

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
Finance & General Purposes Committee**

Meeting No 342 – 22nd May 2006

Table of Contents

- 342.1 Minutes – Meeting No 341 – 24th April – *Adopted*
- 342.2 Accounts for Payment – *Approved*
- 342.3 Loan Sanction – *Approved*
- 342.4 Insurance Renewals 2006/07 - *Approved*
- 342.5 Staff Matters - *Approved*
- Request for Additional Staffing Resources -
- Filling of Vacant Posts
- Community Safety Officer Extension of Maternity Leave and
Granting of Annual Leave
- 342.6 Street Naming Policy – EQIA – *deferred*
- 342.7 Council Decision Making Structures – *existing committee structure*
to be retained
- 342.8 Reports - *Noted*

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Finance & General Purposes Committee Meeting No 342 held in the McKinley Room, Riada House on Monday 22nd May 2006 at 7.30 pm.

- In the Chair:** Alderman H Connolly
- Present:**
- Alderman**
F Campbell
C Cousley (Mayor)
J Simpson
- Councillors**
J Finlay
B Kennedy
A Patterson
M Storey, MLA
- Apologies:** Councillors
A Cavlan
I Stevenson (Deputy Mayor)
- In Attendance:** Councillor D McKay
Chief Executive
Finance & I.T. Officer
Corporate Services Officer
Committee Clerk

342.1 Minutes – Meeting No 341 – 24th April 2006

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

that the minutes of Meeting 341, on 22nd May 2006, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

342.2 Accounts for Payment

Treasury advice schedules detailing payments for Period 2, 2006/07 drawn on the Council's Revenue and Capital Bank Accounts were circulated at the meeting.

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

that accounts to the value of £715,170.26 from the Revenue Account and £84637.58 from the Capital Account be approved for payment

342.3 Loan Sanction

The Council has budgeted for the undernoted projects in 2006/07 to be financed by way of loans –

- Refurbishment of Health Suite at Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre – Estimated Cost £590,000. Loan to be repaid over 20 years.
- Provision of Children's Soft Play Area at Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre – Estimated Cost £185,000. Loan to be repaid over 20 years.
- Replacement Refuse Collection Vehicle – Estimated Cost £135,000. Loan to be repaid over 7 years.
- PA System at Sports Stadium – Estimated Cost £30,000. Loan to be repaid over 20 years.
- Provision of 2 grass pitches at Riada Playing Fields – Estimated Cost £180,000. Loan to be repaid over 20 years.
- Upgrade of 3 Play Areas – Estimated Cost £186,000. Loan to be repaid over 20 years.
- Upgrade of Changing Rooms at Dunaghy – Estimated Cost £216,000. Loan to be repaid over 20 years.

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

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

342.4 Insurance Renewals

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

The Schedule attached as Appendix A details the renewal premiums for 2006/07 compared with the 2005/06 premiums. For 2006/07 the premiums are just under £30,000 less than 2005/06.

The Insurers for Property and Combined Liabilities have offered a 4.5% discount on the premium if a long-term agreement (3 years) is entered into. This would result in a further £4,200 reduction in the 2006/07 premiums.

Committee is asked to consider the long-term agreement option.

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

To recommend that that a long-term agreement be entered into for property and combined liabilities insurance cover, with effect from April 2006 (appendix A refers).

Councillor Kennedy joined the meeting during this item, the time being 7.50pm

* The Finance & IT Officer left the meeting at 8.02 p.m.

342.5 Staff Matters

5.1 - Request for Additional Staffing Resources

This matter, previously considered, as set out in Min 341.4.1 and 340.3.2, was referred back to Committee by Council at its meeting in April 2006. An additional report by the Director of Borough Services in support of additional clerical resource for the directorate was circulated.

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

To recommend that the following additional staffing resources be approved and included in the Council's establishment as permanent posts, the cost of funding the posts to be met from revenue reserves.

Central & Leisure Services Directorate

- Part-time Personnel Assistant - £14,000 max
- Part-time Receptionist, Town Hall - £8,000 max

Office of the Chief Executive

- Part-time Committee Clerk/Admin Asst – £10,000

Borough Services Directorate

- Part Time Clerical Officer – £8,600
- General Operative, Full-time – £16,551, including Attendance Allowance

In response to requests by members the Chief Executive undertook to provide information on commitments from reserves over the next three years and an estimate as to the estimated accumulative effect on rates based on the RPA grouping of Councils in the region.

The Chief Executive thanked members for their support of his request for additional staffing resources.

Councillor Storey retired from the meeting at this stage, the time being 8.30pm

5.2 - Vacant Posts

Approval is sought to fill the following vacant posts within the Central and Leisure Services Directorate.

- q 2 x Part Time Fitness Suite Attendants at Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre
- q 2 x Part Time Centre Attendants at Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre
- q 1 x Part Time Receptionist at Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre
- q 1 x Part Time Clerical Officer at Town Hall (full time officer has requested reduced hours)

These are all established posts and are essential to deliver the services.

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

To recommend that the vacant posts as detailed above be filled.

5.3 – LSP Posts

Council provides support staff to the Local Strategy Partnership under a Service Level Agreement. The LSP has agreed to the extension of contract posts, due to end on 31 December 2006, as follows

LSP Project Officer to 31st December 2008
LSP Monitoring Officer to 30th June 2007

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

To recommend that the Service Level Agreement between Council and the Ballymoney Borough LSP be amended to reflect the revised contract arrangements, extending the post of LSP Project Officer to 31/12/08 and the LSP Monitoring Officer to 30/6/07.

5.4(i) – Community Safety Officer Extension of Maternity Leave

A request has been received from the community safety co-ordinator to extend her maternity leave from 16 to 26 weeks, leaving a return date as Monday 30th October 2006. This would be unpaid leave and service cover would be provided by the Temporary Community Safety Co-Coordinator.

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

To recommend that Council grant an additional 10 weeks maternity leave to the Community Safety Co-Ordinator leaving a return date as 30th October 2006

5.4(ii) - Granting of Annual Leave

Further to the above and the officer's carry over of leave from 05-06 to this current leave year, the Community Safety Co-Coordinator has requested that twenty five days leave be granted between 30th October 2006 and 4th December 2006, to extend her maternity absence. This would be paid leave and no additional cover will be provided.

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

To recommend that Council authorise the 25 days leave requested by the Community Safety Co-Ordinator to be taken between the 30th October and 4th December 2006.

5.4 (iii) - Consideration of Job Share Arrangement for Community Safety Co-Ordinator

The Community Safety Co-Ordinator has submitted a request in writing to consider job share arrangements for the post, pending her return on the 4th December 2006. The implications are currently being considered, and a report will be made to the next Committee together with recommendation.

342.6 Street Naming Policy - EQIA

The draft policy and EQIA was issued prior to meeting for committee's comments, before being released for public consultation.

Councillor Finlay requested that this matter be deferred for a month to allow the committee further time to consider the document fully. This was supported by Alderman Simpson. Councillor McKay stated while he was against deferring the matter for a month, this would give Council the opportunity to consult Pobal regarding a ruling under EU law. The Chief Executive undertook to obtain information on this and report to committee.

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

To recommend that the draft Street Naming Policy and EQIA be deferred for one month to allow members further time to fully consider the document.

Councillor McKay retired from the meeting at this stage, the time being 8.50 pm

342.7 Council Decision Making Structures

The report by the Chief Executive on this matter set out in **Annex CE/1**, as previously considered at min 341.8, was referred back to committee by Council. The Chief Executive commented the report, which aligned committees with the new directorates implemented with effect from 1 January 2006, for committee's approval.

He gave details of the current Council/Committee meetings totalling 72+ per year and explained that this would extend to 76+ with the establishment of the new Audit Committee. The proposed new arrangement comprising one Council Meeting, Consultation Committee with Council powers, Corporate & Development Committee Central & Leisure Services Committee, Borough Services Committee and a new Audit Committee would reduce the number of meetings per year to 64.

Councillor Finlay stated that it was the wish of his party for the committee structure remain unchanged. Councillor Kennedy asked for it to be recorded that he would like the proposed structure to be implemented for a trial period. The Chief Executive asked the committee to consider the workload and time commitment required by the two directors serving two committees under the existing committee structure and the additional administrative support to co-ordinate reports for committees.

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

To recommend that the committee structure remains as at present, with the addition of the new Audit Committee.

- q *Council Meetings x 2 per month + special meetings*
- q *Development Committee*
- q *Finance & General Purposes Committee*
- q *Leisure & Amenities Committee*
- q *Health & Environmental Services Committee*

342.8 **Reports**

The following reports were tabled:-

Absenteeism 2005/2005 - report on causes of long term sickness
absence 2004/05, circulated.

Local Government Taskforce – Remuneration of Elected Representatives

This being all the business, the meeting closed at 9.20 pm.

Annex CE/1**Council decision-making structures**

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 has appointed committees to reflect the division of responsibilities among the directorates which existed prior to January 1, 2006 and it is necessary to review these structures in the light of changes at that date. It also has a practice of holding two full council meetings each month: one to deal with committee recommendations (since no powers are currently delegated to committees) along with other business which does not come within the remit of a committee or which is so urgent that a decision is required earlier than the cycle of committee meetings would allow; and a second to deal mainly with Planning matters. An additional matter to be dealt with is Internal Audit, which is now within the Office of the Chief Executive and which will need to be brought periodically to a committee for consideration and direction.

The current committees are Health & Environmental Services, Leisure & Amenities, Finance & General Purposes 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 L&A, both of the directors and by one director and the Chief Executive for the F&GP. The Chief Executive may also attend any committee.

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

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

It seems a logical starting point for designing a new structure of decision making to build it around this division of responsibilities.

This would produce a committee entitled 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 former F&GP and all of the Development committee). It could also include Internal Audit. However the Local government Auditor has given notice that there will be a requirement for councils to have an Audit Committee from 2007 so Council may prefer to create one now. Such a committee would be serviced by the head of service in the Office of the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive and the two Directors should attend as required.

The Borough Services Committee would deal with the whole remit of that Directorate (Environmental Health, Environmental Services, Amenities and Building Control) and would be serviced by the Borough Services Director, deputised for by the Assistant Director in the department.

Similarly, the Central & Leisure Services Committee would deal with the whole remit of that Directorate (Finance, Information & Communication Technology, Human Resources and Recreation) and would be serviced by the Central and Leisure Services Director.

It is further suggested that in order to keep four chairs of major committees as at present, so retaining the same level of opportunity for members to develop the necessary skills, a change could be made to the present arrangement for dealing with Planning Service and other consultees such as Roads Service, Water Service and the NIHE. The recent changes to the planning policy for rural areas will see a reduction in the number of single dwelling applications to be considered in future and earlier changes, where office meetings are agreed without argument, has already led to less time being spent in such meetings.

It is suggested that the meeting to deal with all these matters be designated as a Consultation Committee, with full delegated decision-making powers in these areas and retaining full membership (i.e. all councillors). Council should consider whether it wants to continue with the present arrangement where this meeting is open to the press – it would be in keeping with the spirit of Freedom of Information if it were. This committee could also receive any delegations or presentations which are not appropriate to a service committee, leaving more time available at the one full council meeting each month for consideration of reports from the three committees and, periodically, from the Audit Committee.

These changes will streamline the decision making process within Council, reduce the time taken in producing agendas and compiling reports (as each committee's business will be under the control of one officer) and lead to a reduction¹ in the number of meetings to be serviced, without cutting back on the opportunity for members to gain experience in chairing meetings.

¹ See tables 1 and 2

Table 1 Current meetings

Title	Frequency	No. per year	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

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