

CORPORATE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on Wednesday, 25 November 2009 in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Jim Brown, David McBride, Ronnie McColl, Craig McLaughlin, Marie McNair, Iain Robertson and Martin Rooney.

Attending: Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Andrew Fraser, Head of Legal, Administrative & Regulatory Services; Tricia O'Neill, Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development; Vincent Gardiner, Manager of Exchequer; Gillian McNeilly, Manager of Accounting; Patricia Marshall, Manager of ICT; Liz Cochrane, Head of Policy and Performance; Louisa Mahon, Communications Manager; Sandra Brysland, Seconded Manager, Quality and Self Evaluation; Alison Wood, Corporate Procurement Team Leader; Lewis Morrison, Policy Officer (Disability & Access); Cheryl Marshall, Sustainable Development Officer; Suzanne Greer, Policy & Development Officer – Diversity and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillors Jim Bolland, Margaret Bootland and Jim McElhill.

Councillor Craig McLaughlin in the Chair

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

It was noted that there were no declarations of interest in any of the items of business on the agenda.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on 30 September 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE CULTURAL SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Special Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee held on 5 October 2009 were submitted and approved.

In relation to the item “Proposed Clydebank Town Hall Working Group: Remit”, the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services, in answer to Members’ questions, clarified the cultural remit and terms of reference of the proposed Clydebank Town Hall Working Group.

TERMS & CONDITIONS OF EMPLOYMENT FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEES – AMENDMENTS TO PUBLIC HOLIDAYS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services:-

- (a) advising of the work undertaken to date in relation to the harmonisation of terms and conditions of employment (for former APT & C and Manual Workers) following the implementation of the Single Status Agreement;
- (b) detailing proposals for the future amendment of West Dunbartonshire Council’s terms and conditions of employment for Local Government Employees; and
- (c) seeking approval to amend the days currently designated as public holidays.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services in clarification of certain matters, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) that any future changes to Terms and Conditions of employment, not governed by legislative changes or forming part of national collective bargaining mechanisms (adopted as part of West Dunbartonshire Council’s Terms & Conditions of Employment), be submitted to the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee for approval; and
- (2) that Good Friday be redesignated as a Public Holiday and Fair Monday be removed as a Public Holiday with effect from 1 April 2010 and that arrangements be made to notify staff accordingly.

As an amendment, Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to note that the new set of Terms and Conditions of Employment (referred to in paragraph 3.1 of the report) was imposed and was not in agreement; and
- (2) that any future changes to Terms and Conditions of employment be dealt with by the Council in future and not the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee.

On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

GRANT APPLICATIONS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on grants to voluntary organisations from the Dumbarton Common Good Fund and Community Council budgets.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Accounting in answer to Members' questions, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to approve the recommendation for the Common Good Fund - £1,500;
- (2) to approve the award of a grant of up to £15,000 or 6 months rental to the Tulloch Trust in respect of rental costs for 2009/10 of their new premises at Leven Valley Enterprise Centre; and
- (3) to approve the award of grant of £29,839 to Bellsmyre Digital Community Project on the basis that this award would be the last and final award for this organisation unless any new application from this Project differed fundamentally from what was in place at the current time.

As an amendment, Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to approve the recommendation for the Common Good Fund - £1,500;
- (2) to approve the award of a grant of up to £15,000 or 6 months rental to the Tulloch Trust in respect of rental costs for 2009/10 of their new premises at Leven Valley Enterprise Centre; and
- (3) to approve the award of grant of £29,839 to Bellsmyre Digital Community Project.

On a vote being taken, 3 Members voted for the amendment and 4 the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

LOCAL PROCUREMENT POLICY

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising of a Local Procurement Policy, appended to the report, which has been produced in response to the "Improving Council" Action Plan and Scottish Government guidance.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services, the Committee agreed to continue the item pending further information being incorporated into the report on various matters such as local procurement, flexibility and whether the £30,000 limit contained in Standing Orders for officers delegated authority was adequate.

COUNCIL TAX DISCOUNT ON SECOND HOMES AND LONG-TERM EMPTY PROPERTIES

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services recommending a change to the level of Council Tax discounts granted to second homes and long-term empty properties.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Exchequer in answer to Members' questions, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to approve the reduction of the level of Council Tax discount awarded to second homes and long-term empty properties from its present amount by 10% year on year until it has reached 10% with this change being effective from 1 April 2010;
- (2) that this money would be retained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to fund the approved projects; and
- (3) that officers would contact the owners of second homes and long-term properties to communicate the change in Council policy.

As an amendment, Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to approve the implementation of reduction of the level of Council Tax discount awarded to second homes and long-term empty properties to 10% with effect from 1 April 2010;
- (2) that this money would be retained within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to fund the approved projects; and
- (3) that officers would contact the owners of second homes and long-term properties to communicate the change in Council policy.

On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment and 5 the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

REVIEW OF WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE NEWS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing additional cost options for revised production of the West Dunbartonshire News, following the continuation of a report to the Committee held on 30 September 2009. The report recommends changes to the frequency and format of the publication in order to maximise the cost effectiveness of the publication.

After discussion and having heard the Communications Manager in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor McColl, moved:-

That the Committee agrees to discontinue publication of West Dunbartonshire News and instead officers should hold discussions with the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) with a view to ascertaining whether their publication could be expanded on a once a year basis to include budget and performance indicators. In addition further work with the Community Planning Partnership be involved with regard to these discussions about developing a public sector publication for West Dunbartonshire.

As an amendment, Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor Rooney, moved:-

That the Committee agrees to approve Option 4 contained in the report (i.e. produce an online version of the Council Newspaper only).

On a vote being taken, 2 Members voted for the amendment, 4 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

EQUALITY SCHEME 2009/12

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive seeking the Committee's approval of an Equality Scheme 2009/12.

After discussion and having heard the Policy Officer (Disability & Access) in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to approve the report and the Equality Scheme 2009/12.

RACE EQUALITY SCHEME – ANNUAL REPORT 2009

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive summarising the annual report on the Race Equality Scheme prior to the amalgamation into the Single Equality Scheme 2009-12.

The Committee agreed to note the progress made under the existing Race Equality Scheme and that this provided a sound basis for the forthcoming Equality Scheme 2009-12.

CARBON MANAGEMENT PLAN

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing information on and seeking approval of the Carbon Management Plan (CMP).

After discussion and having heard the Sustainable Development Officer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the Carbon Management Plan;
- (2) to note that budget bids relating to the implementation of the Carbon Management Plan would require to be considered as part of the capital budget commitment in future years;
- (3) that officers should investigate the possibility of holding a briefing for Members on the issues involved together with the publication of a reference guide in this respect;
- (4) that there should be appropriate Member involvement on the Project Board; and
- (5) that annual carbon management performance monitoring reports be submitted to the appropriate Committee.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT: PERIOD 6 2009/10

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising on the performance of the Chief Executive departmental budget for the period to 15 October 2009.

The Committee agreed to note the report.

CORPORATE SERVICES BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT: PERIOD 6

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising on the performance of the Corporate Services budget for the period to 15 October 2009.

The Committee agreed to note, with satisfaction, the favourable variance of £0.319m in the Corporate Services departmental budget to date.

UPDATE ON FINANCE REVENUES COLLECTION PERFORMANCE 2009/10

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on the billing and collection of local revenues.

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that the 2009/10 in-year collection rates for Council Tax and National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) were on track to meet the target performance levels; and
- (2) to note that the 2009/10 collection rate for rents was in line with last year's collection performance level and that an action plan was in place to secure further improvements in rent collection performance.

TREASURY UPDATE (1 APRIL 2009 – 15 OCTOBER 2009)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising on interest rates and treasury transactions of the Council which have taken place during the period 1 April 2009 to 15 October 2009.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORTING – QUARTER 2 (2009/2010)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising on the levels of employee sickness absence for the second quarter (July, August and September) of 2009.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

TRUST FUNDS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising on the balances within the trust funds as at 31 March 2009.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Accounting in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the up-to-date position of the trust funds; and
- (2) to note that the Manager of Accounting would provide information to the relevant Members on the status and current position of the Millburn Trust.

DUMBARTON COMMON GOOD FUND – MONITORING REPORT TO 15 OCTOBER 2009

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing details of income and expenditure on the Common Good Fund Account to 15 October 2009.

The Committee agreed to note the terms of the report.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE’S DEPARTMENTAL PLAN 2009/13 – MID YEAR REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive setting out progress against the Chief Executive’s Departmental Plan for 2009/13, from 1 April to 30 September 2009.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Policy and Performance in answer to Members’ questions, it was agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) to note that including the percentage completion of items on Covalent would be of benefit.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT ARRANGEMENTS: CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – PROGRESS REPORT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive detailing the progress of the Continuous Improvement function for the period July – October 2009 across a number of key areas.

After discussion and having heard the Seconded Manager, Quality and Evaluation and the Executive Director of Corporate Services in elaboration and in answer to Members’ questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 11.35 a.m.