

## **CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of the proceedings of the special meeting of the Central Services Committee held, in committee, in the Committee Rooms, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB, on Thursday 13 May 2010 at 6.00 pm.

### **PRESENT:**

**Alderman:** G Rice MBE

**Councillors:** AM Beattie  
J Beattie  
M Chambers (in the chair)  
T Jeffers  
J Spratt

**In attendance:** Director of Administration & Community Services,  
Community Development Officer, Good Relations  
Officer, Assistant Member Services Officer

**Apologies:** Councillors Bunting, Copeland, Hughes, Long and Tosh,  
Community Services Manager

### **CS/2010/143 : BONFIRE FESTIVAL FUNDING**

The Director of Administration & Community Services stated that, at the Central Services meeting of 10 May 2010, she had been asked to provide the full detail and background to the proposals and information on the Interagency Bonfire Group and the Castlereagh Community Culture Forum. She presented a detailed report reviewing the funding proposals. A copy of the Forum's constitution had also been included for Members' information

The Director reported on the Good Relations funding strategy. She advised that a specific amount of funding had been set aside under the hard issues theme and was earmarked for bonfire projects. She advised that in general good relations funding could be spent through the following three mechanisms:

- direct programming organised and controlled by Council staff,
- through the award of funding to an outside body to administer a specific, targeted objective, possibly using a tender process

- through the provision of grants to local community organisations.

The Director reported on the background and development of the Interagency Bonfire Working Group. She advised that it included other statutory agencies such as NIHE, NIFRS, PSNI and the Roads Service and that officers from both Community Services and Technical Services attended the meetings.

The Director then provided details of 15 local groups that attended meetings of the Interagency Bonfire Group. She stated that invitations were sent out by letter/email and that on average around 8-10 community representatives from approximately 5-8 bonfire sites attended each meeting.

The Director advised that contact with bonfire organisers was often difficult as many of them were hard to reach. It was noted that in the past staff had received personal threats when engaging in this type of work and there were therefore health and safety issues involved in setting up meetings with new bonfire builders. She reported that staff continued to endeavour, where possible, to contact local bonfire builders and to encourage them to attend meetings of the Interagency Bonfire Group.

The Director reported on previous initiatives to support tidy bonfire sites. These included providing “sweet packs” to bonfire sites but this did not involve any real assessment or record of continuous improvement.

The Director advised that in 2010 it was proposed to develop the scheme to make it more equitable and transparent and to potentially lead to considerable improvements in the bonfire sites. Accordingly, tighter controls and commitments to bonfire management had been developed in order to make the fund an incentive for participation with a view to protecting and enhancing a positive impact within the community and to ensure good practice and safer site location.

The Director reported that the pilot scheme had been developed in conjunction with the local bonfire builders and would provide funding to those bonfire schemes that met the agreed criteria.

The Director reminded Members that, at the Central Services meeting on 12 April 2010, the Community Services Manager had presented a pilot proposal that involved a grant aid process to be administered by a panel that would include elected representatives. The proposal was that the scheme would be open to constituted groups who attended a minimum number of Interagency Working Group meetings and who committed to the Tidy Bonfire Site best practice guidelines. Members however expressed concern that there could be an overlap with the community festival funding scheme and the Community Services Manager had been asked to review the proposal in discussion with the Interagency Bonfire Group.

The Director advised that, after further consideration, two options were put forward, one related to an open funding process and the second involved the establishment of a constituted community culture forum to draw down funding and administer it to various schemes.

She reported that the Interagency Group had selected the second option due to the tight timeframe involved and to the fact that the original scheme was only open to constituted groups which would rule out a number of participating bonfire sites. The Community Culture Community Forum had made the funding proposal at the Central Services' meeting in May and represented smaller bonfire groups that were unconstituted and therefore unable to apply for funding. The Director advised that in drawing up the proposal the Interagency Group had considered similar schemes operating in Ards and Ballymena.

The Director advised that, prior to today's meeting, officers had contacted the Good Relations Unit who had expressed no concern about the proposed mechanism for awarding funding.

The Chair expressed continuing reservations in that her understanding had been that the good relations funding would be directed towards bonfire groups that could not access funding from other sources.

Councillor Spratt stated that he felt it was appropriate for funding to be made available to those groups that had attended meetings of the Interagency Group and had committed to best practice guidelines. He stated that in future years other groups would be encouraged to sign up when they saw the advantages to be gained. He stated that he felt that progress was being made in that the bonfire groups were taking ownership of the issue and introducing improved management and practices. With regard to groups not eligible for funding in the current year, he suggested that it would be possible for the Council to provide some means of supporting them on a smaller scale, possibly through community safety programmes. Alderman Rice also agreed that, while a smaller number of groups might receive funding, this would act as an incentive to other bonfire groups to get involved in the best practice initiative.

Councillor J Beattie and other Members referred to considerable progress already achieved in relation to bonfire sites around the Borough including the fact that bonfire material was not accumulating at the site until early July, the absence of tyres in the bonfires, relocation of some sites to accommodate local residents, etc.

In response to a query by Alderman Rice regarding accountability, the Good Relations Officer advised that funding would be released in two stages and that receipts and records would be required before the second stage of funding was released.

Councillor AM Beattie expressed thanks to officers for the hard work and effort in producing the report.

After discussion it was proposed by Councillor Spratt, seconded by Councillor J Beattie and

RESOLVED: that the Council endorse the Bonfire Festival Fund 2010 Pilot Scheme proposal.

### **CS/2010/144 : BONFIRE INFORMATION ROADSHOW**

The Director of Administration & Community Services reminded Members that, at their Committee meeting on 12 April 2010, they had considered a proposal from the Interagency Bonfire Group to fund a bonfire roadshow and had referred it back for further consideration in view of concerns regarding the target audience and the objectives of the roadshow.

She advised that the Community Services Manager had had further discussions with the Interagency Bonfire Group and subsequently had brought a report to the Committee's meeting on 10 May 2010 recording his discussions and including a further suggestion that comment cards be circulated throughout the Borough to allow individuals to raise anonymous concerns if they were unable to attend the roadshow.

At its meeting on 10 May 2010, the Committee expressed concern that this could lead to potential comment between bonfire builders and local residents. They also felt that resident's expectations could be raised unrealistically with regard to resolution of any anti-social impacts of bonfires. The Committee had therefore deferred a decision on funding for the roadshow.

The Director advised that the Good Relations Officer and Community Development Officer were in attendance to explain the proposed approach and to clarify how the roadshow had been organised in previous years.

Councillor Spratt referred to a previous roadshow that had taken place in Moneyreagh that had been attended by residents, bonfire builders and statutory agencies. He reported that several issues had been clarified and resolved at that meeting and this had led to a marked improvement in the management of the bonfire.

Councillor Spratt proposed and it was seconded by Alderman Rice that the roadshows should proceed as planned.

The Good Relations Officer advised that the current year's budget for advertising the roadshow had been reduced and, in order to reach more bonfire builders, she would like to advertise as widely as in previous years.

It was then

RESOLVED:

- (a) that the bonfire roadshows should proceed as planned
- (b) that the advertising budget for bonfire roadshows be set at a similar level as in previous years.

**CS/2010/145 : ALTERNATIVE FUNDING**

The Director of Administration & Community Services reported that officers had been asked to investigate alternative sources of funding for bonfire builders, including the District Policing Partnership or the Community Service Partnership. She advised that, having discussed it with the officers concerned, additional grants of funding would not be possible with either Partnership's current funding arrangements.

Noted.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10.50 pm

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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

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE