

Ballymoney Borough Council**Corporate & Central Services Meeting No 361 – 20th December 2007****Table of Contents**

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**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
CORPORATE & CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE**

Minutes of Corporate & Central Services Committee Meeting No 361 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Thursday 20th December 2007 at 6.00 pm.

IN THE CHAIR Alderman J Simpson

PRESENT

Aldermen
F Campbell
H Connolly
C Cousley

Councillors
A Cavlan
J Finlay
M McCamphill
E Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE

Chief Executive
Head of Finance & IT
Head of Corporate & Development Services
Chief Ex PA

361.1 MINUTES – MEETING NO 360 –26TH NOVEMBER 2007

It was proposed by Alderman Connolly, seconded by Alderman Cousley and
AGREED:

to recommend that the minutes of Meeting No 360 – 26th November 2007, as circulated, be approved.

CENTRAL SERVICES

361.2 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Treasury advice schedules detailing payments for Period 9, 2007/08 drawn on the Council's Capital and Revenue Bank Accounts were circulated at the meeting.

IT IS RECOMMENDED that payment is made.

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

to recommend to Council, payment of General Revenue A/c £643,819.38 and Capital A/c £184,876.24.

CORPORATE SERVICES

361.3 STAFF MATTERS

The Chief Executive reported that Kaye Cormack, LSP Monitoring Officer and Joanne McLaughlin, Town Centre Project Officer have successfully completed their Advanced Diplomas in Management Practice.

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

that a letter of congratulations be sent to Kaye Cormack and Joanne McLaughlin.

361.4 2007/08 PAY SETTLEMENT

A copy of the 2007/08 Chief Officers' Pay Settlement 2007/08 is tabled. Salaries and pay scales will be increased by 2.475% from 1st April 2007. This does not apply to any officers within Council.

361.5 REGIONAL PAY BRIEFINGS

On the pay claim front, the NI Joint Council for Local Authority Services has advised that the individual unions are just starting their internal consultation about the format and content of the 2008 claim (which is likely to be lodged in mid-January). Current intelligence is that the final version is likely to involve a claim for around 6-7% on basic pay and a significant element of bottom loading. It is also likely that there will be attempts to de-couple pay and other conditions: if you recall part of the 2007 agreement included a commitment to a wide review of the other aspects of the Green Book.

The national Employers' Side will be starting a programme of regional pay briefings from mid-January through until March as part of the process of developing its strategy. The date for the Northern Ireland briefing is the morning of FRIDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 2008.

As ever, the strength and quality of the Employers' Side position is largely dictated by the level of input there has been from individual councils. This is going to be another tough negotiating year with a broad agenda so the more participation there has been by councils in the development of the Employers Side Strategy the better.

When details are available Chief Executive will bring to Committee. In the past Mayor and Chief Executive have attended briefings.

361.6 FACILITIES FOR THE MEDIA

Under the 1972 Act, Council provides, for duly accredited representatives of newspapers attending for the purpose of reporting proceedings at the meeting, reasonable facilities for taking reports of those proceedings. To provide better access and visibility of proceedings to media representatives, it is **RECOMMENDED** that the press bench be relocated to the main body of the Chamber (ie seated at the benches used to Chair Committee meetings).

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

to recommend that the press bench be relocated to the main body of the Chamber.

361.7 CONTRIBUTION – WILLIAM KEOWN TRUST

An application has been received from the Trust for a financial contribution towards its work.

The Trust helps individuals and groups on problems with healthcare, education, housing etc. It makes representations to statutory bodies on behalf of disabled people. Each year it highlights the achievement of people with disabilities through Personal Achievement Awards.

Council previously contributed £100. Provision has been made for similar support in the current year.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Council make a contribution of £100 towards the William Keown Trust.

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

to recommend that Council make a contribution of £100 towards the William Keown Trust.

361.8 CAREER BREAKS POLICY

In response to questions at the committee's last meeting the Chief Executive undertook to provide information on Council's career break policy.

- [a] Does a break in attendance at work constitute a break in service? Where an employee's contract continues i.e. the employee has not resigned, the general position is that continuity of service for contractual benefits will continue. It is possible, however, for the Council to vary contractual terms - this should be set out in terms of the career break eg. the Council's current policy provides that the "period of the career break will not count for the purposes of annual increments or qualifying for annual leave". Service before and after the career break will count as service for these purposes.
- [b] Is there an impact on their years of reckonable service re. pension? Even though the employee is not receiving pay, the employee and employer must pay contributions for the first 30 days of the leave of absence. Within 30 days of returning to work the employee can opt to pay basic contributions for the remainder of the period of absence, up to a maximum period of three years, including the first 30 days. The employer will then have to pay their contributions.

[c] Cost to Employer?

The employer's contribution currently stands at 13% of basic pay - the cost therefore depends on the Scale of the post occupied. It is not often that an employee on a career break of a year or more opts to pay their pension contributions since they are usually no longer earning.

361.9 POLICY AND PROCEUDRE FOR PREVENTING DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION IN EMPLOYMENT

In response to a question at the committee's last meeting the Chief Executive agreed to provide information on the Council's policy on disability. A policy and procedure for preventing disability discrimination in employment was adopted by Council in December 2006. The policy and procedure was developed in accordance with the model produced by the Local Government Staff Commission in association with the Equality Commission and assists Council in complying with new equality duties, which came into force in January 2007. The Policy and Procedure assists Council to develop a working environment and provide conditions of employment which as far as practicable will offer people with disabilities the opportunity to seek, obtain and maintain employment with the Council. Council noted that there would be potential costs associated with making reasonable adjustments to facilitate people with disabilities.

361.10 NILGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & EXHIBITION

NILGA's annual conference and exhibition will be held 7/8 February 2008 in the Millennium Forum, Londonderry. Any member wishing to attend should contact the Office of the Chief Executive.

361.11 CORPORATE WEBSITE

Members will be aware of the technical survey of UK local authority websites published recently. The survey recorded Ballymoney at the bottom of the league table. The league table is compiled by Site Morse, which measures performance, tests functions and checks compliance. Site Morse rankings are based on automated tests.

We have been aware that our site, which was over 5 years old, has been lagging behind in technology and in its structure.

Work has been ongoing for several months on upgrading the website. The upgrades made to the site will improve the accessibility and functionality issues and compliance with website accessibility guidelines. We are hopeful that the upgraded site will see us move up this league table.

Our upgraded website, which went live on 7th December, should improve the user experience for the large number of people who use this site on a daily basis. However more work needs to be done and continued investment will be required to keep the site in line with accessibility guidelines and web standards. The update of content of the site to conform to web standards is underway. It was reported that the latest Site Morse report (17/12/07) rated Ballymoney 357, compared to last months 463. There are now currently six councils below Ballymoney in the league table.

The Chief Executive will seek details regarding costing of updating website.

This being all the business, the meeting closed at 6.45 pm.