

CORPORATE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on Wednesday, 29 April 2009 in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank at 10.00 a.m.

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

Attending: Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Andrew A. Fraser, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services; David Connell, Head of Finance and ICT; Vincent Gardiner, Manager of Exchequer; Gillian McNeilly, Manager of Accounting; William Gibson, Section Head (Estates) and Craig Stewart, Committee Officer.

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

Councillor Craig McLaughlin in the Chair

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Robertson declared a financial interest in Item 7 “Dumbarton Common Good Fund – Ground Leases at Nominal Rentals within Broadmeadow Industrial Estate” and advised that he would take no part in the decision and would leave the meeting during the Committee’s consideration of this item.

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the Meeting of Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on 25 February 2009 were submitted and approved as a correct record, subject to the undernoted correction:-

It was agreed that in respect of the item entitled “Grants Update” (Pages 1776/77 refer), an additional recommendation (5) be added as follows:-

- (5) that £5,000 be transferred to the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) from the grants contingency budget for the purposes of Playscheme Grants.

MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE CULTURAL SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of Meetings of the Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee held on 3 February 2009 (Special) and 10 March 2009 (Ordinary) were submitted and approved as a correct record.

In relation to an issue raised by Councillor C. McLaughlin, Chair, concerning the War Memorial at Christie Park, Alexandria, it was agreed to remit this matter to the Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee for consideration.

RENEWAL OF INSURANCE CONTRACTS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services seeking authority to renew and, where appropriate, re-tender the Council's Insurance Contracts.

Having heard Councillor C. McLaughlin, Chair, and the Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Convener of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee, to renew the Insurance Contracts which are subject to Long Term Agreements;
- (2) that authority be delegated to the Executive Director of Corporate Services, in consultation with the Convener of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee, to re-tender the Council's Engineering Insurance/Inspection and Hired in Plant Contracts and re-tender particular Insurance Contracts where that was considered to be in the best interests of the Council;
- (3) to note the position with regard to the renewal of the Mortgage Property Blanket Insurance Policy on 1 April 2009; and
- (4) to note that an appropriate Service Level Agreement clause relating to service standards and timescales would be incorporated into tender specifications as required.

DEVELOPMENT OF STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP PROPOSALS - PRACTICAL REVISIONS TO REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive proposing some practical amendments to reporting arrangements, with the aim of improving the Council's decision making processes.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) that the Conclusions and Officers' Recommendations sections of the report format be combined;
- (2) that the effective use of report formats by officers should be monitored by means of an annual report to the Corporate Management Team (CMT), (Members would have the opportunity to raise any specific issues with Executive Directors);
- (3) that, where appropriate, initial Option Appraisal and Integrated Impact Assessment be carried out during the earlier stages of decision making, and that the resulting information be set out in the Main Issues section of reports;
- (4) that the process of Option Appraisal be subject to review;
- (5) that training be provided for members on Integrated Impact Assessment;
- (6) that Briefing Notes should be provided in the format attached as Appendix 2 to the report;
- (7) that a questionnaire would be prepared, and sent to all Elected Members/lay members of Committees/Council, which would ask Members/lay members to indicate their preferences on how they wished to receive Briefing Notes, i.e. either electronically/hard copy or both, with copies of the Briefing Notes also being made available via the Intranet and in Members' offices; and
- (8) that Briefing Notes should be made available to the public via the Internet, and in hard copy where requested.

DUMBARTON COMMON GOOD FUND – GROUND LEASES AT NOMINAL RENTALS WITHIN BROADMEADOW INDUSTRIAL ESTATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development providing information requested by the Committee in relation to ground leases under the Dumbarton Common Good Fund which are at nominal rentals and assessing the options for selling these interests.

The Committee agreed that the Common Good Fund ground leases within Broadmeadow Industrial Estate, Dumbarton should not be considered for disposal on the basis of the issues detailed in the report.

RENT ARREARS POLICY

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services seeking approval for a rent arrears policy for West Dunbartonshire Council.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Exchequer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to approve the rent arrears policy, attached to the report.

FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS – QUARTER 4 2008/2009

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services seeking approval for rent arrears write-offs for the fourth quarter of 2008/09.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to approve the cases submitted for write-off totalling £45,633.97 as detailed in the Appendix to these Minutes.

OLD PEOPLE'S WELFARE GRANT FUNDING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing the Committee with options regarding the best use of grant funding for elderly welfare organisations.

The Committee noted that at the meeting of the Community Participation Committee held on 18 March 2009 (Page 1835 refers), that Committee agreed to recommend to Council, that as a result of the opinions expressed by the 19 groups represented on the Focus Group, the status quo regarding Christmas payments be maintained and that officers should submit a report to Council or the appropriate Committee reflecting this recommendation.

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

- (a) that further to the community group consultation and the recorded views of the Community Participation Committee, the Committee notes the recommendations contained in the report but instead agrees that the status quo should remain.
- (b) that in order to address safety and other such concern, a review is required to explore the possible options for the administration of the financial payments; and
- (c) that the review referred to should also seek the views of the respective groups for suggestions on how to reduce safety risks as well as suggesting options for the staffing and processing of the funds.

GRANTS UPDATE

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

- (a) providing an update on grants to voluntary organisations through Dumbarton Common Good and Community Council budgets; and

- (b) providing an analysis of local grants approved by the Council for Voluntary Service (CVS) during 2008/09.

After discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Manager of Accounting in elaboration and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the undernoted recommendations:-
 - (a) Dumbarton Common Good (2009/2010) - £8,500;
 - (b) Community Councils (2009/2010) - £4,931.23; and
 - (c) WDCVS allocation to voluntary groups (2009/10) - £105,560;
- (2) to note the grants approved through the administration of grants by the CVS during 2008/09.
- (3) to ask the CVS to assist the Bellsmyre Digital Community Project in developing an exit strategy (if no alternative viable funding sources can be identified); and
- (4) that such a strategy should include a review of the services delivered by the project, in particular the youth diversion work, to determine if there are potential alternative arrangements that can be put in to place to continue such works.

PROVOST'S FUND

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising of the current sum available within the Provost's Fund and inviting Members to approve a top up.

After discussion and having heard the Head of Finance and ICT in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the transfer of £5,000 from the local Grants budget to the Provost's Fund;
- (2) that a briefing note would be sent to all Members of the Committee giving information on the number of applications made and refused in respect of the Provost's Fund for the current financial year as well as for 2007/08 and 2008/09; and
- (3) that the additional information referred to at (2) above would be incorporated into any future reports on this matter.

COLLECTION OF NON-DOMESTIC RATES

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising of the processes undertaken to recover National Non Domestic Rates (NNDR) from incorporated bodies.

The Committee agreed to note the procedures in place to collect NNDR.

UPDATE ON FINANCE REVENUES PERFORMANCE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on the billing of the local Council Tax.

The Committee agreed to note the Council Tax billing performance to date.

TREASURY UPDATE (1 APRIL 2008 – 15 MARCH 2009)

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising on interest rates and treasury transactions of the Council which had taken place during the period 1 April 2008 to 15 March 2009.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

The meeting closed at 10.30 a.m.