

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 10 March 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor J Beattie
(in the chair)

ALDERMEN: Alderman J White (from 7.10 pm until 9.35 pm)

COUNCILLORS: Mrs A Beattie
Ms J Bunting
Mrs M Chambers
M Copeland (from 7.45 p.m.)
C Hall (until 8.20 p.m.)
T Jeffers (from 8.50 p.m.)
V McCoy

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Administration and Community Services, Director of Finance, General Manager Leisure & Marketing, Assistant Members' Services Officer and Alderman Norris

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Cochrane, Drysdale, Duncan and Walker

Following a request from the General Manager Leisure & Marketing, Members agreed to him tabling a report on a number of urgent matters which had been referred from the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 4 March 2010.

F&GP/2010/59 : REPORT FROM THE GENERAL MANAGER LEISURE & MARKETING (copy circulated at the meeting)

The General Manager asked Members to note that Breath Fitness would be undertaking a period of investment and refurbishment at the Lough Moss, Belvoir and Robinson Centres. He outlined that the Members of the Leisure Services Committee had recognised the importance of ensuring that the Robinson Centre facilities did not deteriorate to such an extent that income from Breath Fitness would be put in jeopardy. He indicated that at the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 4 March 2010, Members agreed that a refurbishment be carried out at the Robinson Centre. He circulated a breakdown of the costs involved and advised that these would be met out of capital provision. He added that it had also been agreed that the work should be carried out as soon as possible to coincide with Breath Fitness refurbishment programme.

Alderman White arrived at 7.10 p.m.

The Director of Finance advised that there had previously been a Minute relating to nugatory spend at the Robinson Centre. He added that, having heard the General Manager's comments that the refurbishment was necessary in order to sustain income from Breath Fitness, he was of the view that the expenditure would be appropriate.

Councillor Chambers commented that Officers should be checking with the Local Government Auditor if it was in order to capitalise this expenditure and whether it would be deemed as nugatory spend.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to approve the expenditure in respect of refurbishment works at the Robinson Centre, with a view to commencing work with immediate effect, subject to the following:

- (i) the Director of Finance clarify with the Local Government Auditor whether it was in order for the Council to capitalise the cost of the refurbishment work at the Robinson Centre and to clarify if it would be deemed nugatory expenditure
- (ii) the Director of Finance report back to the Council meeting being held on 25 March 2010 in order that the refurbishment work could commence as quickly as possible

F&GP/2010/60 : CHILD PROTECTION TRAINING

The General Manager advised that at the last Leisure Services Committee meeting it had been agreed that Officers from each directorate be enrolled in the 'Train the Trainers' in Child Protection Training. He advised that the course would commence in September 2010 and conclude in May/June 2011. He reported that it had further been agreed that, in the meantime, training for both regulated and non-regulated staff would be sourced from the Volunteer Development Agency.

He reported that the Leisure Services Committee had agreed that the matter be referred to the Finance & General Purposes Committee for consideration and approval for the training costs to be met out of the corporate training budget.

Councillor McCoy indicated that the Council had a legal requirement to provide relevant staff with child protection training.

Members noted the Leisure Services Committee's recommendation for Officers within each directorate to be enrolled in the Train the Trainers course, and it was felt that it would not be necessary for Officers from the Finance Department to attend the course.

Alderman White proposed that the costs of the training be met out of the corporate training budget. Councillor McCoy seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that

- (a) the costs involved in the two recommendations agreed at the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 4 March 2010 in respect of child protection training be met out of the corporate training budget
- (b) one Officer from each of the Leisure Services, Technical & Environmental Services and Administration & Community Services Departments attend the 'Train the Trainers' in Child Protection Training

F&GP/2010/61 : ROOF REPAIRS AT LOUGH MOSS, BELVOIR AND ICE BOWL

The General Manager circulated a survey report and photographs highlighting the damage to the roofs at the above centres. He outlined that in anticipation of bringing the issue of the roof at the Ice Bowl to the forthcoming Leisure Park Board meeting, the Chairman had asked that the matter be raised at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting to ascertain if a means of funding could be sought from under-spends within other departments.

He further advised that at the last Leisure Services Committee meeting, Members agreed that the roof repairs at Belvoir and Lough Moss Centres should be carried out as a matter of urgency, subject to the matter being tabled at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting to ascertain if the cost of repairs could be found within other departmental under-spends.

The General Manager provided a breakdown of the costs involved, as follows:

Belvoir

Roof repair estimated at £3,600.00 (shortfall of £1,000.00)

Lough Moss

Roof repair estimated at £25,000.00 (£6,000.00 currently remaining in the maintenance budget)

Ice Bowl

Roof repair estimated at £45,000.00 (currently no provision remaining in the maintenance budget)

He advised that based on the above, the total required for the roof repairs at the three centres was estimated at £65,000.00

Discussion ensued in relation to the following:

- potential storm damage to the roofs
- the Council's current moratorium
- options for funding the work
- implications of boundaries review/ownership of assets

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that the Director of Finance report back on the most appropriate way of funding the roof repairs at Lough Moss, Belvoir and Ice Bowl, based on the following options:

- (i) end of year under-spend in revenue within other departments
- (ii) funding the work out of capital provision

The General Manager Leisure & Marketing left the meeting.

F&GP/2010/62 : MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 1 MARCH 2010 (copy previously circulated)

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 1 March 2010 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

TABLED : MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2010 (copy previously circulated)

MATTERS ARISING

F&GP/2010/63 : MOBILE PHONE CONTRACT RENEWAL (Minute No. F&GP/2010/49 refers)

The Director of Finance advised that the Senior Accountant would be tabling the additional costs incurred in respect of BlackBerry mobile phones at the next Committee meeting.

Noted.

F&GP/2010/64 : BELVOIR CREDIT UNION (Minute No. F&GP/2010/58 refers)

Councillor Hall referred to Belvoir Credit Union's request for the Council to consider supplying them with a portacabin to operate out of. He added that he had been advised that the credit union would pay rental to the Council for use of the portacabin.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that the Director of Finance writes to Belvoir Credit Union advising that the Council could not facilitate them by supplying a portacabin.

MATTER ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2009

F&GP/2010/65 : BELVOIR PLAYERS – REQUEST FOR £15,000.00 (Minute No. F&GP/2009/355 refers)

The Director of Finance reminded Members that at the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting held on 9 December 2009, it had been agreed to award Belvoir Players a grant of £15,000.00 towards the costs of providing a one-way traffic system and additional car parking facilities at their studio. He advised that the grant was to be met out of the Contributions to Voluntary Bodies budget.

The Director of Administration & Community Services outlined a number of mapping and land issues that needed to be resolved.

Following a detailed discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That, as per Minute No. F&GP/2009/355, a grant of £15,000.00 be awarded to Belvoir Players before the end of the 2009/2010 financial year.

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

F&GP/2010/66 : 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 2009 to 31 January 2010.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/67 : TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INVESTMENTS,
GOVERNMENT LOANS AND LOAN RESCHEDULING**

The Director of Finance advised Members of an amount recently invested with the First Trust for a one-year period. He added other Council investments were currently with the Northern Bank. He reported that there had been no government borrowing or loan rescheduling in the year to date.

Noted.

F&GP/2010/68 : REQUEST FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

The Director of Finance referred Members to a request from a former student of Grosvenor Grammar School seeking financial assistance towards a group project in Nepal.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance writes to the former student of Grosvenor Grammar School advising that the Council could not provide

financial assistance towards a group project in Nepal, as it did not meet with the Council's criteria for awarding financial assistance.

F&GP/2010/69 : VAT UPDATE

The Director of Finance outlined that as Members would be aware initial payments less 20% to PWC had been received. He advised that these payments represented the claim plus simple interest but that the Council was also seeking payment of compound interest on the claim. He added that he would keep Members updated in this respect.

Noted.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

F&GP/2010/70 : AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 MARCH 2010

The Director of Finance reported that at the above meeting the Deputy Chief Local Government Auditor had referred to the Council's self-review of the effectiveness of its system of internal audit and he had advised that the Council might benefit from an external review of its practices.

Councillor Chambers commented that the external review would need to be carried out as quickly as possible and an Audit Sub Committee convened within the next six weeks to enable the Local Government Auditor to include the results in the Council's Management Letter.

The Director of Finance reported that he had received an email from the Deputy Chief Local Government Auditor regarding a follow-up to his request to the Council for the appointment of an external member to sit on the Council's Audit Sub Committee and an external review of the effectiveness of the Council's internal audit function.

In response to a query from Councillor Bunting, the Director of Finance confirmed that a number of other Councils had appointed an external member to sit on their Audit Sub Committees.

Following discussion, Members agreed that, as the Deputy Chief Local Government Auditor attended the Audit Sub-Committee meetings to provide advice, that the request for external representation should be noted.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to grant approval for an external review of the Council's internal audit function and that the report be available for consideration at the next Audit Sub Committee meeting in April 2010.

Councillor Hall left the meeting at 8.20 p.m.

The Assistant Member Services Officer left the meeting.

At this point, the meeting went into "Staff in Committee"

CORRESPONDENCE

F&GP/2010/73 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE ELECTORAL OFFICE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND RE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT BY-ELECTION

Members were asked to note the Chief Electoral Officer's views on the forthcoming by-election and his request for the Council to consider alternative arrangements.

The Director of Finance asked Members to further note that the Chief Electoral Officer had stated that this was entirely a decision for the Council.

Following a detailed discussion, Members expressed the view that they were confident that all the Council's Directors were more than capable of managing a by-election, and that a letter signed by the Deputy Mayor should be forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer indicating that the Council did not share his concerns.

Councillor Jeffers arrived at 8.50 p.m.

Councillor Bunting asked that the Director of Leisure Services and the Director of Technical & Environmental Services be advised of Members' views in this respect.

The Director of Administration & Community Services indicated that she would be responding to the Chief Electoral Officer in a personal capacity.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that a letter signed by the Deputy Mayor be forwarded to the Chief Electoral Officer advising that the Council did not share his concerns in respect of the forthcoming by-election.

In the absence of the Human Resource Manager, the Director of Administration & Community Services presented the report.

REPORT FROM THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGER (copy previously circulated)

F&GP/2010/74 : HEALTH AND SAFETY - FIRE MARSHALS FOR THE CIVIC CENTRE

The Director of Administration & Community Services outlined that Members were being asked to consider a recommendation to seek nominations from staff across all Council departments to act as fire marshals to assist in the fire safety and evacuation procedure. She advised that the fire marshals would act as proactive fire safety representatives identifying day to day fire risks and

raising these with the building management and supervisors. She indicated that they would also act as a central part of the evacuation procedure ensuring that pre-designated areas were inspected during an alarm situation to ensure no-one was left in their area, whilst also evacuating any persons in the designated refuge points.

She reported that staff would be trained in fire safety, the use of portable fire fighting appliances for tackling small fires when safe to do so, as well as the evacuation chairs located throughout the building.

Advantages

- it is the quickest most efficient way to evacuate a building
- it allows the Fire and Rescue Service into the building quickly to rescue and reduce damage
- the building is split into pre-defined areas for control
- it is a pro-active approach in identifying dangers
- the system uses people to evacuate people, so allowing for adverse human behaviour

The Director of Administration & Community Services outlined that the Human Resource Manager was recommending that a maximum of 12 staff be trained and that they receive similar additional payment as first aiders, i.e.

full time - £11.22 per month
weekly - £2.59 per week (up to 37 hours per week)

The Director of Administration & Community Services reminded Members of the savings made in the 2010/2011 insurance premium.

Councillor Chambers proposed that the costs of the scheme be funded from the insurance savings.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to adopt the fire marshal system, with the costs being met out of the insurance savings made in the 2010/2011 year.

F&GP/2010/75 : CARRY OVER OF ANNUAL LEAVE

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that three staff members' names had been omitted from the report tabled at last month's meeting. She referred Members to a report outlining the detail of the three requests to carry over annual leave.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to grant approval for three staff members to carry over annual leave into the 2010/2011 year, as outlined in the report from Human Resource Manager.

F&GP/2010/76 : ANNUAL LEAVE

The Director of Administration & Community Services outlined that as Members would be aware the Capital Projects Officer was currently on long-term sick leave. She advised that the Officer had accumulated two weeks' annual leave and had asked if he could receive two weeks salary payment as he was not in a position to take the leave.

Given that the request evidently related to health reasons, Members agreed to the payment.

RESOLVED : That, given the particular circumstances of this case, the Council be recommended to grant approval to pay two weeks salary to the Capital Projects Officer in lieu of two weeks annual leave accrued.

At this point the meeting went into "Staff in Committee"

F&GP/2010/80 : WOMEN IN LOCAL COUNCILS WEEK

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that the 'women in local councils week' would run from Monday 8 March to Friday 12 March to coincide with International Women's Day on Monday 8 March. She indicated that the Women in Local Councils Steering Group was encouraging Councils to hold events throughout the week to highlight the Women in Local Councils' Initiative and progress made by individual councils. She added that Members may wish to consider organising an event next year.

Councillor Bunting outlined that an important aspect of the Women in Local Councils initiative was to encourage more women into politics and also to encourage women in employment to apply for higher graded posts. She added that she was fully supportive of this aspect of the Women in Local Councils initiative.

She proposed that the Council organise an event as part of next year's Women in Local Councils week.

Councillor Chambers seconded the proposal.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree to hold an event during the 2011/2012 Women in Local Councils Week.

F&GP/2010/81 : TRAINING REQUEST

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that the Director of Finance was seeking approval for the Finance Control Clerk to attend the 4-day first aid training course to be met out of the central training budget

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to grant approval for the Finance Control Clerk to attend the 4-day first aid training course to be met out of the central training budget

F&GP/2010/82 : STAFFING MATTERS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

(i) **LPB/2009/180 : REQUEST FOR FUNDING**

Members were informed that the Business Manager had requested permission to enrol in February with CIPFA to commence study towards a CIPFA Professional Qualification and was seeking Council support.

The actual financial support required each semester would depend on the number of modules taken, but as with all staff academic requests, Council funding is capped at £1,000 per financial year.

The Acting Director confirmed that there was provision within the draft estimates should the Business Manager wish to proceed with the qualification.

RESOLVED:- that, the Leisure Park Board grant approval to financially support the Business Manager to progress her CIPFA Professional Qualification on the basis that there is sufficient funding within the draft estimates.

(ii) **T&ESC/2010/02 : PLACEMENT STUDENT**

The Building Control Manager reported that, following the Committee's meeting in September 2009 (Minute No TSC/2009/336 refers), he had liaised with the Council's HR section to confirm that proposals for the employment of the placement student were satisfactory.

The Manager reported that the student's performance for October, November and December 2009 was found to be satisfactory and it was now proposed to pay him on NJC Scale 1B Point 7 part-time three days per week.

RESOLVED: that the Council approve payment to the Placement Student on NJC Scale 1B Point 7 part-time three days per week.

(iii) **LAGAN VALLEY REGIONAL PARK BOARD**

The Board considered a range of options where cuts could be made to the core funding. Those regarding staff were discussed and all potential changes lead to the inevitable conclusion that the ranger service should be cut from Head Ranger and Ranger to a new Ranger with the post re-evaluated.

RESOLVED:- that the LVRP Board grant approval for the Park Manager to progress the implementation of these cuts and to re-evaluate the post.

(iii) T&ESC/2010/ : CAREER BREAK REQUEST FROM THE COUNTRYSIDE & ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

The Operational Services Manager attached to his report copy correspondence from the Council's Countryside & Administrative Officer requesting a two-year career break effective, from the 1 July 2010. He advised that the request was to facilitate travel and study.

Councillor Robinson expressed the view that the Officer in question was highly regarded and always worked diligently. He added that whilst the Committee wished her well during her career break, she would be a great loss to the Council.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That approval be granted for the Countryside & Administrative Officer to take a two-year career break, subject to the matter being referred to the next Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting to ensure that the request met with the Council's career break policy.

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised Members that there were no policy implications in respect of the above staffing matters.

Noted.

F&GP/2010/83 : DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Councillor Chambers advised that whilst in attendance at a recent Audit Sub Committee meeting, the Local Government Auditor had reminded Members of their requirement when declaring an interest at a Council or Committee meeting to leave the room.

A lengthy discussion ensued in relation to declaring a pecuniary interest. Particular reference was made to approval of decisions made by the Transition Committee and the fact that the Minutes were being tabled on the evening of the Council meeting, with Members not having adequate time to scrutinise the content.

Noted.

F&GP/2010/84 : APPROVAL FOR PLANNED OVERTIME

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that the Group Chief Environmental Health Officer for Eastern Group was seeking approval for a total of 31 hours planned overtime carried out in February 2010. She

added that the Group Chief Environmental health Officer had confirmed that the work could not have been carried out during normal working hours.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED: That the Council be recommended to grant approval for a total of 31 hours planned overtime carried out within the Eastern Group Environmental Health Service during February 2010.

F&GP/2010/85 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT RE: THE DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (INDEMNITIES FOR MEMBERS AND OFFICERS) ORDER (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2010 – CONSULTATION DOCUMENT (copy previously circulated - referred from the February 2010 Committee Meeting)

The Director of Administration & Community Services recommended that the Council welcomes the new proposals as it provided protection to Members represented on outside bodies.

Councillor Bunting outlined that whilst she agreed that the new proposals should be welcomed, she had concerns that should an Officer or Member need to pursue a matter through the courts, the legal fees involved could preclude an innocent person from clearing their name.

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that she had spoken with the Local Government Auditor who had advised her that whilst Officers had a level of protection under the Local Government Act 1972, Members were covered within legislation dating back to the 1960's. She added that she had been instructed to contact the National Association of Councillors in this respect and she would report back to the Committee when she had received a response.

Alderman White left the meeting at 9.35 p.m.

Councillor Chambers outlined that, prior to leaving the meeting Alderman White had advised that he would draw up a response to the document. She asked that Officers contact Alderman White to let him know that the deadline for submission was 31 March 2010 and that the draft response would need to be tabled at the next Council meeting

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That

- (a) the Director of Administration & Community Services report back to the Committee on the response from the National Association of Councillors
- (b) Officers liaise with Alderman White regarding the response to the Department of the Environment Draft Local Government (Indemnities

for Members and Officers) Order (Northern Ireland) 2010 –
Consultation Document

**F&GP/2010/86 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM AWARE, DATED 20
JANUARY 2010, RE: DEPRESSION AWARE WEEK – CHANGING MINDS
ABOUT DEPRESSION (copy previously circulated - referred from
February 2010 Council Meeting)**

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/87 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM LARNE BOROUGH
COUNCIL RE: DISPLAY OF FLAGS AND EMBLEMS (REFERRED TO
COMMITTEE BY COUNCIL) (copy previously circulated – referred from
February 2010 Council meeting)**

Noted.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this _____ day of
_____ 2010 with the exception of

Minute Nos. _____

MAYOR