

19 July 2010

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Support Services Committee held in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Carrickfergus, on **MONDAY** the **NINETEENTH** day of **JULY** 2010, at the hour of **7.35** o'clock pm pursuant to the Town Clerk's summons calling the Meeting, the following Members were present:

Alderman M Beattie, Chairperson Presiding

<u>Aldermen:</u>	W Ashe	D W Hilditch	J McClurg
<u>Councillors:</u>	R Beggs	C J Brown	T R L Clements
	I E Day	S C Dickson	D Ferguson
	E Ferguson	W S Hamilton	L McClurg
	L Marsden		

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Councillors Cosgrove, McKinney and Neeson.

The following Officials were in attendance:-

Mr I Eagleson	Director of Support Services
Mrs J Shearer	Committee Clerk

SS.46/10
(SS.38/10)

Local Government Training Scheme

Members were reminded that at the last meeting of the Support Services Committee, the Director had been asked to report back on whether training opportunities had been made available in the past and how and when monies had been spent as well as coding of the funding. This information was still being researched, due to a delay caused by annual leave. It could, however, be confirmed that the costs of the Local Government Training Scheme were coded to Corporate Management (2900).

The Director advised that subsequent to the report he had written to the Local Government Training Scheme seeking further details and was awaiting a response. He had also been in contact with NILGA with regard to training for elected Members and they had indicated that they were awaiting the announcement on RPA following the summer recess. They planned to offer training on capacity building. In relation to the coding of training the Director confirmed that the costs of training under the Local Government Training Scheme were not coded to the Democratic budget.

Noted.

SS.47/10
(C.223/10)

Requests for Financial Assistance – Report

Members had been circulated with a report on Applications for Financial Assistance which outlined the background and analysis in this connection which was summarised as follows:-

1. It seemed clear that Members had requested that the acceptability, application process and criteria for dealing with applications for financial support be reviewed (Support Services Committee 17 May 2010).
2. There was, already, a mechanism whereby Sub-Committees had authority to decide on grants on behalf of Council (Development Services 9 March 2009 as ratified).
3. The discussion at the CEO meeting of 21 June 2010 was based on a mistake (that there was no streamlined process for dealing with applications for financial support – when in fact there was). However, some of the points raised were valid e.g. non Councillors sitting on Sub-Committees and would warrant re-examination of the system whereby a Sub-Committee could act on behalf of Council.

It was therefore recommended that:-

1. Reviewed guidelines on acceptability, application process and criteria be submitted to Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee.
2. Grant applications, presently held in abeyance, be re-presented to Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee together with rationale (per Support Services Committee 17 May 2010). Issue grants per Sub-Committee decision (as allowed by recommendation of Development Services Committee 9 March 2009 and subsequent Council ratification).
3. Examine the implications of allowing a Sub-Committee to issue decisions on behalf of Council and report, as soon as possible, with recommendations to overcome any governance weaknesses.

The Director advised that the Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee had met that afternoon and was recommending that the applications for Financial Assistance received prior to the Policy being suspended should be processed. The legal advice obtained had indicated that the Council was under no obligation to process the applications, however, Members felt that those who had applied had done so

19 July 2010

under the former Policy and in good faith, therefore the applications should be dealt with.

Alderman Ashe concurred with the remarks made by the Director and indicated that amended criteria should be available in the near future.

Councillor Hamilton, whilst stating that offering financial assistance to those living in the Borough was good practice, queried as to whether it was within the Council's remit to offer financial assistance for those undertaking qualifications, i.e. football coaches who then in turn charged for the skills they had attained.

The Director stated that he was not in a position to speak on this subject.

COUNCILLOR DAY WITHDREW FROM THE MEETING AT THIS STAGE.

Alderman Hilditch, whilst appreciating the sentiments of Councillor Hamilton, indicated that Council only granted a small percentage of coaching fees and that those persons attaining the qualification usually undertook voluntary work as well, therefore balancing the contribution.

Councillor Beggs was of the opinion that Council had no influence on how people managed their careers and even if clauses were added to policies, they would be impossible to monitor. He was of the opinion that the Policy being discussed presently should assist those competing at high levels and representing the Borough and or Northern Ireland.

Alderman Ashe indicated that the ethos behind the Council's grant system was to develop people in the Borough and improve the quality of life for everyone and the Council's experience of the grant system had been positive.

Alderman Hilditch felt that it was more beneficial that people from the Borough were assisted in attaining skills, as opposed to people from outside the Borough charging local clubs for coaching etc.

COUNCILLOR DAY RE-ENTERED THE MEETING AT THIS STAGE.

Councillor Brown was of the opinion that those who had received financial assistance from Council to gain a qualification for the

19 July 2010

betterment of the community was money well spent.

It was Proposed by Councillor Brown, Seconded by Alderman Ashe, that the Officer's recommendations be accepted and that the applications for financial assistance as placed before the Committee on 17 May 2010 be processed.

On the Proposal being put to the meeting 13 Members voted in favour with 1 Member not voting.

The Chair declared the Proposal carried.

SS.48/10
(C.225/10)

Accounts for Payment

Members had been circulated with copy Treasurer's Report dated 19 July 2010, which was recommended be authorised for payment.

Alderman Hilditch referred to Account CAUS03 – Causeway Coast and Glens Tourism Partners in the amount of £19,664.80. He indicated that the Sub-Committee that approved this particular invoice had approved an amount in the region of £17,000. He requested that this account be withheld to enable further information to be obtained.

It was Proposed by Alderman Hilditch, Seconded by Alderman J McClurg, that subject to Account CAUS03 being withheld for further information that payment orders be issued as follows:-

Cheque Amount	£ 2,831.95
Bacs	£ <u>105,271.00</u>
	£ 108,102.95

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

SS.49/10
(SS.40/10)

Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee – Minutes

Members had been circulated with copy minutes of the Finance Monitoring Sub-Committee meeting held on 14 May 2010 for adoption. These Minutes were agreed at the meeting of 18 June 2010 as being an accurate record of the business.

It was Proposed by Alderman Hilditch, Seconded by Councillor Day, & AGREED to recommend adoption of the Minutes.

SS.50/10
(SS.66/09)

Procurement and Purchasing Policy

The Director of Support Services recommended that the Council's Policy on Procurement and Purchasing be updated annually to reflect EU thresholds for Goods, Services and Capital Schemes as and when these were amended by the EU. The details of the current EU thresholds in place which Council's Policy needed to be amended to reflect had been circulated to Members.

Councillor D Ferguson enquired as to which level the Council represented as there were 4 difference levels.

The Director undertook to ascertain the appropriate level and report back accordingly.

It was Proposed by Councillor Beggs, Seconded by Alderman J McClurg & AGREED to recommend acceptance of the Officer's recommendation, subject to Members being advised of new thresholds for information purposes.

CORRESPONDENCE

SS.51/10
(C.118/10)

Local Government Members' Association (LAMA) – Autumn Seminar

Members were advised that the Local Authority Members' Association (LAMA) Autumn Seminar "Local Government – Efficiency and Financing" would be held on Friday 8 October and Saturday 9 October 2010. Venue – Listowel Arms Hotel, Listowel, Co Kerry. Fee had not yet been decided. Brochure to follow.

Noted.

SS.52/10
(SS.12/10)

Housing Rights Service Training Courses – Training Unit, Middleton Buildings, High Street, Belfast

Members had been circulated with copy documents in relation to the following training courses to be held at the above location:-

- a. Mental Health & Housing:
One day course 16 September 2010. Fee £130-£140 pp
- b. Housing Advice Training Programme:
Six day course 22 September – 27 October 2010 (every Wednesday)
16 February – 23 March 2011 (Associate Band F)

19 July 2010

- c. Dealing with Housing Debt:
One day course 7 October 2010. Fee £130-£140 pp
- d. Prevention of Homelessness as a Consequence of Debt:
Two day course, 4 & 11 November 2010. Fee £200-£225 pp
- e. Challenging Homelessness Decisions:
One day course, 25 November 2010. Fee £130-£140 pp

Noted.

SS.53/10
(C.188/10)

Reference Documents

Members received and noted details of the following Reference Documents:-

1. Housing Rights Review – Policy journal – June 2010.
(Document available in Members’ Room).
2. Housing Rights Service – June E-bulletin – Report of the Independent Commission on the Future of Housing in Northern Ireland.

SS.54/10
(C.236/10)

Consultation Document

Members had been circulated with copy email from Rating Policy Division informing of consultation on the review of the Landlord (Article 21) Rating Allowance. Comments should be provided by 28 October 2010. Written responses to Department of Finance and Personnel, Rating Policy Division, Room D12, Rathgael House, Balloo Road, Bangor, BT19 7NA, email ratingpolicy.cfg@dfpni.gov.uk.

It was noted that Members responses should be submitted to the Town Clerk.

CONCLUSION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 7.50 pm, when those Members present were as listed on page 1.