

## Ballymoney Borough Council

### Corporate & Central Services Meeting No 364 – 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008

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

Minutes of Corporate & Central Services Committee Meeting No 364 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2008 at 6 pm.

**IN THE CHAIR** Alderman C Cousley

**PRESENT**

**Aldermen**  
F Campbell  
H Connolly

**Councillors**  
A Cavlan  
J Finlay  
E Robinson  
I Stevenson

**APOLOGIES**

**Aldermen**  
J Simpson

**IN ATTENDANCE**

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

**364.1 MINUTES – MEETING NO 363 – 25<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2008**

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

*that the minutes of Meeting No 363 – 25<sup>th</sup> February, as circulated,  
be approved.*

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **364.2 COMPASS ADVOCACY NETWORK LTD – SHADOW COUNCIL PROPOSAL**

This application from Compass Advocacy Network Ltd was deferred from Committee's last meeting, when the Manager attended to outline the proposal. They are asking Council for:

1. access to the Council Chamber (or other suitable accommodation) for the shadow Council Meetings;
2. 1 days training per annum on Council protocols and procedures
3. advice and guidance on the democratic process

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

*to defer consideration of the proposal to Committee's next meeting.*

### **364.3 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO DPP**

The Policing Board has advised, following the recent interview process, that it is progressing the administrative process towards the announcement of the appointment date on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. Offers of appointment has been issued to successful candidates. When the offers are accepted formal appointments will be made effective from 1 April 2008 and details of the appointments made public.

### **364.4 POLICE BUDGET 2008/09**

Arising from the public sector spending settlement across the UK under the Comprehensive Spending Review covering the next three years 2008 – 2011 the Policing Board has written to advise that the Police Grant in Northern Ireland has been suffered a shortfall in excess of £120m over the next three years. This has resulted in very difficult decisions having to be taken to live within available resources.

At the Board meeting held on 6 March 2008, the Board considered and approved a balanced budget for 2008/09 presented by the Chief Constable.

The Board reluctantly agreed with the PSNI that some projects will not now be able to be progressed. Difficult decisions had to be made but Members were assured that in the year ahead the budget proposals will have a minimal impact on the delivery of front line policing and that options for maximising the use of resources were being considered at all levels of the PSNI. However, some projects and strategies will be affected including the call handling

project and the recruitment of Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), along with savings to be realised on overtime working. This is additional to the efficiency savings of £71.4m achieved over the past 3 years by the PSNI. Members were particularly disappointed that the PCSO project and the Call Handling project (Project Unity) will not be progressed as planned but were assured that there are no planned cuts in the number of regular police officers at this time.

Even with the savings referred to above there remains projected shortfalls of £5m in 2009/10 and £7.5m in 2010/11. Discussions will shortly begin with the PSNI on how these shortfalls might be addressed. The Board will continue to ensure that PSNI make the best possible use of available resources and improve current services where possible (eg. improving the existing call handling arrangements).

The funding settlement means that the Board and DPPs will have to work all the harder with the PSNI at all levels to ensure that the policing with the community strategy, and the quality of service delivered by the PSNI, is maintained and improved. The Board appreciates the work of DPPs in this regard and remains committed to delivering on the agenda set by the Independent Commission on Policing.

In spite of a difficult public sector funding settlement the Board has been able to maintain a level of funding that will enable DPPs to continue with their consultation and engagement work.

#### **364.5 NIO PROGRAMME OF CONSULTATION, EQUALITY SCREENING AND EQIAS**

The NIO in carrying out its functions is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

To meet the requirements of this Act, the NIO identifies any policy likely to have an unintentional adverse impact on equality of opportunity through a process known as screening. If necessary a full Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is carried out on a policy, in accordance with detailed guidance published by the Equality Commission. Where an EQIA confirms adverse impact the NIO will consider ways of eliminating or mitigating the effect.

To facilitate involvement at the earliest opportunity the NIO recognises that it is important to provide individuals and interested parties with a complete picture of the work that the NIO is doing to assess the impacts of policies on equality of opportunity.

The Annual Progress Report of the NIO Equality Scheme provides information on equality screening and impact assessments during the period April 2006 to March 2007. A copy of the Annual Progress Report will be available on the NIO website [www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk).

The programme, details circulated, provides information on current consultations, screening exercises and impact assessments. The table lists policies which the NIO screened out from further equality action between July 2007 and February 2008 and where possible we have identified forthcoming work. Over the coming months the NIO will be targeting their consultations with stakeholders and interested organisations on the various new issues outlined in this programme.

### **Future Arrangements**

In light of the Equality Commission advice to avoid consultation fatigue you will wish to note that the **NIO will no longer issue the following to all consultation groups:-**

- i. the NIO Programme of Consultations, Screenings and EQIAs as attached to this letter; or
- ii. separate written public consultation documents.

The NIO Programme and NIO consultation documents will be available on the NIO website at [www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk) under Public Consultation. The Northern Ireland Prison Service consultations will appear on their website at [www.niprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.niprisonservice.gov.uk).

For organizations who do not have access to the internet but are interested in receiving a hard copy of the updated Programme this will be provided on request.

Further clarification on the above communication has been provided by NIO.

The NIO has been made aware that wording in the letter "*In light of the Equality Commission advice to avoid consultation fatigue.....*" may have given rise to a perception that the Equality Commission had issued guidance to the effect that the onus would be entirely on consultees to access the NIO and NIPS websites in order to garner information on screening, EQIAs and consultation activities. The NIO apologises if the reference to Equality Commission guidance has given rise to any confusion or misunderstanding.

In respect of consultation requirements the NIO will continue to conduct timely, open and inclusive consultations on its policies. In addition we will also continue to comply with the requirements of the Guide to the Statutory Duties as set out below and that, accordingly, at a minimum will send out timely notice to consultees that programme lists, policies or screening documents and EQIAs are being issued for consultation.

These are available in electronic format from the NIO website [www.nio.gov.uk](http://www.nio.gov.uk) and the NIPS website [www.niprisonservice.gov.uk](http://www.niprisonservice.gov.uk) with hard copies also available on request.

### **Extract from the Guide to the Statutory Duties**

*Public authorities should... provide, at least annually, a list of new and proposed policies (with summary information on the policy aims) to consultees, as specified at Section 4, 3(b)... and in line with the Guiding Principles on Consultation included in Section 4, 2(c). This list should identify policies included or excluded for equality impact assessment through screening. In much the same way that initial screening exercises helped public authorities to finalise their first equality impact assessment*

*timetables, asking consultees about new and proposed policies ensures that those with most significant equality impact are impact assessed’.*

*‘The above guidance does not preclude consultation taking place more frequently if this is appropriate. For example, the volume of new and revised policies introduced may indicate the need for more frequent consultation. Similarly, the screening process as detailed in Section 4, 3(a)(i) and (ii) will have internally identified any potential adverse impact, in which case it would be logical, reasonable and appropriate to consult with affected groups immediately. When there is ambiguity, the public authority should consult on whether a new or proposed policy should be subject to equality impact assessment’.*

[Section 4 3(a) (v), page 65)

Furthermore, Section 4 2 (c) of the *Guide* requires that consultation should be *‘timely, open and inclusive’*.

### **364.6 ANNUAL MEETING OF COUNCIL**

In accordance with Council standing orders the annual meeting of Council will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of June – **19<sup>th</sup> June 2008** at 7.30 pm.

### **364.7 ULSTER SCOTS TRAINING**

As part of an SEUPB Raising Awareness project, The Ulster Scots Agency is offering free Ulster-Scots Awareness training programme “Awareness of Ulster-Scots culture and language” to council members and staff. The training sessions are at no cost and can be delivered as a stand alone session or integrated into existing training sessions. Members are invited to register interest with the Office of the Chief Executive.

### **364.8 REVIEW OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

#### **a] – North Antrim Agricultural Association Ltd**

The Association has made application for a contribution towards the annual show on 7<sup>th</sup> June. Each year the show attracts a large turnout of visitors from across the Province for its varied programme of events and exhibits.

The launch of the 2008 show will take place in Ballymoney Rugby Club on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30 p.m. and members are invited to register their interest in attending with the Office of the Chief Executive.

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

***to recommend that Council contribute £1,200 in respect of the running costs of the show and sponsorship, as provided for in the budget.***

**[b] – Portrush Sea Cadets**

An application has been made by Portrush Sea Cadets for grant towards educational equipment and other general support for the organization, which is based in Portrush but also attracts recruits from this borough. No budget provision has been made.

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

***to investigate if the organisation would be eligible for a Community Support Grant.***

- \* Councillor Robinson joined the meeting at 6.15pm.
- \* Alderman Campbell joined the meeting at 6.22pm.

**CENTRAL SERVICES****364.9 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT**

Treasury advice schedules detailing payments for period 12, 2007/08 drawn on the Council's Capital & Revenue Bank Accounts were circulated.

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

***to recommend to Council that Accounts to the value of £598,026.00 from the Revenue Account and £179,493.45 from the Capital Account be approved for payment.***

**364.10 COUNCILLORS' ALLOWANCES – DEPENDENTS' CARERS'**

The Department has determined new maximum rates of dependants' carers' allowance, payable under the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999, as amended.

Details of the new maximum rates effective from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2007 are attached as Appendix 1.

As the Council has approved the payment of all Councillors Allowances at the maximum rates it is recommended that the maximum rates for the Dependents' Carers' allowance are approved.

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

***to recommend that the maximum rates for the Dependants' Carers' allowance are approved.***

### **364.11 DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

Attached as Appendix 2 is a draft Debt Management Policy. The draft Policy details the procedure to be followed for the recovery of outstanding debt and the procedure for the writing off of bad debts.

The policy formalises the current procedure for the recovery of outstanding debt and establishes the procedure for the writing off of bad debts.

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

***to recommend that the Debt Management Policy be adopted.***

### **364.12 TENDERS FOR EMPLOYMENT AGENCY SERVICES**

The Head of Finance and IT reported that Council would be inviting tenders for employment agency services and it is recommended that the Chair of the Committee and the Director should be responsible for opening the tenders.

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

***that the Chair of the Committee and the Director of Central and Leisure Services should be responsible for opening tenders for employment agency services.***

\* Councillor Stevenson joined the meeting at 6.38pm.

**This being all the business, the meeting closed at 6.40 pm**

**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1 - Councillors' Allowances, Dependents' Carers' allowances

Appendix 2 - Debt Management Policy

## APPENDIX 1

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 1972

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (PAYMENTS TO COUNCILLORS) REGULATIONS  
(NORTHERN IRELAND) 1999DETERMINATION OF MAXIMUM RATES OF DEPENDANTS' CARERS'  
ALLOWANCE

The Department of the Environment makes this determination, in exercise of the powers conferred on it by section 36 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 (a), and the Local Government (Payments to Councillors) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999(b), as amended. With effect from 1 October 2007, the maximum amounts of dependants' carers' allowance shall not exceed the amounts specified in the following table:-

STANDARD CARE	SPECIALISED CARE
£5.52 per hour	£11.04 per hour
£144.00 per month	£288.00 per month
Maximum payments per member, per month, shall not exceed £288.00	

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day of February 2008.



A senior officer of the Department of the Environment

**APPENDIX 2**

**Ballymoney Borough Council**

**DRAFT**

**DEBT MANAGEMENT POLICY**

**Adopted by Council on**

## 1. Recovery of Debt

### Follow-Up Procedure for Collection of Outstanding Debts

**Before instigating these procedures, care must be taken to ensure that the Council has not received payment.**

A written record of all actions taken including any variation to the procedures, must be made in the Finance Department.

The procedure for recovery of debt is as follows:

- (a) 1 month after issue of invoice:

Statement issued to the Debtor detailing the outstanding debt.

- (b) 1 month after statement:

Final Notice Issued to the Debtor requesting payment and giving notice that legal action will be taken to recover debt and that service will be withdrawn, unless the debt is settled within 7 days, without further notification.

- (c) Legal action commenced and consultation with service department regarding withdrawal of service.

The Finance Department shall ensure the timely commencement of legal action depending on whether the debt was invoiced monthly or quarterly.

- (d) The Service Department and/or Finance Department may also contact debtors by telephone where the amount owed justifies the time involved.

## 2. Bad Debts

**No item should be written off as a bad debt unless all reasonable steps have been taken to recover the amount.**

An invoice can be written off if it falls into one of the following categories

- (a) The Enforcement of Judgements Office deems the debt to be unrecoverable  
(b) A debtor has moved premises and all attempts to trace have proved unsuccessful  
(c) The costs to be incurred in pursuing the debt outweigh the potential benefits  
(d) The debt is older than the statute of limitations (6 years) and court proceedings have not been commenced within the 6 years.

All items of less than £1000 may be written off by The Director of Central & Leisure Services. Bad debts in excess of this amount may only be written off

when approved by the Corporate & Central Services Committee and subsequently ratified by the Council.

In order that the value of debtors may not be overstated in the Council's Balance Sheet at 31 March in any year the Finance Department should examine the sundry debtors lists each month and arrange to have bad debts dealt with by the procedure as outlined at 1 above.

### 3. Procedures for Writing off Bad Debts

(a) Amounts under £1000

It is the responsibility of the Finance Assistant to report to the Director of Central and Leisure Services on a monthly basis any debts that may require to be written off. The report will detail all action that has been taken to recover the outstanding debt. Once the Director of Central & Leisure Services has granted approval for writing off a debt the Finance Assistant will update the Sales Ledger and other records accordingly. The Finance Assistant will notify relevant departments of any debts written off and it is the responsibility of all departments to ensure that all bad debtors notified to them are no longer permitted to use fee based Council facilities/services unless payment is received in advance. All debts written off by the Director of Central & Leisure Services must be reported to Council on a quarterly basis for information purposes in aggregate form.

(b) Amounts £1000 and over

The Director of Central & Leisure Services having approved that the debt should be written off will prepare a report for the Corporate & Central Services Committee. The report must indicate:

The amount of the debt  
 The service provided which gives rise to the debt  
 The account reference of the debtor  
 The Director of Central & Leisure Services to advise if

in

her view all reasonable steps in accordance with the Council's procedure have been taken to recover the debt.

When the Council has approved the Committee decision the Finance Assistant will update the Sales Ledger and other records accordingly. The Finance Assistant will also notify relevant departments of any debts written off and it is once again the responsibility of all departments to ensure that all bad debtors notified to them are no longer permitted to use fee based Council facilities/services unless payment is received in advance.