

**LIMAVADY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE BHUIRG LÉIM AN MHADAIDH**

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

4 AUGUST 2009

Minutes of meeting held in the Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady at 7.00 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

Aldermen M Coyle, G Robinson and J Rankin. Councillors P Butcher, M Carten, B Chivers, L Cubitt, M Donaghy (chair), B Douglas, J F McElhinney, C Ó hOisín, G Mullan and E Stevenson.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Committee Clerk, Human Resource Manager, Finance Manager and the Chief Executive.

APOLOGIES:

Councillor A Brolly, Councillor A Robinson and the Director of Support Services.

MINUTES:

The minutes of meeting held 2 June 2009 were approved and signed on the proposal of Alderman Coyle, seconded by Councillor Chivers.

MATTERS ARISING: - None.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS:

The Finance Manager answered a number of questions relating to the payment of accounts for May and June 2009 which were approved by members.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

Human Resource Report: IN COMMITTEE on the proposal of Alderman Coyle, seconded by Councillor Carten:

The Human Resource Manager presented the Human Resources Report dated 4 August 2009 which detailed recruitment & selection, absenteeism, cause of absence and issues relating to Investors in People. The report was adopted on the proposal of Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Butcher subject to the following:

Leavers/Casual List: Reference was made to the leaving of a temporary member of staff who had been conscientious and hardworking. It was queried if this person would be retained on a casual list for future employment. The Human Resource Manager confirmed that Council did have a casual list for temporary employees and that she would check if the person was currently on this list.

Current Vacancies: A member suggested that the remit of the Arts & Events Development Officer should be extended beyond Council held events by giving help and advice to those holding events within the wider community.

Absenteeism: The Human Resource Manager reported that absenteeism from April to June 2009 was 8.57 days against a target of 11 days per year annualised.

Development Services - Rural Development Programme: The Human Resource Manager confirmed that following consultation and discussion, the previous Project Officer and Administration Officer had accepted the revised job descriptions and terms & conditions for the posts of Rural Development Project Officer and Project Business Support Officer for delivery of the Rural Development Programme. Council endorsed the pay scales for posts.

Employer of the Year: Members congratulated Barry Toorish, Roe Valley Leisure Centre Manager on being named Skills Active NI Employer of the Year.

Skills Recognition Scheme – Excellence in Action: The Staff Recognition Scheme to be piloted at Roe Valley Leisure Centre was approved by Council.

OUT OF COMMITTEE on the proposal of Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Carten.

Comments outside the Human Resource Report:

Members requested that gratitude be forwarded to Technical Service staff for their help in the search for an employee of a contractor to Council who had tragically died the previous weekend.

SUMMARISED FINANCIAL INFORMATION FOR 3 MONTHS ENDING 30 JUNE 2009:

The Finance Manager explained that the Finance Department would be preparing 5 and 8 months accounts to better link in with the Estimates time-table and instead of preparing complete 3 months accounts, only the large items of expenditure and income were checked as outlined in the summarised financial information for 3 months period up to 30 June 2009.

The following variances were noted and agreed by Council:

- Salaries & Wages – £39k favourable due to the start date for Community Wardens; pitches caretakers wages and reduction in pay increase from a budgeted 2% to an actual 1%.
- Other Expenditure – totalling £50k due to reduction in waste disposal gate fees £25k favourable; vehicle costs £4k favourable and energy costs of £26k favourable.
- Loan Charges - £16k favourable and
- Other Income - £26k adverse mainly due to reduction in Astroturf pitch of £9k and trade waste collection income of £8k.

Members were informed the posts of Community Wardens would commence 7 August 2009. A member suggested that Wardens telephone numbers be shared with members.

Reference was made to the fact that Council had saved on wages for the AstroTurf Pitch Caretaker, whilst at the same time it had lost out on income from use of the pitch by the wider community since the pitch opened. The Finance Manager agreed to investigate if there had been a loss to Council.

DOE CIRCULAR NO LG 15/09 – COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCES:

The Finance Manager outlined that although negotiations relating to the 2009/10 pay settlement in Northern Ireland were ongoing, Minister of the Environment Sammy Wilson had agreed that an increase of 2.5% should be applied to Councillors' allowances with effect from 1 April 2009.

Councillor Cubitt proposed, seconded by Alderman Robinson 'that Council do not accept the 2.5% increase in Councillors allowances for the year.'

Alderman Coyle put forward an amendment 'that the increase in Councillors allowances by 2.5% be referred to both the NAC and NILGA.'

The amendment was put to the meeting and declared lost, 3 for and 10 against. Councillor Cubitt motion was put to the meeting and declared carried, 10 for and 3 abstentions. It was noted that the decision not to accept the increase in allowance would result in a saving of £4,500.

The basic allowance of £9,500 per year per Councillor and the special responsibility allowance totalling £20k was approved by members.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

The information Technology Policies and Procedures document was approved on the proposal of Alderman Coyle, seconded by Councillor Ó hOisín.

GUIDANCE ON LAPTOP USE FOR COUNCILLORS:

The Finance Manager gave an overview of the guidelines on laptop use for Councillors. He requested that members sign and return appendix 1 of the document which confirms an understanding of the requirements outlined in the guidelines. Agreed.

REPORT BY THE CHIEF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITOR – THE EXERCISE BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITORS OF THEIR FUNCTIONS IN THE YEAR TO 31 MARCH 2009:

The Chief Executive provided an overview of report by Mr John Buchanan, Chief Local Government Auditor on the exercise by local government auditors of their function in the year to 31 March 2009. The following salient points of the report were noted as follows:

- Loan Position at 31 March 2008 – Limavady 12th out of 26 councils at £263 per head.
- District Fund – Limavady lowest out of 26 councils with reserves at 4.6%.
- Council Attendance at Meetings - it was noted that the Auditor had commended disclosure of attendance at meetings. *It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor Cubitt that the disclosure of Councillors attendance at meetings would be uploaded to the website.*
- Vacant Properties – It was noted that a substantial sum had been recovered through property inspections in the Borough.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Councillors Info Site: A member queried if the service provider of Council Info website had been informed that Council was no longer availing of the service.

Maintenance Work – Limavady: Members indicated that the maintenance work on Roe Mill Road and at Market Street impacted on traffic going to the Milk Cup matches and to the overall appearance of the town. Council was of the opinion that there was a need for improved communication between government agencies and utility providers.

NEXT MEETING: - 1 September 2009.

THE BUSINESS CONCLUDED AT 8.15 PM

Chair: _____