

15 February 2010

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Carrickfergus, on **MONDAY** the **FIFTEENTH** day of **FEBRUARY** 2010, at the hour of **7.15** o'clock pm pursuant to the Town Clerk's summons calling the Meeting, the following Members were present:

Alderman M Beattie, Chairperson Presiding

Aldermen: W Ashe D W Hilditch P McKinney

Councillors: R Beggs C J Brown T Clements
 M Cosgrove I E Day E Ferguson
 W Hamilton L McClurg L Marsden

An apology for non-attendance was received on behalf of Councillors S Dickson and J McClurg.

The following Officials were in attendance:-

Mr A Barkley Director of Environmental Services
Miss A Beacom Senior Committee Clerk

SS.6/10
(SS.3/10)

Land & Property Service (LPS) – Vacant Property Inspection

Members were reminded of a request for information on the terms and conditions agreed with LPS to undertake vacant property inspections in the Borough in 2008. In this connection, the Committee had been circulated with copy letter dated 11 September 2008 from David Beattie, Directorate of Data Information and Systems stating that "LPS will provide funding to cover reasonable additional costs for Councils that carry out vacancy inspections". Also circulated was copy email from Mr Beattie dated 18 September 2008 detailing the funding equation of £7.00 per inspection and mileage of 40p per mile.

On 8 January 2009 the Council had billed LPS for 1,290 property inspections and associated mileage of £9,437.60. A copy of the invoice had been circulated to Members. This was subsequently paid in full.

On 21 May 2009 Iain Greenway, Director of Operations in LPS wrote to the Chief Executive (copy letter circulated) to advise "that legal and accounting advice is unequivocal – that the costs must be added to the cost of collection". A split between regional and district rates would apply.

15 February 2010

The Committee had also been circulated with copy email dated 21 January 2010 from Gail Fryer, Head of Operational Finance to the Director of Support Services advising that the cost to Council of the vacancy exercise was £4,043.30 being the sum recovered via “costs of collection” in the actual penny product calculations. Therefore the Council has in effect only received £5,394.20 against actual expenses of £9,437.60.

The Director of Environmental Services reported that the Director of Support Services was seeking a meeting with the Chief Executive of LPS or his nominee to discuss the shortfall.

Councillor Brown queried whether Council was engaged by LPS to carry out the work on its behalf, the cost of performing this task and whether it had been agreed that LPS would meet all of the Council’s legitimate costings.

ALDERMAN HILDITCH LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS STAGE.

The Director of Environmental Services advised that the work was offered to Council but he was not aware of the prior arrangements with LPS.

Alderman Ashe requested that the Director of Support Services furnished Members with copies of all relevant paperwork presented to the Committee at the time of the decision together with the Minutes in connection with this issue.

ALDERMAN HILDITCH RE-ENTERED THE MEETING AT THIS STAGE.

Councillor Cosgrove was of the view that the information already circulated did not appear to show LPS, a public sector body, in a good light. He would await a full report on this matter.

Councillor Brown referred to the e-mail from Mr Beattie which clearly showed the figures involved and Council had complied with the payment criteria. He enquired if this was a one-off exercise. Alderman Ashe understood that a further request had been received, which would not be considered until there was a resolution to this issue.

Councillor Marsden was of the view that from the information available, LPS had entered into a contract agreement, the terms and conditions of which it had retrospectively attempted to vary.

15 February 2010

Councillor Beggs also expressed concern that LPS appeared to be changing the agreement made with Council and further information was required to explain why the sub-contract was not being honoured.

The Chairman cautioned Members with regard to whether there had been some indication previously that the cost of the exercise would be borne by those who would benefit.

Councillor L McClurg requested that copies of the schedules be provided in the documentation sought by Alderman Ashe, detailing the full amount invoiced in 2009 and the recovered amount in 2010.

The Committee AGREED to recommend that Council await the provision of all the information requested.

ALDERMAN HILDITCH AND COUNCILLOR DAY DECLARED A NON-PECUNIARY INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM AND TOOK NO PART IN THE DISCUSSION OR VOTING THEREON.

COUNCILLOR COSGROVE DECLARED A PECUNIARY INTEREST IN THE FOLLOWING ITEM AND LEFT THE MEETING AT THIS STAGE.

SS.7/10
(C.36/10)

Accounts for Payment

Members had been circulated with copy Treasurer's Report dated 15 February 2010, which was recommended be authorised for payment.

It was Proposed by Alderman McKinney, Seconded by Councillor E Ferguson, that payment orders be issued as follows:-

Cheque Amount	£ 9,722.44
Bacs	£165,895.37
	<hr/>
	£175,617.81

On the Proposal being put to the meeting, it was declared carried unanimously.

COUNCILLOR COSGROVE RE-ENTERED THE MEETING AT THIS STAGE.

15 February 2010

SS.8/10
(SS.2/10)

Request for Financial Assistance

Members were advised that of the £3,000 budget, the balance available was £1,920 with proposals from this report totalling £80.00.

(SS.23/09)

(a) Joseph Seaton – RUR Association

Members had been circulated with copy application for funding from Mr Joseph Seaton of the RUR Association to attend a commemoration service in Normandy, France from 4 – 9 June 2010.

It was recommended that financial assistance of £80.00 be granted, being the maximum award for an individual application.

It was Proposed by Alderman Hilditch, Seconded by Councillor L McClurg, & Unanimously AGREED to recommend accordingly.

SS.9/10
(SS.3/10)

Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee – Minutes

Members had been circulated with copy minutes of the Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee meeting held on 18 December 2009 for adoption. These minutes had been agreed at the meeting of 15 January 2010 as being an accurate record of the business.

It was Proposed by Alderman Hilditch, Seconded by Councillor E Ferguson, & AGREED to recommend that the minutes be adopted.

CORRESPONDENCE

SS.10/10

Prospect Heights, Carrickfergus – Traffic Calming Proposals

Members had been circulated with copy letter dated 27 January 2010 from Paul Caldwell, Roads Service, Traffic Management, forwarding details of traffic calming proposals for the Prospect Heights area of Carrickfergus. Formal consultation with residents would commence on 27 January 2010. Details of the scheme were available in the Members' Room.

Noted.

SS.11/10
(SS.46/09)

Local Government Pay Award - Unison Speaking Rights

Members had been circulated with copy letter dated 4 February 2010 from Sean Dorrity, Branch Secretary, Unison requesting speaking rights at a meeting of Council in order to address the issue of 2010/11 pay award for Local Government workers.

15 February 2010

It was recommended that Mr Dorrity be invited to make his presentation at the Support Services Committee meeting to be held on 15 March 2010.

While appreciating the request, Councillor Cosgrove drew attention to the fact that pay negotiations were carried out nationally and Council could not influence the pay award process. He was supported in this matter by Councillor Hamilton.

Councillor Brown reminded Members that Council had already struck a rate which included increases on the basis of advice from the National Joint Council.

In agreeing, Councillor Beggs stated that the pay negotiations would determine what the award would be.

It was Proposed by Councillor Cosgrove, Seconded by Councillor Hamilton, & AGREED to recommend that Council explain its role in the matter to Unison and indicate that it would be happy to receive a letter from the Union, outlining its views on the issue.

SS.12/10

Housing Rights Service – Training Courses

Members had been circulated with copy details of the following Housing Rights Training courses:-

- (a) Mortgage Possessions Proceedings – 27/28 April 2010.
Fee £225 pp

It was Proposed by Councillor Clements, Seconded by Alderman Hilditch, & Unanimously AGREED to recommend the attendance of Councillor Marsden.

Alderman Ashe requested that the cost applicable to Council be confirmed given that it was a member of the Housing Rights Service.

- (b) Prevention of Homelessness as a Consequence of Debt – 16 & 23 March 2010. Fee £225 pp
- (c) Challenging Housing Decisions – 20 or 22 April 2010.
Fee £155 pp
- (d) Housing Benefit – 9 or 11 March 2010. Fee £155 pp

15 February 2010

- (e) Housing Advice Training Programme – six day course 19 & 26 February, 4, 12, 19 & 26 March 2010. Fee £760 pp
- (f) Harassment & Illegal Eviction – 18 February 2010. Fee £155 pp

Members noted that as at 31 January 2010 the Member training budget had £500 unused.

SS.13/10
(C.55/10)

Reports

Members noted receipt of the following reference documents:-

- (a) Housing Rights Review – Policy Journal – January 2010
- (b) Housing Rights Service – Annual Report 2008/09

SS.14/10

Northern Workforce Development Forum – Impact of Economic Downturn

Members had been circulated with copy letter dated 15 February 2010, from the Minister for Employment and Learning, advising that the Northern Workforce Development Forum had agreed to host a meeting in the ECOS Centre, Ballymena, on 24 February 2010, at 11.30 am, to discuss the severe impact that the Economic Downturn is having on individuals and business.

Contents of the letter were noted.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.40 pm, when those Members present were as listed on page 1.