follows:

- Matters will be tabled at the respective originating Committee in the first instance, as they relate to departmental budgets or operational requirements. Subsequently, they are brought to the Finance & General Purposes Committee to ensure consistency of practice and to safeguard that the Council's respective policies are adhered to.

Following some discussion, it was

**RESOLVED**: That the Council be recommended to re-affirm the above position regarding staffing matters.

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that clarification was also being sought as to whether staffing matters from the Leisure Park and Golf Club Boards go to Finance & General Purposes Committee were simply for noting given that they had executive powers, or could they be rescinded if there were policy implications.

Following a detailed discussion, Members were of the view that as the Boards had executive powers that Human Resource issues should go to Finance & General Purposes Committee for policy review. Members were also of the view that Standing Committees would have responsibility for their own staffing matters, and again, these would be tabled at Finance & General Purposes Committee for policy review only.

The Director of Administration & Community Services noted Members' comments and outlined that Officers would endeavour to work within agreed procedures. She added that there could be a problem if an issue was agreed at Committee/Board, ratified by full Council, and subsequently implemented, and it was discovered at a later stage at the Finance & General Purposes Committee that there were policy implications.

Councillor Robinson stated that staff requests went to the relevant Directorate and were considered in line with Human Resource policies before a recommendation came before the relevant Committee/Board.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to

- (a) reaffirm that, as the Leisure Park and Castlereagh Hills Golf Boards had executive powers, they would be responsible for Human Resource matters, and that decisions would be tabled at the Finance & General Purposes Committee for policy review only
- (b) agree that Standing Committees had responsibility for staffing matters, and as above, they would be tabled at Finance & General Purposes Committee for policy review only

The Director of Finance and the Assistant Members' Services Officer left the meeting.

## **STAFF IN COMMITTEE**

### **FINANCE MATTERS**

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

**(circulated at the meeting)**

**At the Council meeting on 24 June 2010, the minutes of the meeting were adopted with the exception of Minute F&GP/2010/165 which was referred back to the Committee**

**F&GP/2010/165 : INTERNAL AUDIT MATTERS**

The Director of Finance outlined that Members may recall that, in response to a request from the Deputy Chief Local Government Auditor, the Council had commissioned Goldblatt McGuigan to produce a report on the effectiveness of the Council's internal audit service. The report had been considered at the Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 29 April 2010 and he referred to a copy of the draft Minutes for Members' information.

He outlined that the draft Minutes had been tabled at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 12 May 2010 but were not agreed and were referred, together with the Goldblatt McGuigan report to a Special Council meeting on 24 May 2010. He attached to his report a copy of the Minutes for Members' information.

He updated Members on the following issues:

- (i) The Council is currently awaiting a response from its legal advisor on whether the Local Government regulations incorporate a compliance requirement with the CIPFA guidelines.

The Director of Finance referred Members to a copy of the LG/04/08 circular from the Department of the Environment.

- (ii) The Management Team (MT) gave detailed consideration to Minute 2010/248 and agreed to make the following recommendations to the Finance & General Purposes Committee, in order to progress matters expeditiously:

“additional resource in respect of ‘Head of Audit’.

MT agreed that this matter would not be considered further until legal advice has been received

“additional training and development for the Internal Auditor”

MT agreed that additional training and development would be given to the Internal Auditor at every possible opportunity. This would be achieved through the officer appraisal which will be completed within the next 2 weeks.

“review the reporting structure, i.e., the Internal Auditor would report directly to the Audit Sub-Committee when necessary”  
MT agreed to update the Council’s Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy to take account of comments from Goldblatt McGuigan regarding the Internal Auditor being made aware of all suspected cases of fraud and reporting directly to the Audit Sub-Committee.  
MT agreed to update the Council’s Anti-Fraud & Corruption Policy accordingly

- (iii) The Council’s Management Team also considered the frequency of meetings and independence of the Audit Sub-Committee.  
MT agreed to request the Finance & General Purposes Committee to consider replacing the Audit Sub-Committee with an Audit Sub-Committee reporting directly to the Council.  
MT felt that this would give the Audit Committee a greater degree of independence as highlighted in the Goldblatt McGuigan report. This would of course necessitate a review of the current terms of reference as previously agreed for the Audit Sub-Committee.  
MT also felt that this Committee should meet every other month to improve its effectiveness.

The Director of Finance advised that a Special Council meeting has been convened on 10 June 2010 to adopt the Minute pertaining to his report and also the Minutes of the Sub-Committee held on 29 April 2010.

He indicated that it would be his intention to table a composite report at tomorrow evening’s Special Council meeting which would take account of all outstanding matters in relation to the Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 29 April 2010.

Councillor Chambers advised that she was required to convene an Audit Sub-Committee within the next few days but, as the Audit-Sub Committee Minutes had not as yet been approved, this had delayed the process and might therefore have implications for the Council’s Management Letter.

The Director of Finance explained that it was hoped to convene an Audit Sub-Committee as soon as possible after the Special Council meeting on 10 June.

In response to a query from Councillor Chambers, the Director of Finance stated that the Council was trying to set compliance at a level that would not place a financial burden on its ratepayers, whilst ensuring an acceptable level of adherence to CIPFA guidelines.

Alderman White proposed that the Council agree with the Management Team’s recommendations except for the one relating to frequency of meetings.

He expressed the view that it would be adequate for the Audit Sub-Committee to meet on a quarterly basis rather than every two months.

Councillors Drysdale and Cochrane left at 8.20 p.m.

Councillor Chambers expressed concern that in accepting some of the Management Team's recommendations was contrary to decisions taken by the Audit Sub-Committee. She added that she was totally opposed to the Audit Sub-Committee being reconstituted as a full Committee of Council. She added that the Local Government Auditor had stated that he had no difficulty with the existing reporting process.

The Director of Administration & Community Services indicated that the Management Team had looked at the recommendations from a governance perspective, in terms of the Audit Sub-Committee reporting to full Council. She added that under present arrangements, the parent committee could over-ride a decision of the Audit Sub-Committee.

Councillor Drysdale returned to the meeting at 8.26 p.m.

Alderman White advised that he would withdraw his proposal.

Following a detailed discussion, Alderman White commented that, in light of the fact that the Local Government Audit was content with the current reporting process, he proposed that the Audit Sub-Committee continue to report to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Robinson.

Councillor Chambers expressed her concern in relation to the recommendation for the Council to appoint a Head of Audit. She added that the Council was attempting to keep its costs down and it was her view that it would be more cost effective to employ an external auditor on a quarterly basis to review the Council's internal audit.

Councillor J Beattie outlined that whilst he understood the need for transparency, he had concerns at the costs involved in some of the recommendations within the report from Goldblatt McGuigan.

Following a detailed discussion on the other aspects of the supplementary report, Members were of the view that it was not necessary to appoint a Head of Audit. Approval was also granted for the following:

- additional training and development for the Internal Auditor
- the Internal Auditor would report directly to the Audit Sub-Committee, when necessary

- the Management Team would update the Council's Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy to take account of comments from Goldblatt McGuigan regarding the Internal Auditor being made aware of all suspected cases of fraud and the Internal Auditor reporting to the Audit Sub-Committee when necessary.

Members agreed to accept the Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 29 April 2010, subject to the legal opinion in relation to compliance with CIPFA guidelines and an amendment being made in terms of the Audit Sub-Committee continuing to report to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

The Director of Finance advised that he would table the amendment at tomorrow evening's Special Council meeting for Members' information, prior to incorporating it into the Minutes.

He then sought clarification as to whether the Committee was accepting the report from the Management Team, subject to an amendment that the Audit Sub-Committee continued to report to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Following further discussion, it was

**RESOLVED** : That the Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 29 April 2010 be approved subject to the legal opinion in relation to compliance with CIPFA guidelines and an amendment being made in terms of the Audit Sub-Committee continuing to report to the Finance & General Purposes Committee

The Director of Administration & Community Services left the meeting.

## **MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2010**

### **MATTERS ARISING**

#### **F&GP/2010/166 : IT STRATEGY (Minute No. F&GP/2010/127 refers)**

The Director of Finance advised that he had spoken with the IT Manager and it may not now be necessary to appoint an additional staff member. He added that he would monitor the situation and keep Members advised accordingly.

Noted.

#### **F&GP/2010/167 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM LEGAL – ISLAND RE: DATA PROTECTION & COMPLIANCE UPDATE CONFERENCE BEING HELD IN**

**ANTRIM ON 3 JUNE 2010 AT A COST OF £295.00 PLUS VAT (Minute No. F&GP/2010/133 refers)**

The Director of Finance advised Members that the Officer was unable to attend the above conference as it had been over-subscribed. He outlined that a briefing paper on the conference was available at a cost of £50.00.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree to purchase the briefing paper on the Data Protection & Compliance Update Conference, at a cost of £50.00.

**F&GP/2010/168 : MINUTES OF THE IT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 MAY 2010 (copy previously circulated)**

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the IT Sub Committee meeting held on 21 May 2010 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

**F&GP/2010/169 : MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 MAY 2010 (copy previously circulated – referred to the Committee at the Council meeting held on 27 May 2010)**

The Director of Finance stated that his supplementary report took account of the resolution contained in the above Minutes which had already been considered at tonight's meeting.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/170 : REPORT FROM THE AGENCY SUPPORT OFFICER RE: TIME AND ATTENDANCE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (circulated at the meeting)**

The Agency Support Officer updated Members on the implementation of the time and attendance system throughout various departments within the civic centre. He reported that as the system evolved, regular meetings would be convened with Human Resources to assist with policy, procedure development, and review. He added that updates would be provided at Senior Management Team meetings to consider review issues and put in place appropriate remedial action.

The Agency Support Officer outlined that as previously reported, initial meetings had taken place to discuss implementation within Leisure Services and the development of an implementation schedule. However, a decision was taken at a recent Management Team meeting not to proceed with implementation at this stage.

Councillor Chambers queried how Members could support Officers in implementing the system if one department was permitted to opt out.

The Agency Support Officer indicated that there were a number of anomalies within the Leisure Services Department, in terms of hourly rates of pay, staff carrying out a number of roles, etc.

In response to a query from Councillor J Beattie, the Director of Finance advised that the Director of Leisure Services was keen to have the system implemented, but the Management Team had been of the view that it was important that it operated successfully within the civic centre before moving onto another large department.

Councillors Robinson and Skillen left the meeting at 9.15 p.m.

The Agency Support Officer advised that software required at this stage would deal with complexities such as flexible working and time off in lieu. He indicated that the total cost of the software was £10,295.00, but as Eastern Group was meeting 50% of this cost, the cost to Council would be £5,147.50.

He briefed Members on all relevant costs to date, projected costs and the level of savings to be achieved from the full implementation of the system.

Following a proposal from Councillor Drysdale, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree to the purchase of the Time & Attendance software at a cost of £10,295.00, with Eastern Group meeting 50% of this cost.

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

**F&GP/2010/171 : MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD 30 APRIL**

The Director of Finance briefed Members on the above.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/172 : TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INTEREST ON  
INVESTMENTS, GOVERNMENT BORROWING AND LOAN  
RESCHEDULING DURING THE PERIOD 1 APRIL TO 31 MAY 2010**

The Director of Finance advised Members of the interest generated on the Council's investments during the above period. He outlined that there had been no government borrowing during that period. However, the Procurement

Section was currently working on the necessary economic appraisals which must accompany the loan sanctions applications. He advised that when the sanctions had been approved he would be drawing down the loans to finance capital outlay.

He reported that there had been no loan rescheduling in the year to date.

Noted.

### **F&GP/2010/173 : FINANCIAL PLANNING**

The Director of Finance sought Members' views as to whether meetings of the Estimates Working Group should be convened on an adhoc basis during the summer recess. He outlined that this would enable Members to consider the financial impact on the rates in respect of the following:-

- 3.1 European landfill directive.
- 3.2 RPA implementation costs.
- 3.3 Efficiency savings from new Government.
- 3.4 Implications of RPA planning contained within current estimates.
- 3.5 General state of economy and impact on disposable income.
- 3.6 Consideration of possible land sales.
- 3.7 Waste management.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that the Estimates Working Group meetings will be convened on an adhoc basis over the summer recess to consider the financial impact of a number of issues, as outlined above.

### **F&GP/2010/174 : STAFFING MATTERS**

The Director of Finance advised Members that the Wages and Salaries Supervisor was retiring, and under Vacancy Control, he was seeking permission for the current Wages and Salaries Officer to act up in this supervisory role. He added that it was his intention to replace this Officer's post on a part-time basis.

He further reported that there were currently two Officers within the Finance Section currently on sick leave and one on maternity leave, as follows:

**Finance Officer** – on sick leave since 8 April

**Acting Management Accountant** - currently on maternity leave and not due return to work until 15 November 2010.

**Secretary to the Director** - on sick leave since 11 May 2010 and he current sick line was up to 28 June 2010

He outlined that in an effort to ensure continuity of support to front line services and maintain high levels of financial control, it had been necessary to re-organise the Finance Section, as outlined below:

**Finance Officer**

Both the control clerk and finance clerk are covering a percentage of the duties of this post assisted by the Financial Accountant. An Agency worker has been brought in for some of the duties left undone in the control and finance clerks' posts.

**Acting Management Accountant**

An agency worker is currently covering this post.

**Director's Secretary**

The agency worker is covering the control and finance clerks' duties, is also covering this post.

The Director of Finance outlined that an honorarium would be due to the three staff covering for the Finance Officer, and he would update Members in this respect at the next Committee meeting.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council agrees that, in line with Vacancy Control, the current Salaries & Wages Officer act up as Salaries & Wages Supervisor, with the Officer's vacant post being recruited on a part-time basis.

**F&GP/2010/175 : PROVISIONAL ACTUAL PENNY PRODUCT 2009 – 2010**

The Director of Finance attached to his report for Members' information correspondence from the Land & Property Services regarding the Council's Penny Product finalisation for last year. He advised that at the time of estimates, the figure had been estimated at £528,717 and the Council was therefore £93,598 better off than expected.

Noted.

Alderman White left the meeting at 9.30 p.m.

**F&GP/2010/176 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF ENTERPRISE, TRADE & INVESTMENT RE: SERVICES REGULATIONS 2009**

The Director of Finance referred Members to the above correspondence in relation to the Council's non-compliance with the Services Directive 2009, together with a response from the Acting Chief Executive.

He advised that he had received an email advising that the Department was content with the Council's progress to date.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/177 : APPLICATION FOR CONTINUATION OF STUDY COURSE**

The Director of Finance advised Members that he had received a request from the Council's IT Officer for financial assistance towards the continuation of his study course. He advised that this request was in line with the Council's IT strategy, and he therefore recommended approval.

RESOLVED : That, in line with the IT Strategy, the Council be recommended to approve the request from IT Officer for financial assistance toward the continuation of his study course.

**F&GP/2010/178 : PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

The Director of Finance referred Members to the Council's Performance Indicators for the 2008/2009 year.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/179 : SPECIAL FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**

The Director of Finance sought approval to convene a Special Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting on Wednesday 23 June 2010 at 7.00 p.m. to sign off the draft accounts for the 2009/2010 year.

RESOLVED : That a Special Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting be convened on Wednesday 23 June 2010 at 7.00 p.m. to sign off the draft accounts for the 2009/2010 year.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**F&GP/2010/180 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM TRANSLINK RE:  
PROPOSAL FOR A NEW WORLD CLASS TRANSPORT HUB FOR  
BELFAST (referred to Committee by Council) (copy previously circulated)**

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/181 : CONSIDERATION OF YOUTHS RIDING  
QUADS/MORTORBIKES ON PUBLIC ROADS WITHIN THE BOROUGH  
(referred from the May Council meeting)**

Councillor Drysdale advised Members that at the last Council meeting he had asked for a letter to be forwarded to the Minister for Policing & Justice in relation to the above. He referred to the issue of availability of legal aid to youths driving quads on public roads, whilst not being available to the car drivers involved.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/182 : EMAIL FROM DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE &  
PERSONNEL RE: CANCELLATION OF NON-DOMESTIC REVALUATION  
(copy previously circulated)**

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/183 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE  
ENVIRONMENT RE: TRAVELLING ALLOWANCE (copy previously  
circulated)**

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/184 : LSP SEGMENTAL ANALYSIS DETAILING COST OF  
COLLECTION BREAKDOWN PENNY PRODUCT 2009/2010 (copy  
previously circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Copeland, the Director of Finance advised that he estimated that it would cost the Council in the region of £40,000 to £50,000 to collect the rates in-house.

Councillor Copeland commented that the charge for rates collection had increased over the past five years and debt had increased. He added that to carry this out in-house would require the Council to obtain the relevant data base.

Councillor J Beattie suggested that the Deputy Mayor writes to NILGA in this respect.

Following discussion, it was

**RESOLVED** : That the Council be recommended to agree that Councillor Copeland liaise with the Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes Committee in order to write to NILGA in relation to the year on year increase in the charge for rates collection. The letter to include a proposal that

Castlereagh Borough Council would consider collecting the rates in-house, in an effort to gain greater efficiencies.

**F&GP/2010/185 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT RE: LIMIT ON DISTRICT COUNCIL EXPENDITURE FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES 2010/2011 (copy previously circulated)**

Noted.

**ANY OTHER FINANCE BUSINESS**

**F&GP/2010/186 : NILGA/SOLACE CONFERENCE BEING HELD ON 16 JUNE 2010**

The Director of Finance outlined that the Members represented on NILGA would be attending the above conference, and that the Acting Chief Executive (Director of Leisure Services) had expressed an interest in attending.

Councillor Copeland indicated that, if available, he would also like to attend.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that

- (a) the Deputy Mayor and the Acting Chief Executive (Director of Leisure Services) attend the NILGA/Solace conference being held on 16 June 2010
- (b) the invitation to the above conference be left open to all non-NILGA members

**F&GP/2010/187 : MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 JUNE 2010 (circulated at the meeting)**

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 7 June 2010 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.40 p.m.

\_\_\_\_\_  
CHAIRMAN  
\_\_\_\_\_

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this \_\_\_\_\_ day of

\_\_\_\_\_ 2010 with the exception of

Minute Nos. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR