

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 Thursday, 10 November 2011 at 7.10 p.m.

PRESENT: Alderman J Beattie MBE
(in the chair)

ALDERMEN: S Duncan
M Henderson MBE (from 7.15 until 7.34 p.m.)
Mrs G Rice MBE (from 7.15 p.m.)

COUNCILLORS: Mrs A Beattie
M Copeland MLA
M Gregg
C Hall
B Hanvey
C Howard (from 7.35 p.m.)
T Jeffers (until 8.05 p.m.)
T Morrow
T Sandford
J Spratt MLA
D Vitty
J White

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Finance, Director of Administration & Community Services, Human Resources Manager, Economic Development Manager and Member Services Officers

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received on behalf of Alderman Robinson, Councillors Chambers, Drysdale, Long, O'Reilly, Cochrane and McCoy

F&GP/2011/167 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (7.12 p.m.)

Members and Officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests (including gifts and hospitality) they should have in respect of items on this agenda. Declarations of interest were put forward as follows:

- Councillor Spratt in his role as Chair of the NJC and any items raised in relation to Northern Ireland Assembly Committees
- Councillor Copeland with regard to items raised in relation to Northern Ireland Assembly Committees
- Councillor White with regard to the Hanwood Board

Noted.

**TABLED : MINUTES OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2011**

There were no matters arising in relation to Human Resource issues.

HUMAN RESOURCE MATTERS

F&GP/2011/168 : MEETING WITH EQUALITY COMMISSION (7.13 p.m.)

The Human Resource Manager advised that a meeting was recently held with the Equality Commission in relation to the most recent Article 55 Review. She reported that the meeting had been positive with the representatives of the Commission commending the revised Affirmative Action Plan as a model of best practice. She advised that a further meeting had been held with other representatives from the Equality Commission on the draft Equality Scheme and they had suggested that a section be included within the Action Plan in relation to the measures currently taken by the Council with regard to equality. She advised that the Equality Scheme would be issued for public consultation during November 2011.

Noted.

F&GP/2011/169 : PAY BRIEFING (7.14 p.m.)

RESOLVED (7.14 p.m.) That the Pay Briefing be referred for consideration to "Staff in Committee".

Councillor Spratt, the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and the Economic Development Manager left the meeting at 7.14 p.m.

**F&GP/2011/170 : FLEXIBLE WORKING HOURS POLICY AND TOIL
POLICY (7.14 p.m.)**

The Human Resource Manager referred Members to a copy of the above policy. She advised that a number of minor amendments had been necessary in order to support the roll out of the Time and Attendance system. The amendments included the following:

- clarification on the rules relating to lunch breaks, e.g. scanning arrangements and directed lunches
- limiting the amount of time which could be carried forward, or taken off as TOIL
- the ability to transfer time between TOIL and flexi, subject to the Manager's agreement

Following discussion, it was

RESOLVED : That the Council be recommended to approve the Flexible Working Hours Policy and Toil Policy.

Aldermen Rice and Henderson arrived at the meeting at 7.15 p.m., and the Economic Development Manager returned to the meeting.

F&GP/2011/171 : STAFFING WITHIN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT (7.15 p.m.)

The Economic Development Manager referred Members to his report together with a business case regarding the strategic economic development of the Borough. He advised that the report provided a review of what had been delivered by the Economic Development Service over the period 2009-2011 and identified obstacles that had impeded activity over the same period, as follows:

- EU funding for business support was successful but the inherent bureaucratic requirements increased administration, and the collection of data for EU audit purposes retracted from project delivery;
- The strategic development of tourism and visitor servicing in the Borough was of fundamental importance to Castlereagh, given its close proximity to ports and Lisburn and Belfast City Centres. Cost effective, collaborative development of tourism could in future help offset the Borough's high dependence on public sector employment (41%) which was compounded by a limited supply of land for further commercial development within the Borough.
- The strategic role of the Council's corporate Grants Officer should be enhanced to ensure that a proportionate amount of funds were secured to the benefit of Castlereagh. Despite securing funding of £413,680 since 2009, it was recognised that not all requests for help with funding applications were able to be assisted because of the Grants Officer being on an interim part-time contract arrangement with limited time afforded to applications by the Economic Development Manager.

The Economic Development Manager recommended that the Grants Officer regress to a full time corporate service which would extend to local community/voluntary organisations and businesses. Furthermore, Members were asked to consider the business case for the appointment of a full-time Assistant Economic Development Officer on a temporary fixed term contract, in line with the Evolution Project funding timescale of 13 December 2013. He asked Members to note that the Assistant Economic Development Officer's role was as follows:

- Administering the Council's Evolution Project, in accordance with funder requirements, and
- Co-ordinating and developing the Borough's public and private sector tourism product by maximising the potential local economic gain from visitors to the Greater Belfast Metropolitan Area.

The Economic Development Manager reported that as a consequence of additional funding secured, the draft financial estimates for Economic Development for 2012/2013 showed a forecast increase of 2% to £218,875. This was inclusive of:

- Additional salary costs for the Assistant Economic Development Officer;
- Additional £10,000 budget for the strategic development of tourism within the Borough;
- £15,000 budget for the strategic development of physical regeneration/environmental improvement within the Borough

Councillor Spratt, the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance returned to the meeting at 7.23 p.m.

Councillor Vitty expressed the view that groups across the Borough were missing out on funding opportunities due to their lack of expertise in putting forward their bids. He added that he firmly believed that the Grants Officer should provide guidance to local groups across the Borough to assist them in identifying grants and applying for funding.

Councillor Copeland left the meeting at 7.25 p.m.

Councillor Vitty outlined that the Grants Officer should also be able to apportion time to assist Officers within the various Council Departments with funding opportunities in order to develop community and sports programmes across the Borough. He expressed his support for the recommendations put forward by the Economic Development Manager.

Councillor Morrow concurred with Councillor Vitty's comments. He added that he had attended the launch of the Evolution Project and he felt that it was important to encourage job creation within the private sector and tourism across the Borough.

Councillor Copeland returned to the meeting at 7.30 p.m.

The Director of Finance outlined that the request for the Grants Officer's post to revert back to full time would enable the Officer to assist Officers in all Council departments and community/voluntary organisations with funding opportunities.

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that the Community Support Plan encouraged community groups to avail of assistance from Officers with funding opportunities.

Alderman Henderson left the meeting at 7.34 p.m.

The Director of Administration & Community Services indicated that community groups would benefit greatly from the ability to avail of the support and guidance of a Grants Officer.

Councillor Howard arrived and Councillor Spratt left the meeting at 7.35 p.m. Councillor Hanvey outlined that in light of strategic opportunities for economic development, he asked if there was any merit in enhancing the Economic

Development Sub Committee. Furthermore, given the current economic downturn and the potential cuts in public services, the Economic Development Strategy should be adequately resourced to meet the business and tourism commitments.

Councillor Spratt returned to the meeting at 7.36 p.m.

Alderman Beattie asked the Economic Development Manager to provide Members with a flow chart in respect of the Evolution Project. The purpose of this was to detail the processes and partnerships to be managed by Economic Development.

In response to a query from Alderman Beattie, the Economic Development Manager confirmed that the business case for staffing had been reviewed by the Management Team.

Councillor Duncan outlined that she had been a member of the Economic Development Sub Committee for the past number of years. She added that the current Economic Development staff were doing an excellent job but the Economic Development Strategy required further resources to meet its objectives. She proposed that the Committee accept the Officer's recommendations.

Councillor Beattie seconded the proposal.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED (7.45 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to agree

- (a) that the Grants Officer post regress to a full time corporate service which would extend to local community/voluntary organisations and businesses
- (b) approve the business case for the appointment of a full time Assistant Economic Development Officer on a temporary fixed term contract, in line with the Evolution Project funding timescale of 13 December 2013, subject to review
- (c) that the Economic Development Manager provide Members with a flow chart in relation to the Evolution Project detailing the processes and partnerships to be managed by Economic Development

The Economic Development Manager left the meeting at 7.45 p.m.

STAFF FROM OTHER COMMITTEES

F&GP/2011/172 : COMMUNITY SERVICES (7.45 p.m.)

The Human Resource Manager referred Members to an extract from the Community Services Manager's report which had been considered at the Central Services Committee meeting on 8 November 2011. It had been reported to the Committee that over the past number of months Community Services had experienced staffing issues as a result of officers finding other employment, sick leave and maternity. Currently three positions within the team remain vacant and to ensure priority work could be maintained, the Central Services Committee had resolved the following:

- (a) that honorarium payments as detailed above be made to the Arts Assistants in recognition of additional responsibilities taken on in the absence of an Arts Officer
- (b) that Council note arrangements for the delivery of the Good Relations Programme during the Good Relations Officer's maternity leave.
- (c) that retrospective approval be given to the acting up arrangement by a Community Centre Assistant to cover the absence on long term sick leave of one of the Facilities Coordinators.

The Human Resource Manager advised that there were no policy implications with regard to the above.

Noted.

The Member Services Officers left the meeting at 7.45 p.m.

STAFF IN COMMITTEE

The Director of Administration & Community Services, the Human Resource Manager, Alderman Rice and Councillor Howard left the meeting at 8.15 p.m. and Councillors Copeland, Vitty and the Member Services' Officers returned to the meeting.

**REPORTS FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE
(copies previously circulated)**

F&GP/2011/177 : REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION (8.15 p.m.)

The Chief Executive outlined that as Members would be aware the First Minister had announced that the Reform of Local Government was to proceed based upon the '11 Council model'. He had also indicated that elections to Shadow Councils may take place in 2014, with the new Authorities fully functioning by 2015. It was anticipated that further details would be forthcoming from the Minister for the Environment.

Members would also be aware that funding for the Transition Committees and the post of Change Manager was removed last year but progress had been

made with preparations with Lisburn City Council for transition. Whilst further clarity was awaited from the Minister, it would be prudent for discussion to recommence with Lisburn City Council, initially at Senior Management Team level. Officers would prepare reports for Council consideration on the current status and scoping of issues still to be addressed.

Councillor Spratt proposed that approval be granted for discussion to recommence as outlined by the Chief Executive. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Morrow.

RESOLVED (8.16 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to grant approval for discussion to recommence with Lisburn City Council, initially at Senior Management Team level, to prepare reports for Council consideration on the current status of transition, within the Review of Public Administration Programme and scoping of issues still to be addressed.

F&GP/2011/178 : CORPORATE PLAN (8.16 p.m.)

The Chief Executive reported that the Council's last Corporate Plan covered the period 2006-2009 and had not been updated due to the then imminent impact of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) and the Local Government Elections. With the new Council elected in May 2011 for a four year period and a statement from the First Minister that RPA was to be completed by 2015, there was now a need for the Council to agree and publish a new Corporate Plan.

He referred Members to his report detailing the purpose and structure of the Corporate Plan and advised that the Plan should cover the life of the current Council term from 2012 to 2015. The Corporate Plan would need to be agreed and published by April 2012 in order to inform the 2012/2013 estimates process and link into the new Prudential Indicators required as part of the Finance Act. He outlined that one particularly important aspect of the Finance Act would require Council agreement to a 3 to 5 year capital programme which could be embedded into the new Corporate Plan.

The Chief Executive asked Members to consider forming a Corporate Plan Working Group which would report to the Finance & General Purposes Committee. He envisaged that there should be at least one 'all Member' workshop to provide the opportunity for each Councillor to have an input.

He sought approval for the following:

- (a) the preparation of a new Council Corporate Plan 2012-2015
- (b) the formation of a Corporate Plan Working Group reporting to the Finance & General Purposes Committee
- (c) 'all Member' workshops be convened as and when required

Councillor Spratt suggested that Group Leaders on the Council provide nominations from each Party to sit on the Working Group

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED (8.19 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to grant approval for the following:

- (a) the preparation of a new Council Corporate Plan 2012-2015
- (b) the formation of a Corporate Plan Working Group reporting to the Finance & General Purposes Committee
- (c) Group Leaders on the Council nominate Members from each Party to sit on the Corporate Plan Working Group
- (d) 'all Member' workshops be convened as and when required

F&GP/2011/179 : MINUTES OF THE AUDIT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2011 (copy previously circulated) (8.19 p.m.)

RESOLVED (8.19 p.m.) That the Minutes of the Audit Sub Committee meeting held on 17 October 2011 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

The Economic Development Manager returned to the meeting at 8.20 p.m.

F&GP/2011/180 : MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2011 (copy previously circulated) (8.20 p.m.)

RESOLVED : That the Minutes of the Economic Development Sub Committee meeting held on 24 October 2011 be approved as a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

**MATTERS ARISING
MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SUB COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON 24 OCTOBER 2011**

F&GP/2011/181 : DRAFT PLAN FOR POSSIBLE EXTENSION TO THE VISITORS' CENTRE (Minute No. EDO/2011/42 refers) (8.21 p.m.)

Councillor Hanvey outlined that, should the extension go ahead and bearing in mind the remoteness of the facility, he asked if security measures would need to be enhanced further. He asked Officers to also bear in mind the flooding problems which occurred during heavy rain.

Alderman Beattie outlined that he had previously seen plans which were based on a two storey extension. He asked for an assurance that the Council was not committed to anything at this stage.

The Economic Development Manager advised that at this stage Officers were merely considering the feasibility of extending. He outlined that following discussions with Lagan Rural Partnership, the project would be eligible to

apply for 75% funding under the 'Conservation and Upgrading of the Rural Heritage' call. He added that it was estimated that the project would cost £325,000, with the Council's contribution being £75,000. Officers were currently prioritising what could be provided in line with the available budget, in terms of the following work:

- moving the office accommodation to a new upper floor
- a gift shop, tourist information point and craft area being housed on the ground floor
- improvements to WC provision and baby changing
- improvements to disabled access and access for maintenance vehicles

The Economic Development Manager reminded Members that approval had been granted at a previous Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting for Officers to explore and quantify the feasibility of the proposal to extend the facilities. He advised that he was currently liaising with the Capital Projects Officer and the Planning Officer in this regard, together with other interested parties such as DARD Forestry Service, Lagan Valley Regional Park and Cooke Rugby Club

Councillor Spratt outlined that he understood that there was currently a notice displayed in the Visitors' Centre prohibiting use of the WC to members of the public if they had not availed of the café facilities. He added that if additional WC facilities were to be provided, he asked Officers to ensure that there would be no restrictions placed on the public's use of these facilities during centre opening times.

He stated that apart from the significant number of cyclists and walkers using the towpath, the café alone attracted thousands of visitors each year. Given the limited space currently available within the facility, he felt that this was an excellent opportunity for the Council to avail of significant funding to enable the facilities to be enhanced in order to attract more visitors and maximise its commercial potential. He stated that he was totally in favour of the Economic Development Manager progressing with the feasibility study and liaising with all the relevant interested parties. He added that the matter could be considered in more detail when the business case was brought before the Committee.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED (8.35 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to agree that the Economic Development Manager continue to explore the feasibility of the proposal to extend facilities at the Lock Keeper's Cottage and Visitors' Centre, and that he table a business case in this regard to a future Committee meeting.

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

F&GP/2011/182 : SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS (8.35 p.m.)

The Director of Finance referred Members to a copy of the Summary of Accounts and advised that there was a favourable variance up to period 6.

Noted.

**F&GP/2011/183 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM HM REVENUE & CUSTOMS
RE: OVER-DECLARED OUTPUT TAX ON LEISURE FACILITIES**

(8.36 p.m.)

The Director of Finance updated Members on the meeting he had recently attended in London with the consultants in relation to the Leisure Services VAT claim. He circulated a copy of an email from the VAT Consultants for Members' information. The Director stated that he hoped to be in a position to provide further information at the next Committee meeting.

Noted.

**F&GP/2011/184 : CORRESPONDENCE FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF
THE ENVIRONMENT RE: REQUEST TO ATTEND A COUNCIL MEETING**

(8.40 p.m.)

The Director of Finance referred Members to the above correspondence and advised that DOE officials would welcome the opportunity to provide Members with an overview of the new Local Government Finance Act.

In response to a query from Councillor Copeland, the Director of Finance outlined that representatives from LPS would be meeting with him in the near future to consider the EPP for next year.

Noted.

At this stage Councillor Copeland declared an interest in the Hanwood Trust, and both he and Councillor White, who had declared an interest at the beginning of the meeting, left at 8.41 p.m.

**F&GP/2011/185 : REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE RE:
HANWOOD TRUST COMPANY LIMITED – GOVERNANCE
ARRANGEMENTS (8.41 p.m.)**

The Director of Finance outlined that at a previous meeting of the Finance & General Purposes Committee Members had requested information pertaining to the Hanwood Trust Company Limited. He indicated that the Hanwood Trust was now sustainable and no longer in receipt of Council capital or revenue funding. Staff were directly employed by the Hanwood Trust and the organisation had separate accounting, payroll, legal and insurance arrangements in place.

He reported that the Council had no dominant legal control over the Hanwood Trust and he referred Members to his report detailing the current governance

arrangements in place. He outlined that a clear distinction of duties was required to ensure that the Council was not perceived or inherent in the operational and strategic decision of the Trust. He was therefore recommending the following changes:

- all company papers are issued and retained directly by staff at the Hanwood Trust
- all Minutes of Board Meetings and AGM will be held centrally by the Hanwood Trust
- Council Officer attendance at the Hanwood Trust Board meetings is reduced to administrative support and all other attendance is by prior Council Director approval for particular items of business upon invitation by the Hanwood Board
- the Service Level Agreement which has been renewed annually will be retained until such time as changes are requested by the Hanwood Trust

The Director of Finance further recommended that the following be put in place:

- (i) notice of each AGM and EGM and the Minutes arising from these meetings be provided to the Council
- (ii) Council be supplied with a copy of the annual financial statement of the Hanwood Trust

He reported that the above changes would not affect:

- the nomination of Councillors to the Hanwood Trust Board at the Council's AGM
- use of the Hanwood Centre Phase 1 building as an emergency response facility when required upon approval by the Hanwood Trust Chairman (both parties have agreed to this arrangement but a legal agreement is currently being pursued to formalise it)

Councillor Vitty asked if there had been any discussions as yet with the Board in respect of the recommendations.

The Director of Finance advised that he had informal discussions with the Chairman of the Board, and following approval by Council, it would be his intention to attend the next Board meeting to inform the Trust's Directors of the Council's decision.

In response to a query from Councillor Duncan, the Director of Finance advised that the only Council administrative support that would remain in place would be minute taking.

Alderman Rice proposed that the Council agree the Director's recommendations. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Vitty.

Following further discussion, it was

RESOLVED (8.45 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to agree:

- (a) the following changes with regard to the Hanwood Trust Board:
- all company papers are issued and retained directly by staff at the Hanwood Trust
 - all Minutes of Board Meetings and AGM will be held centrally by the Hanwood Trust
 - Council Officer attendance at the Hanwood Trust Board meetings is reduced to administrative support and all other attendance is by prior Council Director approval for particular items of business upon invitation by the Hanwood Board
 - the Service Level Agreement which has been renewed annually will be retained until such time as changes are requested by the Hanwood Trust
 - notice of each AGM and EGM and the Minutes arising from these meetings be provided to the Council
 - Council be supplied with a copy of the annual financial statement of the Hanwood Trust
- (b) the Director of Finance be authorised to attend the next Hanwood Board meeting to advise the Trust's Directors of the Council's decision

F&GP/2011/186 : LOCAL GOVERNMENT ELECTION 5 MAY 2011
(8.46 p.m.)

The Director of Finance advised that as he was currently seeking clarity on an outstanding invoice, he had been unable to table the above accounts but he hoped to bring these forward for approval at the next Committee meeting.

Noted.

Councillors White and Copeland returned to the meeting at 8.47 p.m.

F&GP/2011/187 : CASTLEREAGH SPORTS DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION (8.47 p.m.)

As a member of the CSDA, Councillor Morrow declared an interest.

The Director of Finance outlined that, as requested at the last Committee meeting, he had provided Councillor Long with a copy of the CSDA funding criteria.

Councillor Hall asked if he could be provided with a copy.

RESOLVED (8.47 p.m.) That the Director of Finance forward a copy the CSDA funding criteria to Councillor Hall.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

F&GP/2011/188 : MOBILE PHONE PROVISION (8.48 p.m.)

The Director of Finance advised that the current mobile phone contract was due to expire in January 2012 and he sought permission for Officers to seek tenders in this regard.

Councillor Spratt proposed that Officers be authorised to seek tenders for mobile phone provision, and this was seconded by Alderman Rice.

RESOLVED (8.49 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to grant approval for the Director of Finance to arrange for tenders to be sought in respect of the Council's mobile phone provision.

F&GP/2011/189 : AGENCY STAFF (8.49 p.m.)

The Director of Finance advised that a contract needed to be put in place with regard to Agency staff and he recommended that Officers liaise with their counterparts in Lisburn City Council in order to draw up a contract for both councils.

Councillor Beattie proposed that that the Committee agree to the Director's recommendation, and this was seconded by Councillor White.

RESOLVED (8.50 p.m.) That the Council be recommended to agree that Officers liaise with their counterparts in Lisburn City Council in order to draw up a contract in relation to Agency staff.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.50 pm.

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this _____ day of
_____ 2011 with the exception of

Minute Nos. _____

MAYOR

