

**Ballymoney Borough Council
Corporate & Central Services
Meeting No: 354 – 23rd April 2007**

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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
Corporate & Central Services Committee

Minutes of Corporate & Central Services Committee Meeting No 354 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 23rd April 2007 at 6.00pm.

IN THE CHAIR A Patterson

PRESENT **Aldermen**
 F Campbell
 H Connolly
 C Cousley (Vice Chair)
 J Simpson

Councillors
 A Cavlan
 J Finlay
 B Kennedy
 D McKay, MLA
 E Robinson
 I Stevenson
 M Storey, MLA
 R Wilson

APOLOGIES -

IN ATTENDANCE Chief Executive
 [Items 1-6]
 Director of Central & Leisure Services
 [Items 7-15]
 Head of Corporate & Development Services
 [Items 1-6]
 Committee Clerk

354.1 MINUTES OF MEETING NO. 353 – 26th MARCH 2007

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Finlay and
AGREED:

***to recommend to Council that the Minutes of meeting no. 353 –
 26th March 2007, as circulated, be approved.***

CORPORATE SERVICES

354.2 MARKETING SUB-COMMITTEE

Report of meeting of 13th April and 20th April were circulated.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Councillor Stevenson and **AGREED**:

to recommend to Council that the report of Marketing Sub-Committee of 13th and 20th April 2007, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record, attached as Appendix A.

354.3 COUNCIL DECISION MAKING STRUCTURES

The Chief Executive presented the following report:

Introduction

After the completion of the restructuring of departments in January 2006, Council considered realigning its decision-making systems to better reflect the new functional arrangements. The proposal was for Council and four committees (Consultation, Corporate & Development, Central & Leisure Services & Borough Services) to each meet monthly, with an Audit Committee meeting about four times per year.

Following consideration at committee and council, It was agreed in May 2006 that an Audit committee be established and that the mid-monthly council meeting be replaced by a Consultation committee. However, at that time it was decided to retain the other committees and continue with the arrangement of having officers share the business at two of these.

Given the imminent introduction of a new scheme of basic allowances and the increased provision for special responsibility allowances (SRA), it is necessary to review the current scheme of payment to councillors. Consideration of the scheme is a separate matter but two of the recommendations regarding SRA are relevant to this paper. The first is that SRA should be restricted to no more than half the councillors in a council (excluding Chair and Vice-Chair) and the second is that there should be a fair distribution of SRA across a representative sample of political parties. Before a decision is taken on the scheme of allowances, Council should again consider if it wants to realign the business committees to reflect the management structures it has adopted.

Background

The 1972 Local Government Act sets down that:

a council may appoint a committee for any such general or special purpose as in the opinion of the council would be better regulated and managed by means of a committee, and may delegate to a committee so appointed, with or without restrictions or conditions, as the council thinks fit, any functions exercisable by the council with respect to either the whole or a part of the

district of the council, except the power of making a rate, or of borrowing money or of acquiring, holding or disposing of land ...

Ballymoney Borough Council appointed committees to reflect the division of responsibilities among the directorates which existed prior to January 1, 2006. The current committees are Health & Environmental Services, Leisure & Amenities, Corporate and Central Services and Development. The first and last of these have a single officer as the main presenter of business, while the other two are attended by, in the case of Leisure & Amenities, both of the directors and by one director and the Chief Executive for Corporate & Central Services. The Chief Executive may also attend any committee.

Since January 2006 the business of Council has been managed and led within a slimmed down management structure, comprising 2 Directorates and the CE's office. The titles for these are:

Office of the Chief Executive
Borough Services Directorate and
Central and Leisure Services Directorate

Proposal

Building a new structure of decision making around this division of responsibilities would produce three new committees: -

Corporate and Development Services, serviced by the Chief Executive with the Head of Service as his deputy, would cover the remit of Corporate Services and Development (taking in part of the Corporate & Central Services committee and all of the Development committee);
Borough Services Committee, serviced by the Borough Services Director, deputised for by the Assistant Director in the department, would deal with the whole remit of that Directorate (Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Amenities and Building Control); and
Central & Leisure Services Committee, serviced by the Central and Leisure Services Director, would deal with the whole remit of that Directorate (Finance, Information & Communication Technology, Human Resources and Leisure).

These changes will streamline the decision making process within Council, reduce the time taken to produce agendas and compile reports (as each committee's business will be under the control of one officer) and lead to a reduction in the number of meetings to be serviced, while retaining the same number of committee chair positions as compared with the period prior to the departmental reorganisation. (See tables 1 & 2)

Table 1 Meetings pre 2006

| Title | Frequency | No. per year | Chair/Vice Chair |
|------------------|-----------|--------------|------------------|
| Council | Monthly | 12 | Mayor |
| Council Planning | Monthly | 12 | Mayor |
| Development | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| L&A | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| F&GP | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| H&ES | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| Total | | 72 | |

Table 2 Proposed meetings post AGM 2007

| Title | Frequency | No. per year | Chair / Vice Chair |
|----------------------------------|-----------|--------------|--------------------|
| Council | Monthly | 12 | Mayor |
| Consultation | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| Corporate & Development Services | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| Central & Leisure Services | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| Borough Services | Monthly | 12 | Elected by Comm. |
| Audit | Quarterly | 4 | Mayor |
| Total | | 64 | |

IT IS RECOMMENDED that, with effect from the AGM in 2007, Council establishes the following committees: -

Corporate and Development Services, serviced by the Chief Executive with the Head of Service as his deputy, covering the remit of Corporate Services and Development (taking in part of the Corporate & Central Services committee and all of the Development committee);
 Borough Services, serviced by the Borough Services Director with the Assistant Director in the department as his deputy and dealing with the whole remit of that Directorate (Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Amenities and Building Control);
 Central & Leisure Services, serviced by the Central and Leisure Services Director and dealing with the whole remit of that Directorate (Finance, Information & Communication Technology, Human Resources and Leisure)

and disbands the following committees: -

Health & Environmental Services;
 Leisure & Amenities;
 Corporate and Central Services; and
 Development.

IT IS ALSO RECOMMENDED that Council consider the composition of the new committees. The current committees comprise twelve members each plus Mayor and Deputy Mayor ex-officio (total membership 14).

After discussion, it was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Robinson and **AGREED**:

to recommend to Council to defer consideration until the next committee meeting in May.

354.4 CONTRIBUTIONS TO CHARITABLE BODIES

Chief Executive referred to Council's request for a report on this subject. He advised that each year the Council sets aside budgets for contributions to other bodies. The general aim of the Council's policy for contributions to other bodies is to facilitate those activities which enhance and develop the borough and those who reside within its boundaries.

This report relates to contribution to voluntary/charitable bodies providing any public service in Northern Ireland, for which power to contribute is available under Section 108 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972.

Currently Council will not normally offer assistance to national or regional charities and no assistance is offered where statutory assistance is available from other public bodies. Likewise activities relating to sponsorship for some activity where the ultimate benefit would be a charitable organisation are not supported.

Priority is accorded to applications from organisations with a physical presence or otherwise operating directly in the borough. Groups/organisations outside the borough area will not receive assistance, unless they clearly demonstrate that the funding sought will be of benefit to the borough and those who reside in it.

Assistance is only made available for a specified activity, event or function. No funding is made available for routine or recurrent expenditure such as general overheads, salaries, rent, rates, etc.

Council does not currently have a formal application or monitoring process. The current practice is to consider each application on its own merits and within the framework of the budget. Therefore Council cannot guarantee financial support to any applicant.

The Council has used this power to donate to several organisations over the years which have a local impact, groups being required to provide evidence of a significant level of benefit. Sums donated have been small recognising the fact that Council cannot be regarded as a significant or regular contributor to voluntary/charitable bodies, but nonetheless recognising the role played locally by such bodies. The exception has been the local Hospice Support Group's Nursing Service, which Council contributed £1,000 annually.

Council's main charitable activity is undertaken by the Mayor who organises one or two fundraising events each year for his nominated charities. The Mayor also lends his support to facilitate the promotion of charitable events organised by organisations in the borough.

Commenting on the report, Councillor Finlay expressed his personal opinion that the issue of charitable contributions was never an easy decision. He felt that it was difficult for Council to select particular charities to support, given the number of worthy causes seeking support.

Councillor Robinson stated that it was credible for a Mayor to select a charity that he/she wished to support during his/her term of office.

Councillor Kennedy felt he would not want a policy to tie Council in so that they did not give to any charities, as there may be specific occasions where Council may want to support them, eg: the Special Olympics.

The committee noted the present rationale for considering applications from charitable bodies and that this would be considered under a proposed EQIA on grants and pricing policy.

354.5 EQIAs

- 5.1 The EQIA on Flags and Emblems has been issued for consultation with a closing date of 25th June 2007. A copy has been issued to members.
- 5.2 The responses to the EQIAs on Election of Office Bearers has been considered. A summary of the comments received was circulated.
- 5.3 The responses to the EQIAs Representation on External Bodies has been considered. A summary of the comments received was circulated.

Motion 1

It was proposed by Alderman Simpson and seconded by Councillor Robinson to recommend to Council to defer any decision on the EQIA and bring the paper back to Committee.

Motion 2

It was proposed by Councillor Kennedy and seconded by Councillor McKay to accept the EQIA document.

The Chairman put Motion 1 to the vote with 11 voting for the motion and 2 against. The motion was carried.

It was proposed by Alderman Simpson, seconded by Councillor Robinson and **AGREED**:

to recommend to Council to defer consideration of the draft consultation documents to the committees next meeting.

354.6 NILGA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 2007/08

NILGA have now advised that their overall budget for the year has been increased by the rate of inflation at 3%. The Council's contribution, calculated using the penny product, is £4012-00, excluding VAT.

- * **Chief Executive left the meeting at 6.30pm**
- * **Head of Corporate & Development Services left the meeting at 6.30pm.**
- * **Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 6.30pm.**
- * **Councillor Kennedy left the meeting at 6.30pm.**

CENTRAL SERVICES

354.7 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Treasury advice schedules detailing payments for Period 12(2), 2006/07 and Period 1 2007/08 drawn on the Council's Capital and Revenue Bank were circulated.

IT IS RECOMMENDED that payment is made.

The Director responded to a number of members' queries.

It was proposed by Alderman Cousley, seconded by Councillor Finlay and **AGREED:**

to recommend that accounts to the value of £814,248.33 from the Revenue Account and £304,109.23 from the Capital Account be approved for payment.

* **Councillor Storey left the meeting during considerations of the above matter at 6.48pm.**

354.8 LOAN SANCTIONS

When setting the Rates for 2007/08 the Council budgeted for the undernoted projects to be financed by way of loans –

| Project | Estimated Cost £ | Loan Period |
|--|------------------|-------------|
| Big Bite Skip Lorry | 140,000 | 7 years |
| Mechanical Sweeper | 70,000 | 7 years |
| Riverside Park Improvements | | |
| And Cycle Link to JDLC | 277,500 | 20 years |
| Upgrade 3 Play Areas at Bendooragh, Dunloy & Dunaghy | 215,000 | 20 years |
| Extension to CCTV & Security at Town Hall | 55,000 | 10 years |
| CCTV at Riada Stadium | 47,000 | 20 years |
| Paths & Car Park Surfaces At Riada Stadium | 50,000 | 20 years |
| Amenities Vehicles & Equipment | 39,500 | 7 years |
| Cardiovascular Equipment | 92,000 | 5 years |
| Upgrade CCTV & PA System At JDLC | 35,000 | 10 years |

IT IS RECOMMENDED that application be made to the Department of the Environment for loan sanction approvals for the projects detailed above.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

to recommend to Council that application be made to the Department of the Environment for loan sanction approvals for the projects detailed above.

354.9 SIGNING OFF THE 2006/07 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Under the Local Government (Accounts & Audit) Regulations (NI) 2006 the Annual Accounts of the Council for the year 2006/07 are to be signed off by the Council before being submitted to the Department of Environment.

The legislation requires the accounts to be submitted by 30th June 2007.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Council authorises the Corporate & Central Services Committee to sign off the 2006/07 Annual Accounts at its meeting on 25th June 2007.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council delegates authority to the Corporate & Central Services Committee to sign off the 2006/07 Annual Accounts at its meeting on 25th June 2007.

354.10 TREASURY MANAGEMENT

Approval is sought to open and operate an account with the Bank of Ireland, Bristol and West PLC in accordance with the Bank's conditions included in the Business Account Mandate for the purpose of placing fixed term deposits.

All transactions through the account to be dealt with by David Wright, Head of Finance & IT and Iris McCleery, Director of Central & Leisure Services.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Robinson and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council open and operate an account with the Bank of Ireland, Bristol and West plc and that David Wright, Head of Finance & IT and Iris McCleery, Director of Central & Leisure Services, be authorised to deal with all transactions through the account.

*

Councillor Stevenson left the meeting at 6.50pm.

354.11 COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES

As reported to Committee in February 2007 from 1st April 2007 the allowances which may be payable to councillors are as follows: -

- Basic allowance
- special responsibility allowance
- chairman/vice-chairman's allowance (Mayor/deputy Mayor)
- dependants carers' allowance
- travelling and subsistence allowance

The above allowances, with the exception of receipted subsistence allowances are taxable.

Basic Allowance

The Basic Allowance has been increased to £9500 per annum (£791.66 per month) and the attendance allowance has been abolished.

The Basic Allowance will be paid monthly by BACS on the 5th last banking day of the month. No claims are required.

The rate of £9500 is fixed to 1st April 2009.

Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

The Special Responsibility Allowance is to be only paid to those members of the council who have "significant additional responsibilities, over and above the generally accepted duties of a councillor."

The Department has asked councils to consider adopting the following three recommendations as good practice. -

- councillors should be able to claim only one SRA
- no more than 50% of councillors (excluding the council mayor and deputy mayor) should receive SRA.
- there should be safeguards to ensure a fair distribution of SRA across a representative sample of political parties.

The Maximum rate of SRA is £20,000 per annum for a council with a population not exceeding 50,000.

The maximum rate payable to individual members is limited to one fifth of the £20,000 ie £4,000 per annum maximum.

A schedule detailing the allowances paid in 2006/07 was circulated.

The Committee needs to make a recommendation to council on the level of SRA payable and the significant additional responsibilities undertaken for which the allowance is payable.

Chairman's/Vice-chairman's Allowance

The Special Responsibility Allowance allocation should be used for the chairman's/vice-chairman's allowance.

Dependants' Carers' Allowance

The Dependants' Carers' Allowance is a new allowance open to all members who are the main carers of a dependant where care is required to enable the member to perform an approved duty.

The rates of allowances are determined by the Department of the Environment and are based on the national minimum wage. The current rates are –

- Standard Care - £5.35 per hour up to maximum of £140 per month.
- Specialised Care - £10.70 per hour up to maximum of £280 per month.

Total payments per member per month should not exceed £280.

A claim form will be available to members wishing to claim the Dependants' Carers' Allowance. Receipts must be obtained from specialist carers and must accompany the claim form.

Travelling and Subsistence Allowance

The levels of travelling and subsistence allowances are reviewed annually by the Department of the Environment.

Travelling and subsistence allowances will continue to apply when expenditure is incurred in relation to approved duties.

A new blue Travel & Subsistence claim form for members will be issued. Claims should be submitted monthly and will be paid monthly in arrears.

Travel & Subsistence allowances must be claimed within a 3 month period of the expense being incurred on an approved duty.

A copy of the Departments Guidance on Councillors' Allowances – April 2007 document was circulated.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Campbell and **AGREED:**

to recommend to Council to, (i) defer any decision on the payment of the Special Responsibility Allowance to the May committee meeting, and (ii) pay the basic allowance, dependents' carers' allowance and travelling and subsistence allowances at the maximum levels with effect from 1 April 2007.

*

Councillor Finlay left the meeting at 7.25pm.

354.12 CARRY FORWARD OF ANNUAL LEAVE TO 2007/08

A schedule detailing the employees who have made application to carry forward unexpended leave in 2006/07 to the 2007/08 leave year for the reasons specified was circulated. The employees' applications are supported by their directors.

IT IS RECOMMENDED that the 5 employees are permitted to carry forward the days/hours detailed in the schedule.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

to recommend to Council that the five employees are permitted to carry forward the days/hours detailed in the schedule.

354.13 INSURANCE RENEWALS

The Council's insurances are renewed annually on 1st April.

Details of the renewal premiums at 1st April 2007 compared with the 2006/07 premiums were circulated for members' information. The premiums for 2007/08 are just under £20,000 less than 2006/07.

The broker's fee has remained unchanged.

354.14 DISTRICT COUNCIL DOMESTIC PROPERTY RATES 2007/08

The Table of the Northern Ireland District Councils Domestic Property Rates for 2007/08 was circulated.

Ballymoney is ranked in 12th position from the lowest.

354.15 AGENCIES & BOUGHT IN SERVICES

The Director of Central and Leisure Services informed committee that she would have a report on agencies and bought-in-services available for the next meeting.

This being all the business the meeting closed at 7.35pm.

Appendix A: Marketing Sub-Committee – 13th April 2007 and 20th April 2007.

APPENDIX A

Marketing Sub-Committee – Meeting held Friday 13th April 2007

Present: Councillor Patterson (Chair), Alderman Campbell, Alderman Connolly,
Alderman Simpson
Head of Corporate & Development Services, Corporate Project Officer
Apologies: Councillor Finlay (Mayor)

1. Freedom of the Borough – Dr Robert Dunlop

The Head of Corporate & Development Services updated members on plans for the Freedom Ceremony on Monday 23rd April.

The following issues were agreed:

1.1 Programme for event - ceremony, followed by wine reception and civic luncheon.

1.2 Toasts – suggestions made for proposers and respondents to toasts.

New Freeman – Proposed by Mayor
Borough of Ballymoney – Responded to by Chair of Committee,
Cllr Patterson
Guests – Proposed by Cllr Kennedy

Head of Corporate & Development Services to confirm with guest speakers.

1.3 Menu – sit down meal with one choice each course (starter, main, sweet and tea/coffee, petit fours). Catering by Event Co, Dunloy.

1.4 Gift – framed pencil drawing of Robert Dunlop by local artist.

1.5 Music – national anthem after ceremony (instrumental) with music during lunch by 5 piece ensemble from Dalriada.

Members agreed to meet again on Friday 20th April to be updated on arrangements for the ceremony.

Marketing Sub-Committee – Meeting held Friday 20th April 2007

Present: Councillor Patterson (Chair), Alderman Connolly, Alderman Simpson
Head of Corporate & Development Services, Corporate Project Officer
Apologies: Councillor Finlay (Mayor) Alderman Campbell

2. Freedom of the Borough – Dr Robert Dunlop

Members reviewed and agreed arrangements as follows:

Reception & civic luncheon, speakers, gifts.