

Resources Task Group19th May 2009**Table of Contents**

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Resources Task Group

Minutes of Meeting of Resources Task Group held on Tuesday 19th May 2009 at 10.00 am in the Lanyon Room, Riada House.

In the Chair: Alderman H Connolly (Item 1 and 2 part)
Alderman J Simpson (items 2-6)

Present: Alderman F Campbell
Councillor E Robinson
Councillor M McCampbell

In Attendance: Chief Executive
Director of Borough Services
Director of Central & Leisure Services
Head of Corporate & Development Services

1. MINUTES – MEETING – 9TH APRIL 2009

Consideration of the minutes was deferred until later in the meeting to allow a further copy to be produced, as a member wished to raise an issue on the content of the minutes.

2. RATES 2010/2011 – REPORT BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

The Chief Executive presented a paper, circulated, on issues with regard to the 2010/2011 rate setting process.

Rates Estimates 2010/2011

The budget setting exercise for 2009/10 began earlier than in previous years, but despite that the process was most difficult and produced an outcome, which will cause real challenges for managers and staff to implement. Given that in just over 8 months time the exercise will be repeated, it is suggested that work begins now to plan for next year.

Officers can now begin to identify likely major factors which will impact on the rates for next year. These include: -

- Expenditure
- Inflation
- Pay (including cost of under-provision for 2009/10)
- Pensions
- National insurance
- Landfill fees, haulage and tax
- Energy & fuel

- Loan charges
- Income
- Fees & charges
- General grant
- Rates revenue
- Other grants
- Bank Interest

Some of these are known now e.g. landfill tax and national insurance. Many can be estimated and revised during the year. Some are merely guesses at this stage and loan charges are dependent on the level of new capital provision that is planned.

In order that the implications of these factors on the rates for 2010/11 can be fully considered, it is necessary for members to indicate now what size of increase, if any, they would like to see in the rates for next year and also what provision, if any, they would like to make for capital works and purchases. These can of course be revised during the year. However, without this information, officers are planning in the dark.

The changes in predicted income and expenditure, taken along with the budget for capital works and the target rates increase, will show what level of decrease in net expenditure will be required. Knowing this now allows time to plan any reduction needed, rather than being forced to cut expenditure in February without being clear of the consequences. Officers also need to consider the effect of the cuts made in running costs, maintenance and energy budgets for the current year and whether they can be sustained for next year or need to be reinstated to ensure that services can continue to be delivered and minimum temperature levels for staff are provided.

There could be a new complication for next year if the suggestion in a recent consultation paper of a role for Transition Committees in approving the rates set by the member councils is implemented.

It is RECOMMENDED that members indicate what level of increase, if any, they would like to see in the rates for next year and also what level of provision, if any, they would like to make for capital works and purchases.

- * **Alderman Simpson arrived during presentation of the paper and assumed the Chair (10.15 am).**

A lengthy discussion ensued on the Council's current financial position, the expectations of ratepayer re enhanced/new community facility provision, their view on the level of rate increase and the impact on business and community ratepayers of the current economic climate.

Specific issues which engaged members attention included – best estimate of landfill charges, the inability of LPS to fund Councils to continue work on identifying occupied properties not paying rates, loss of revenue to Council arising from non-payment of rates, the desire for and ability to fund new capital projects, communication of Council's programme of work on service delivery, means whereby resource costs might be reduced, bank interest rates.

Arising from discussion on the level of increase officers should work to, the consensus of the meeting was 4-5%

It was **AGREED:**

to recommend to Council that officers produce a draft Rate Estimate 2010/2011 with an increase of 4-5%

The group received a progress report on decisions by management and issues being addressed with regard to current budgets, which would operate within cost centre budget rather than individual cost code budget. Specific issues identified included.

- Review of services with reduced budget to assess whether they can continue to be provided.
- Pilot period of temperature reduction across workplaces to assess if required budget reduction could be achieved.
- Removal of drinking water units.
- Issues arising from reduction in maintenance budgets.
- Review of overtime working arrangements.
- Removal of payphone (Riada House) and reduction in fax machines.

Any specific proposals on revision of services would be processed via the relevant committee and decisions tabled at Resources Task Group for information.

3. MINUTES – MEETING – 9TH APRIL 2009

A copy of the minutes of the last meeting was circulated to members and discussed.

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

that the minutes of meeting on 9th April 2009, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising:

3.1 Review of RTG Remit (Item 2.7)

It was noted that the last meeting had agreed that the current format of the variance reports were satisfactory and should be retained. Arising from discussion on the frequency of reporting and whether this should be extended to reporting budget variances against profile spend on a monthly basis, it was proposed by Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor Finlay and **AGREED:**

to recommend that variance reports for April-June be presented to the Resources Task Group in September and variance reports for July and August be presented in October 2009 with monthly reports thereafter.

4. REPORT ON WORK & ACTIVITY OF RESOURCES TASK GROUP TO DATE

It was noted that the financial reporting arrangements, agreed by RTG, with effect from 1.4.08 ie specific reports to be produced and frequency of production, were set out in Annex 1 to minutes of 9.4.09. It had been agreed these would be reviewed after six months operation (at 1.10.08) but the review had been deferred until all reports had been considered.

Report on the work and activities of the group 4.1.08 – 9.4.09 covering financial reporting, other specific reports requested, applications for filling of vacant posts and other issues impacting on service costs and service provision, as circulated, was tabled.

5. REMIT RESOURCES TASK GROUP – EXTENDED REPORTING

Council, at its meeting on 6th May requested the following reports (copies circulated), dealt with at RTG meeting 9.4.09, be tabled for further discussion – fuller copies of the reports were circulated.

- Vacant posts and cost of covering posts ie agency costs at March 2009
- Fixed term contracts – position, department, date of termination
- Overtime worked in 07/08 and 08/09 to date, per department and
- Contractual overtime – cost 08/09.

These were reconsidered as follows:

a) VACANT POSTS AT 31.3.09

- Two posts (part time catering assistant and full time general operative) were now filled following approval of RTG. The Director of Central & Leisure Services advised that the catering assistant post had been filled via Agency, as it had not been possible to fill through the recruitment campaign. She indicated that she was currently undertaking a study of the opening hours of the restaurant and would report via Leisure & Amenities Committee.
- Two posts (Central Services and Amenities) remained on long-term sick, with duties being covered by part time staff and Agency.
- Three caretaker posts (Town Hall, Riada House and a general post covering various locations) now reviewed and report to be submitted to RTG.
- One clerical post (Building Control), omitted from schedule to be included, work currently being undertaken by technical staff. Report will be brought to RTG in due course.

It was noted that RTG had expressed its desire to fill posts through recruitment rather than long-term use of Agency labour.

b) VACANT POSTS

The following posts were submitted for consideration:

- **Energy Efficiency Advisor**

The above post holder (Agency worker) has advised that she intends to offer her resignation with effect from 31st May. The post is currently shared with Coleraine and Moyle Councils and is 100% funded by Northern Investing for Health Partnership.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the post be filled for the remainder of the grant-funding period (estimated 22 months) and that recruitment be via the Council's preferred employee provider.

AGREED:

to recommend that the post of Energy Efficiency Advisor be filled for the remainder of the grant funding period (estimated 22 months) and that recruitment be via the Council's preferred employee provider.

- **Building Superintendent At Riada House**

The post delivers a range of essential duties.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the post be filled on the basis of the current job description – 37-hour working week, with contracted overtime removed and provided by extended hours of part time caretaker.

AGREED:

that consideration of the filling of the post be deferred to the next meeting and relative costs of permanent versus Agency be provided.

- **Caretaker At Fulton Park, Balnamore**

This vacancy arises through resignation of the post holder to take up another post with Council.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that this permanent part time post (7 hours per week) be filled by recruitment. The post holder is required to cover additional hours if required.

AGREED:

to recommend that the permanent part time caretaker post at Fulton Park, Balnamore, be filled by recruitment.

- **TIC Receptions (Part Time)**

The post holder has requested a further one-year career break from 1ST July 2009. The post provides TIC service to satisfy minimum standards required by NITB.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the post be filled to ensure the efficient delivery of front line services.

AGREED:

to recommend that the extension of career break be approved and that the permanent part time TIC Receptionist post continue to be filled by the other part time Receptionist working full time hours.

▪ **Fitness Instructors/Leisure Attendants (JDLC)**

Four part time posts are, or will become vacant within the next few months.

It is **RECOMMENDED** that the posts, essential for the continued operation of the fitness suite, swimming pool and Treasure Island, be filled through the continuation of Agency if satisfactory candidates are available.

AGREED:

to recommend that the following posts be filled by recruitment via the Council's preferred employee provider, if possible.

- **1 Fitness Instructor and 1 Leisure Attendant – maternity leave from April 09 for nine months**
- **1 Fitness Instructor and 1 Leisure Attendant – maternity leave from August 09 for nine months.**

The Director of Central & Leisure Services outlined, in response to inquiry, the services under the Pulse contract, which included an officer delivering sales and marketing of the fitness suite.

c) FIXED TERM CONTRACTS

The report, considered at the last meeting on 9.4.09 on current fixed term contract (FTC) posts and temporary contracts covering maternity leave/career breaks, was circulated and further discussed.

Arising from request for clarification of employee rights, the Chief Executive drew members' attention to the footnote on the report "The Fixed Term Employees (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations 2002 guarantees employees on fixed term contracts the right not to be treated less favourably than comparable, permanent employees. In addition, the Regulations introduced a four-year rule – a fixed term contract is normally automatically converted into a contract of indefinite duration once an employee has completed four years' continuous employment under two or more fixed term contracts."

The Chief Executive agreed to provide further information on this issue for the next meeting.

d) OVERTIME WORKING (INCLUDING CONTRACTUAL OVERTIME).

Report on overtime costs 2007/08 and 2008/09 per department and contractual overtime 2008/09 considered at the last meeting were circulated.

The cost of working on public holidays, which was in line with the nationally agreed terms and conditions of service, was discussed. It was noted that Health & Environmental Services Committee had agreed working on public holidays to deliver refuse collection services and the schedule of cover for Christmas 09 was published in the Committee Minutes (ref HES 349.19).

It was noted that management was looking at all overtime working.

6. NEXT MEETING

AGREED:

Group to meet on 22nd June at 7.00 pm to consider reports on vacant posts.

The meeting closed at 12.50 pm