

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

**SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**7 OCTOBER 2008**

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

**PRESENT:**

Aldermen G Mullan, J Rankin and G Robinson. Councillors A Brolly, P Butcher, M Carten, B Chivers, M Coyle, M Donaghy, B Douglas, J F McElhinney, A Robinson, C Ó hOisín and E Stevenson.

**IN ATTENDANCE:**

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

**APOLOGIES:** - Councillor L Cubitt.

**WELCOME:**

The chair welcomed Mrs Denise McLaughlin, newly appointed Clerical Officer within the Chief Executive's Department to the meeting.

**MINUTES:**

The minutes of meeting dated 2 September 2008 were approved and signed on the proposal of Councillor Chivers, seconded by Councillor Carten.

**MATTERS ARISING:** - None

**PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS:**

The payment of accounts for the month of August 2008 were approved and signed on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor McElhinney.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:**

**IN COMMITTEE** on the proposal of Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor Brolly. The Human Resource Manager presented the Human Resources Report and enlarged thereon. The report was adopted on the proposal of Councillor Carten, seconded by Councillor Butcher subject to the following:

**Stress Awareness:** Members were advised to inform the Human Resource Department if they wished to attend stress awareness training.

**Absenteeism:** The Human Resource Manager summarised statistics on absenteeism from April to August 2008 and it was noted that figures revealed a downward trend in absenteeism from 17.20 days at the end of June to 13.89 days

at the end of August 2008. It was also noted that Council was being proactive in using every mechanism to meet the target of 11 days per year annualised.

**Single Status Implementation:** The Human Resource Manager gave an overview of main outcomes of Single Status Agreement, including results of the job evaluation scheme, protection arrangements recommended to address those suffering from any financial detriment, revised job descriptions and protection certificate to NILGOSC. She highlighted that no-one in Limavady Borough Council would earn less in the year 2008/09 as a result of the proposals and suggested that Council would recognise that these proposals represented a fair position. It was suggested that the implementation date for the agreement would be 1 November 2008. Agreed.

**Proposed Structure and Staffing Arrangements:** Council were advised that a review of the Technical Service Department had been conducted and it was recommended that the post of Technical Services Manager would be replaced with new posts of Operations Manager and Waste Services Manager, with the posts of Cleansing Officer and Works Supervisor being removed.

She outlined that given the potential redundancy situation of two staff members, the Local Government Staff Commission had been consulted on the most appropriate process to fill the posts and the guidance in these circumstances was that the staff be ring fenced for the new posts and normal advertisement arrangements did not apply. However, the staff would be required to go through a formal interview to demonstrate that they meet the criteria and their suitability for the post. It was noted that the proposed new structure and staffing arrangements would result in a savings to Council of £25k per annum.

**Staff Grievance:** The Chief Executive informed members that legal advice had been received in relation to a grievance by 23 employees to wearing PPE equipment incorporating the Council bilingual logo. He said the opinion indicated that the use of the bilingual logo was not unlawfully discriminatory and should not be considered as violating an employee's dignity or create an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. However, the opinion indicated that while Council may have the power to introduce the bilingual logo to uniforms, this was not covered by the original motion on use of the logo, which referred to headed paper and the website. Therefore, the application of the bilingual logo on uniforms, including PPE equipment would be an extension of existing policy and would be subject to policy screening and an Equality Impact Assessment.

A number of points were raised in the discussion which followed, including the view that this was bringing politics into the workplace. A view point also expressed was that a lot of people had no problem with Irish Gaelic as this was used for example in the motto of the Royal Irish Rangers.

Councillor Coyle proposed that Council utilises the bilingual logo on all Council uniforms, vehicles and other such materials outside current Council policy and that an Equality Impact Assessment should be carried out. This was seconded by Councillor Brolly and on being put to the meeting was declared carried 9 for, 3 against. **OUT OF COMMITTEE** on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Alderman Mullan.

**ADJUSTMENTS TO ACCOUNTS – MATERIAL AMENDMENT:**

The Finance Manager explained that Council's surplus for the year ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008 had been £11k and reserves were £400k when the unaudited accounts had been presented to Council on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2008. He said that since June, two developments outside of Council's control would have significant financial implications for Council.

1. Council would receive £226k in November 2008 as finalisation of Penny Product for 2007/08 and the net effect of this would be to increase this year's surplus to £187k and the reserves to £576k.
2. Council received an email on 11<sup>th</sup> September indicating that due to ongoing appeals by the MOD dating back to April 2003, Councils finalisation of Penny Product for 2008/09 would be reduced by £390k.

The Finance Manager pointed out that finalisation of Penny Product for 2008/09 might have a positive element which could be offset against the £390k. However, at this point it would be prudent to provide for the two amounts of £226k favourable and £390k adverse in the 2007/08 final accounts. He said this would mean a deficit for the year of £203k and reserves of £186k, which was lower than previously reported to the Audit Committee and full Council in June 2008.

A member queried why details of the appeal had not been highlighted to Council earlier. The Finance Manager responded that the matter had only come to light within the last few weeks and that Land & Property Services had confirmed that no other appeals of a large amount had been submitted.

It was agreed that the Chief Executive would forward members concerns in relation to repayment of monies to Nigel Dodds, Minister of Finance & Personnel and to request advice from members of the assembly. It was also agreed that the appeal would be discussed at the next Audit Committee meeting.

**ANY OTHER BUSINESS:**

- ◆ Members were advised that Land & Property Services had asked if Council staff would take part in a paid exercise to determine vacant properties in the Borough. Agreed subject to checks being made regarding insurance and liability of Council.
- ◆ Reference was made to recent bad publicity from within the Borough and it was suggested that Council would investigate promotion of the area via PR work or look at ways to promote good news stories. It was pointed out that recent bad publicity emanated from within the chamber and that members should reflect on this.
- ◆ It was suggested that Eoghan Quigg was an ambassador for the Borough and that Council should support him in his X Factor quest.
- ◆ It was agreed that a letter of sympathy would be forwarded to Martin McGuinness, Deputy First Minister on the death of his mother.

**NEXT MEETING:** -4 November 2008.

**THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS**  
(The meeting ended at 8.30 pm)

**Chair:** \_\_\_\_\_