

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

FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

17 AUGUST 2005

Minutes of meeting held in the Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady at 7.30 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Committee Clerk, Director of Environmental Services, Director of Development, Acting Director of Support Services and Human Resource Officer.

APOLOGIES:

Acting Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

V.J. REMEMBRANCE:

On the 60th Anniversary of VJ Day, members stood in silence as a mark of respect for those who had fought in the eastern front during World War II.

MINUTES:

The minutes of meeting dated 15 June 2005 were approved and signed on the proposal of Councillor Chivers, seconded by Councillor Cubitt subject to amendment on page 1, paragraph 8 ‘... Councillor Chivers reminded members that Gortnaghey Community Association were continuing to explore ways of acquiring gap funding for their proposed community hall.’

MATTERS ARISING:

DPP Annual Report – Petty Crime: At the request of Councillor Butcher, the Acting Director of Support Services agreed to seek clarification from the DPP Manager if the burning of cars was considered a petty crime.

Internet and E Mail Policy: The Acting Director of Support Services clarified that Council was waiting for a response from NIPSA regarding Internet and E Mail Policy.

Payments for Hire of Lorries: The Acting Director of Support Services explained that the contract with Alan Miller was for hire of both vehicle and driver for waste disposal.

Recruitment for Economic Development Officer: The Acting Director of Support Services said the position of Economic Development Officer would be advertised over the next two weeks.

Feedback - Confederation of European Councillors Conference: Councillor Ó hOisín reported that approximately 100 Councillors attended the Confederation of European Councillors Conference in Mullingar and that the speakers included medical and nutritional professionals, who spoke on sporting development in Ireland. He said the high point of the conference had been the lecture from John Treacy and Trevor Ringland.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS:

Payments for the months of June and July were approved on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor Cubitt.

Officers present answering queries regarding payments to Grafton Recruitment (agency staff), Checkmate Guarding (car ferry security) and F McParland & Company (demolition to town hall houses).

HUMAN RESOURCES:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Cubitt, seconded by Alderman Mullan that items 5, 6 and 13 on the agenda be discussed **IN COMMITTEE**.

The Confidential Human Resource Report dated 17 August 2005 was adopted on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor Butcher subject to the following:

Chief Executive: Councillor Cubitt referred to the request by Liam Flanigan to review his holiday entitlement from 30 to 31 days and said he would be opposed to this request. This was seconded by Councillor Robinson.

The Human Resource Officer outlined holiday entitlement for Chief Executive's in other councils in Northern Ireland and said the request was standard and reasonable as part of terms and conditions of employment.

The proposal on being put to the meeting was declared lost, with 4 voting for and 8 against. Councillor Butcher proposed that Council accept the recommendation by the Human Resource Officer to grant the extra day leave. This was seconded by Councillor Coyle. Councillor Cubitt requested that his opposition be noted. Agreed.

Absenteeism: Members noted and agreed to the revised format for provision of figures for sickness and absenteeism within the Human Resource Report.

Re-organisation Implementation Proposals: The Acting Director of Support Services outlined that following the Implementation Team recommendations and subsequent restructuring of Councils departments, the Directors have completed a review of organisational requirements and the following was recommended within the Re-organisation Implementation Proposals:

- the proposed new structure for the three directorates be adopted;
- new posts to be developed and recruited;
- evaluation of existing posts to take place where appropriate;
- consult with two officers regarding redundancy and
- communication and appropriate consultation to take place with all employees.

Councillor Butcher proposed and Councillor Coyle seconded that Council accept the recommendations.

Councillor Cubitt voiced his opposition and said the proposals were not in line with recommendations made within the Howarth Report. Councillor Coyle pointed out that the original report was faulty as it only looked at the basic top structure of Council and not the cascading effect on who would carry out the work of those leaving through retirement or redundancy.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDIT – MOBILE PHONES, LOCAL AUTHORITY COMPANIES:

The Acting Director of Support Services referred to letter dated 25 July 2005 from J S Buchanan, Local Government Auditor in which he detailed High Court judgement by Mr Justice Coghlin in relation to expenditure by Newry & Mourne District Council for reimbursement to members for use of mobile phones supplied by Council. Members noted that the Judge stated that ‘...there was no lawful basis upon which such payments that would be implied reasonably necessary or incidental to the powers to make payments to Councillors and must be regarded ultra vires.’

The Acting Director of Support Services said that Local Government Auditor view was that such expenditure ruled unlawful by the High Court could not continue and it would take a change in the Regulations by the Department to empower councils to make such payments.

On the advice of the Acting Director of Support Services, it was agreed that decision be deferred until after Solace and NILGA met with the DOE on 5 September 2005. **OUT OF COMMITTEE.**

NOTICE OF MOTION:

Before the motion was read, Councillor Stevenson queried if Standing Orders were to be suspended as traditionally Notice of Motions were brought to the Monthly Meeting of Council. Councillor Brolly responded that clarification had been sought with the Acting Chief Executive and he had advised that the Notice of Motion would be brought to the Finance & General Purposes meeting as all 15 elected members sat on this committee. Councillor Stevenson said it was obvious that Councillor Brolly was going to let the motion be heard no matter what his views.

Councillor Butcher proposed:

“That this Council remove all British military memorabilia from the Council offices, specifically pictures in the hallway and any other symbols, such as plaques in display cases etc, in keeping with Councils’ policy of a neutral building and not fostering division.”

In proposing the motion, Councillor Butcher said he wished those who worked or served in Council to do so in a clean neutral building, irrespective of political beliefs and that divisions needed to be bridged so that everyone would be equal. The motion was seconded by Councillor Donaghy.

Councillor Stevenson suggested that the motion should not be debated until whatever symbols or plaques Councillor Butcher referred were identified. He said the motion was sectarian, undemocratic and an attempt by Sinn Fein to ‘green the west’. He added that Sinn Fein might as well say ‘Brits Out’ and in his opinion to ask for the removal of a few paintings was getting into the ridiculous.

Councillor Cubitt said the motion was derisory. He queried if complaints had been received about the symbols and said Limavady was turning into another Bellaghy or Dunloy with the amount of tricolour being erected.

Alderman Robinson indicated that he would not support the motion as it was designed solely to stir up tensions in Council and across the Borough and that over the years unionists in Limavady had to endure the removal of the Union Flag, abolition of the designated day’s flag policy, intensification of the Irish language in street signs and on letter heads, all in the apparent aim of promoting neutrality. He said that nationalists should oppose this form of cultural ethnic cleansing and urged them to vote against the proposal. He concluded that many of the items referred to by Councillor Butcher had been donated to Council in memory of the thousands who perished in defence of democratic rule against fascist tyranny.

Councillor Coyle put forward an amended proposal that this Council:

- is absolutely committed to equality in all aspects of its work;
- notes the presence of British military memorabilia in council offices and that there are no symbols reflecting an Irish identity;
- establishes an all-party sub-group, reflecting the balance of the council, to ensure equality in symbols at Council, which would consider whether to ensure neutrality or parity of esteem;
- agrees that the sub-group should consult with the Equality Commission on any recommendations it brings forward to council;
- notes that a number of councils have adopted new policies on symbols without equality proofing them, and that this has been the subject of legitimate complaint to the Equality Commission; and proposes therefore that the new policy be fully equality proofed in accordance with the Council’s equality scheme and section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act.

The proposal was seconded by Alderman Mullan who said the original motion had not been thought out as more consideration should have been given on what to do with the memorabilia.

Councillor Robinson queried how long the items had been in Council possession and if Council had received complaints or had a complaints log book. Alderman Rankin and Councillor Douglas voiced their support for what had been said by other unionist councillors.

Councillor Ó hOisín said he did not view the motion as sectarian or anti British but an attempt to rectify a serious imbalance in the Council building. He said that

during his time in Council there was very little that reflected his culture or viewpoint and that Council needed to look at a policy of inclusively rather than exclusivity, with cherishment of emblems of everyone's culture but unfortunately this was not going to happen and the motion of neutrality appeared to be best solution. In conclusion, he took exception to comments made regarding intensification of the Irish language, which in his view threatened no one.

The amendment on being put to the meeting was declared carried, 9 voting for and 6 abstentions. The substantive motion was put to meeting and declared carried, with 9 voting for and 6 abstentions.

It was agreed that the establishment of an all party sub-group be included on the agenda for the September's Monthly meeting of Council.

ROAD NAMING:

Housing Development – Drumsurn Village: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor Chivers that the B Mullan & Son development in Drumsurn Village be named Castle Meadows.

ACCOUNTS FOR YEAR ENDING 31 MARCH 2005:

The Acting Director of Support Services submitted accounts for year ending 31 March 2005. He explained the main variances and answered members' queries thereon.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 1972 – LOANS FOR OFFICERS FOR PURCHASE OF MOTOR VEHICLES:

Members noted the revised Determination on loans for officers on purchase of motor vehicles and that the revised interest rate would be 3.15% per annum.

COUNCILLORS ALLOWANCES:

The Acting Director of Support Services tabled Determinations on Councillors allowances for member's information. Noted

LIMAVADY BOROUGH COUNCIL - SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITY ALLOWANCE:

The Acting Director of Support Services detailed proposed Special Responsibility Allowances for the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and agreed chairs of the four standing committees. Councillor Douglas voiced his opposition at the lack of equality in those eligible for the allowance and Councillor Cubitt suggested that the figures be compared with councils of similar size.

The proposed Special Responsibility allowance was approved on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor Butcher.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Review of Public Administration: In response to Councillor Butcher, the Acting Director of Support Services said a Special Meeting of Council would be arranged

for early September to finalise Council's viewpoint on the Review of Public Administration.

Special Planning & Development Meeting: The Director of Environmental Services explained that a Special Planning & Development Committee meeting would take place on Tuesday 30 August 2005 at 7.30. He said that Andy Meenagh, Draft Area Plan Team, Fiona McCandless, Planning Service and Michael Graham, Farningham McCreadie Partnership would attend to answer queries on applications refused or deferred due to undermining of Draft Northern Area Plan 2016.

St. Mary's Pipe Band: The Director of Development informed members that St. Mary's pipe band had requested financial support from Council for a trip to Edinburgh. It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor McElhinney to contribute £600 towards the £2,000 cost of the trip.

Beach Risk Assessments: The Director of Development reminded members that Council had agreed to work in partnership with Coleraine and Moyle Councils regarding beach safety. He said that ROSPA had carried out an initial survey of Benone with regard to producing a Water Safety Policy and Risk Assessment Report and that Council's contribution would be £2,255.75. Members agreed to the recommended expenditure and that 2 officers from Council would visit and evaluate how the system operated in the Wirral, Cheshire.

NEXT MEETING:

21 September 2005

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS

(The meeting ended at 9.45 pm)