

## **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 12 May 2010 at 7.00 p.m.

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

**COUNCILLORS:** Mrs A Beattie  
Mrs M Chambers (from 7.04 p.m.)  
M Copeland  
Mrs S Duncan  
C Hall (until 7.50 p.m.)  
B Hanvey (until 9.10 p.m.)  
T Jeffers

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Director of Administration and Community Services, Director of Finance, Assistant Members' Services Officer and Alderman Norris

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

### **F&GP/2010/123 : PRESENTATION BY MIKE SMYTH , UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER RE: EUROPEAN INVESTMENT BANK**

Mr Smyth outlined that Northern Ireland's fiscal position has deteriorated sharply in recent months, with £370 million of public spending cuts confirmed in January for 2010/2011. He added that these cuts would be spread across various departments and give rise to some tough choices in respect of health, education, policing, etc.

Councillor Chambers arrived at 7.04 p.m.

He outlined that with no possibility of Treasury bail-out, Northern Ireland would have to raise more of its own revenue. He added that, given the steady revenue stream through the district rate, Local Government would be eligible to borrow from the European Investment Bank. He suggested that Castlereagh Borough Council explore forming a partnership with the other local councils as there was a lower threshold on borrowing of £20 million.

Mr Smyth advised that EIB could provide a loan to cover 50% of project costs, with match funding provided by Central Government.

Councillor Chambers expressed concern as to whether Local Government would be in a position at this stage to borrow.

Councillor Hall left the meeting at 7.50 p.m.

In response to a query from Councillor J Beattie, Mr Smyth confirmed that, if invited, he would be happy to make a presentation to a future meeting of NILGA.

Mr Smyth commented that it would be in order for the Council to utilise the economic development budget to service loan charges associated with the respective capital outlay.

Following a detailed discussion,

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance forward a copy of Mr Smyth's presentation on the European Investment Bank to Committee Members.

**F&GP/2010/124 : MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 2010 (copy previously circulated)**

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the Economic Development Sub-Committee meeting held on 4 May 2010 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

**F&GP/2010/125 : MINUTES OF THE AUDIT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2010 (copy previously circulated)**

Councillor Chambers advised Members that Goldblatt McGuigan had carried out an external review of the Council's internal audit which had been considered at the above meeting. She referred Members to the Minutes of the meeting outlining the Deputy Chief Local Government Auditor's comments in relation to the Council's compliance with the CIPFA Code of Practice and the recommendations put forward by Goldblatt McGuigan. She expressed concern that if the Council was not seen to be progressing with the recommendations, it would have implications for the Council's Management Letter.

Councillor Hanvey expressed the view that these matters should be considered corporately and he proposed that a Special Council meeting be convened.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Mrs Beattie.

Councillor Chambers indicated that the officials who had attended the Audit Sub-Committee meeting should attend the Special Council meeting.

Following a detailed discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That

- (a) a Special Council meeting be convened to consider the report on the external review of the internal audit carried out by Goldblatt McGuigan,

together with the Minutes of the Audit Sub-Committee meeting held on 29 April 2010

- (b) Mr D Lynn (Deputy Chief Local Government Auditor), Mr J Poole (KMGP Auditor) and Mr A Thompson (Golblatt McGuigan) be asked to attend the Special Council meeting

Councillor Copeland left the meeting at 8.30 p.m.

**F&GP/2010/126 : MINUTES OF THE IT SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 APRIL 2010 (copy previously circulated)**

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the IT Sub-Committee meeting held on 16 April 2010 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

**MATTERS ARISING**

**F&GP/2010/127 : IT STRATEGY (Minute No. ITSC/2010/55 refers)**

The Director of Finance outlined that Officers from Lisburn and Castlereagh Councils were currently preparing an IT report, but that progress was slow as most of the decisions depended on the outcome of RPA

Councillor J Beattie indicated that there had been some discussion at the IT Sub-Committee meeting in respect of employing one additional IT staff member. He asked if RPA did not go ahead as scheduled, was there any requirement to appoint another member of staff.

The Director of Finance advised that he would like to discuss this with the IT Manager.

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance liaise with the IT Manager to discuss the requirement to appoint one additional member of staff within the IT Section, should RPA not progress as scheduled and report back to a future Committee meeting.

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

**F&GP/2010/128 : SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS FOR APRIL 2010**

The Director of Finance reported that he would present the above accounts at the May Council meeting.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/129 : TREASURY MANAGEMENT – INVESTMENTS, GOVERNMENT LOANS, LOAN RESCHEDULING AND TREASURY MANAGEMENT POLICY & STATEMENT 2010/2011**

The Director of Finance updated Members on the above activities and sought approval for the Treasury Management Policy & Statement for 2010/2011.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to approve the Treasury Management Policy & Statement for 2010/2011.

**F&GP/2010/130 : FINANCE DEPARTMENT BUSINESS PLAN FOR APRIL 2010 TO MARCH 2011**

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to approve the Finance Department's Business Plan for April 2010 to March 2011.

**F&GP/2010/131 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION RE: SMALL BUSINESS RATES RELIEF SCHEME**

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/132 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICERS SUPERANNUATION COMMITTEE RE: ADDITIONAL EMPLOYER COSTS**

The Director of Finance explained that this would have implications leading up to the setting of estimates, and this correspondence would be re-visited during that process.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/133 : 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**

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree that one Officer within the Finance Department attend the Data Protection & Compliance Update Conference on 3 June 2010, following which the Officer would provide the Management Team with a brief.

At this point Paul Woods, Agency Project Support Officer joined the meeting to present a report on the time and attendance system.

**F&GP/2010/134 : REPORT ON THE TIME & ATTENDANCE SYSTEM (BIOMETRIC SCANNERS) IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE (circulated at the meeting)**

The Agency Project Support Officer reported that out of the 225 targeted users, 221 were currently operating the system, and it was hoped that the remaining staff would be operating the system shortly. He outlined that key management information reports could be produced providing data to a degree of transparency not previously realised outside the specific department. He added that these reports have been used to assist in the verification of timesheets submitted to payroll.

He continued by stating that a high level of system integrity not only represented good governance but ensured that the system would withstand rigorous audit, either internal or external.

The Agency Project Support Officer indicated that Directors/Managers would shortly be provided with reports in order to monitor usage and remedy any issues.

He added that he was awaiting a detailed specification from Timeware UK to capture the Council's required enhancements and allow accurate assessment of both potential cost and timescale. He added that the software refinement was required to cater for the complexities of flexitime and toil.

The Officer reported that it had been agreed that the first location to implement the system within Leisure Services would be the Lough Moss Centre but that a date had not as yet been agreed. He outlined that some Leisure Services' staff carried out two or three different functions on different rates of pay and he was currently liaising with Management in this respect.

He outlined that work would continue to focus on the following:

- trial payroll integration
- development and application of consistent corporate operational policy
- flexible working and toil policy revision

The Agency Project Support Officer addressed Members' queries in relation to:

- potential future financial savings
- compatibility with Lisburn City Council
- staff compliance

Councillor J Beattie thanked the Officer for attending and stated that the Committee looked forward to future updates.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/135 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY RE: LOCAL GOVERNMENT (DISQUALIFICATION) (AMENDMENT) BILL (referred to the Committee at the April Council meeting)**

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance liaise with Councillor J Beattie in order to prepare a Council response to the Northern Ireland Assembly on Local Government (Disqualification) (Amendment) Bill.

**ANY OTHER FINANCE MATTERS**

**F&GP/2010/136 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S FORUM RE: CONFERENCE ON THE CHALLENGES FACING PUBLIC SERVICES ACROSS NORTHERN IRELAND (circulated at the meeting)**

The Director of Finance asked Members to note the cost of the conference, with no charge for the fourth delegate attending.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Director of Finance and Councillors J Beattie, Copeland and Chambers attend the conference on the challenges facing public services across Northern Ireland on 3 June 2010, with the fourth delegate attending free of charge.

**MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE MEETING  
(copy previously circulated)**

**F&GP/2010/137 : ACTING UP ALLOWANCES (Minute No. F&GP/2010/105 refers)**

The Director of Administration & Community Services clarified that the acting up allowances would be split equally between the three Officers involved.

Noted.

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

**F&GP/2010/138 : TRAINING POLICY COMPARISON – ACADEMIC ASSISTANCE CLAW-BACK PROCEDURE – CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL AND LISBURN CITY COUNCIL**

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that further to a matter discussed at a previous committee meeting regarding the difference in

training policies, she referred Members to a report detailing comparisons of the claw-back procedure for academic assistance between Castlereagh Borough Council and Lisburn City Council.

She asked Members to note a number of differences between the two councils and asked Members if they wished for Officers to look at merging the two policies to ensure equality.

Members were of the view that given that an announcement on RPA was imminent, it would be better to defer further consideration of this matter until further clarification had been received.

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to agree consideration of the Academic Claw-back Policy be deferred until clarification has been received in relation to a date for RPA.

#### **F&GP/2010/139 : RETROSPECTIVE APPROVAL**

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that the Group Chief Environmental Health Officer for Eastern Group was seeking retrospective approval for unplanned overtime carried out in March 2010. She advised that the overtime had been approved by the Group Chief Environmental Health Officer and 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 retrospective approval for the payment of unplanned overtime carried out within the Eastern Group Environmental Health Service during March 2010 as follows:

J McKinstry - Harvey      2.5 hours      emergency incident response

#### **F&GP/2010/140 : NOTIFICATION OF BUDGETARY OVERSPEND**

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that, although Officers had been monitoring the recruitment expenses budget leading up to the end of the 2009/2010 financial year, it was overspent due to recruitment expenses. She added that an invoice had recently been received from the Mount for an Assessment Centre held in December 2009, resulting in a further over-spend.

Noted.

#### **F&GP/2010/141 : UPDATE ON APPOINTMENT OF DISABILITY CHAMPIONS (Minute Ref No: F&GP/2010/11 refers)**

The Director of Administration advised that the Mayoral Support Officer/Director's Secretary and the Investment and Enterprise Development Officer had put themselves forward as Disability Champions. She reported

that the Staff Commission had confirmed that both Officers could represent the Council in this respect and it was envisaged that Officers would alternate attendance at meetings.

She asked Members to note that the Committee had already appointed Councillor J. Beattie as the Elected Members' representative.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to approve the appointment of the Mayoral Support Officer/Director's Secretary and the Investment and Enterprise Development Officer as the Council's Staff Disability Champions.

**F&GP/2010/142 : FAIR EMPLOYMENT MONITORING RETURN FOR THE PERIOD 2 JANUARY 2009 TO 1 JANUARY 2010**

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that the Fair Employment Monitoring Form for the Council had been completed which was a statistical analysis of the religious breakdown of staff for the period 2 January 2009 to 1 January 2010.

The Human Resource Advisor circulated a copy of the monitoring returns for 2008 and 2009.

The Director of Administration & Community Services provided a brief overview of the report and asked Members to note that the number of applications received from Roman Catholics had shown an increase in 2009.

Noted.

**F&GP/2010/143 : PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL SCHEME**

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised Members that the Management Team had agreed that the approved Performance Appraisal Scheme for 2010/11 would be rolled out, with effect from 1 April 2010. She added that all section managers would be instructed that they were required to ensure 100% compliance with the scheme.

She advised that the Committee had previously discussed compliance with the scheme and due to Officers' involvement in various Transition Sub Committees and other RPA related matters it has been difficult to ensure 100% compliancy.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That Section Managers ensure full co-operation and implementation of the Council's Performance Appraisal Scheme.

**F&GP/2010/144 : VACANCY CONTROL SCHEME**

The Director of Administration & Community Services outlined that unfortunately until there was an announcement from the Minister, the vacancy control scheme would have to be adhered to. She advised that the Council's Management Team had agreed an approach which she outlined for Members' consideration.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That, in the absence of an announcement from the Minister in relation to RPA, the Council be recommended to agree the vacancy control procedure for dealing with staff within the "at risk" group, as follows:

- all Managers be provided with a briefing paper in order to inform any "at risk" staff within their sections/departments of the procedure
- the Human Resources Section follow this up with a written letter to the "at risk" group
- a monthly system of review of all vacancies to be set up with Lisburn City Council in order for each vacant post to be considered under vacancy control procedures

#### **F&GP/2010/145 : POLICY REVIEW MEETING**

The Director of Administration & Community Services recommended that a Special Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting be convened towards the end of June 2010 to review a number of the Council policies.

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That Officers liaise with Councillor J Beattie in order to convene a Special Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting to review a number of Council policies.

Councillor Hanvey left the meeting at 9.10 p.m.

#### **F&GP/2010/146 : REPORTS/REQUESTS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES**

##### **1. REQUEST TO RECRUIT A SPORTS DEVELOPMENT STUDENT – LEISURE SERVICES (LS/2010/46 Refers)**

At the Leisure Services Committee meeting held on 1 April 2010, approval had been granted to make an approach to the University of Ulster to discuss the possibility of the Council offering a one-year placement to a sports development student to commence in August 2010. This arrangement would be on a non-paid work placement basis, but subject to his/her coaching qualifications, the student could undertake coaching duties in a paid capacity, with payment being met out of the Sports Development budget. This payment would not be any additional burden on the budget as the student would be effectively replacing another coach. It would however have the benefit of potentially allowing a more consistent provision of some coached

activities that are within the remit of the Sports Development Programme. In addition to this, the Sports Development Officer would have the benefit of an assistant who could help him with the varied administration duties of the post, including the CSDA and forthcoming Active Communities Programme. Subject to appropriate interest the student would be employed between August 2010 and August 2011.

In response to a query from Councillor J Beattie, the Human Resource Advisor confirmed that the student would only receive payment for any coaching duties carried out, and would therefore be employed by the Council on a casual basis.

**2. REQUEST FOR A REPLACEMENT STUDENT PLACEMENT - GRANTS ASSISTANT**

Members will recall that the Grants Officer was granted a career break for a period of one year (commencing 23 February 2010). A placement student from the University of Ulster covered the duties of the post in the interim on Salary Scale 1B, Point 7, £12,629. The placement period expires on 18 August 2010.

The duties related to this post will be of significant importance in developing proposals for Tullycarnet Park and facilitating a 'Friends of Tullycarnet Park Group'.

At the Economic Sub Committee meeting held on 4 May, Members approved the employment of a Student Placement as a Grants Assistant from August 2010 to February 2011, subject to review and dependent on the Grants Officer returning from career break in February 2011.

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that there were no policy implications in respect of the above two requests.

Noted.

The Assistant Members' Services Officer left the meeting.

**STAFF IN COMMITTEE**

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.30 p.m.

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CHAIRMAN

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this \_\_\_\_\_ day of  
\_\_\_\_\_2010 with the exception of

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

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MAYOR