

## **CORPORATE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on Wednesday, 28 May 2008 in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton at 10.00 a.m.

**Present:** Councillors Jim Bollan, Margaret Bootland, Jim Brown, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Ronnie McColl, Craig McLaughlin, Iain Robertson and Martin Rooney.

**Attending:** Joyce White, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Terry Lanagan, Executive Director of Educational Services; Liz Cochrane, Principal Policy Officer; David Connell, Head of Finance and ICT; Stephen Brown, Head of Legal, Administrative and Regulatory Services; Gillian McNeilly, Manager of Accounting; Vincent Gardiner, Manager of Exchequer; John Duffy, Section Head - Risk Management; Lynne Henderson, Policy Officer, Corporate Planning and Performance Review; Cheryl Gallacher, Sustainable Development Officer; Iain Thomson, Quality and Performance Officer and Fiona Anderson, Committee Officer.

**Apology:** An apology for absence was intimated on behalf of Councillor Marie McNair.

**Councillor Craig McLaughlin in the Chair**

### **MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

The Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on 26 March 2008 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

### **MINUTES OF CORPORATE CULTURAL SUB-COMMITTEE**

The Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee held on 20 March 2008 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

After discussion and having heard the Manager of Legal Services in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Chair, Councillor R. McColl, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved:-

- (1) that the Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee be given delegated authority over its own budget and all cultural events;

- (2) that officers should prepare a Scheme of Delegation and identify a budget heading which would be reported to the next meeting of the Corporate Cultural Sub-Committee; and
- (3) that a report should be submitted to the next meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee.

Following further discussion and having heard the Manager of Legal Services and the Head of Finance and ICT in further explanation, as an amendment, Councillor Rooney, seconded by Councillor McBride, moved:-

To continue with the status quo meantime until the report comes forward to the next meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee to clarify the full extent of the delegated powers.

On a vote being taken 4 Members voted for the amendment and 5 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

### **CORPORATE DEBT POLICY**

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on 26 March 2008:-

- (a) a report was re-submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing information on the introduction of a Corporate Debt Policy; and
- (b) a report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Service providing an update on the development of a Corporate Debt Policy.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the seminar scheduled for 16 June 2008, and
- (2) to note that a further report would be submitted to Committee in August at the conclusion of the consultation process.

### **SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENTS**

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the progress in developing West Dunbartonshire's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) and requesting Members' comments.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services in elaboration and in response to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to recommend that the wording of the statement in the draft Single Outcome Agreement relating to a "Staff Survey question to be developed on perception of bureaucracy within the Council", be amended;
- (2) to note that the Chief Executive and the Principal Policy Officer would have further discussion to refine the draft Agreement;
- (3) that Members of the Committee would provide any comments on the SOA templates by 4 June 2008;
- (4) to note that the final version of the document would be submitted to Council at its June meeting for approval; and
- (5) to recommend to officers that references to lesser known abbreviations such as GRO should be written out in full.

### **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY**

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing information on the Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan for 2008-2009.

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

- (1) to note the comments made in connection with trying to reduce the length of reports with a view to reducing paper waste;
- (2) to note the importance of all documents being made available in paper format to enable members of the public to access them more easily;
- (3) to note that paper copies of West Dunbartonshire's Sustainable Development Strategy 2008-2012 would be issued to Councillors McBride and Robertson;
- (4) to approve the Sustainable Development Strategy 2008-2012; and
- (5) that an updated Action Plan be submitted to the Committee in October 2008.

### **CORPORATE SERVICES' DEPARTMENT – QUARTER 4 PERFORMANCE REVIEW**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services setting out the performance of the Corporate Services Department in the fourth quarter of 2007/2008 from 1 January to 31 March 2008.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Manager of Exchequer in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to congratulate the Environmental Health Section on reaching the final stages of the MJ Public Protection Achievement of the Year Award and to wish them luck and note that the winner would be announced on 26 June 2008 in London;
- (2) to note that the Council's new website which was introduced in January 2008 and has attracted criticism for not being user friendly, is to be reviewed and improvements introduced where applicable;
- (3) to note the measures being undertaken to improve absence rates, particularly in relation to stress-related absences;
- (4) to note that the Executive Director of Educational Services would be the lead officer on a Stress Working Group;
- (5) to note the arrangement of a three day training programme dealing with training Managers in the Corporate Services Department to identify and cope with stress-related problems in the workplace;
- (6) to note that Councillor Rooney would meet the Executive Director of Corporate Services after the meeting to discuss absence rates and the reasons for absence in more detail;
- (7) to request that the effectiveness of the telephone switchboard and the contact centre be appraised by the Director; and
- (8) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

#### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT – QUARTER 4 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2007/08**

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive setting out the performance of the Chief Executive's Department in the final quarter of 2007/08 and providing an overview of performance in 2007/08 as a whole.

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

- (1) to congratulate the Chief Executive's Department staff involved in:-
  - (a) the production of the West Dunbartonshire News, the Council Newspaper, for winning the Gold Award for Best Newspaper at the Chartered Institute of PR Scotland Pride Awards in December 2007; and
  - (b) the ongoing work of the Fairtrade Steering Group for gaining Fairtrade status for Balloch in September 2007;

- (2) to note that the Fairtrade Steering Group would apply for Fairtrade status for the rest of West Dunbartonshire on an area by area basis;
- (3) to request that the Chief Executive's Department investigate the cost of producing a sticker incorporating the WDC logo and Balloch Fairtrade for display in Bed and Breakfast establishments and shops in the Balloch area; and
- (4) otherwise to note the contents of the report.

### **CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT – SERVICE PLAN 2008/12**

A report was submitted by Chief Executive setting out the 2008/12 Service Plan for the Chief Executive's Department.

Following discussion and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Principal Policy Officer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to approve the implementation of the Service Plan.

### **WRITE-OFF POLICIES**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services recommending amendments to the current write off policies.

Having heard the Manager of Exchequer in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to approve the recommended change in council tax and community charge write off policy.

### **BENEFIT INVESTIGATION TEAM FRAUD RESULTS 2007/2008 AND ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN 2008/2009**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services informing of the performance of the benefit investigation team during 2007/2008 and seeking approval for the team's business plan for 2008/2009.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Manager of Exchequer in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the benefit investigation team fraud results report 2007/2008;
- (2) to approve the benefit investigation team business plan for 2008/2009; and
- (3) to request that a more detailed report including cost benefit analysis be submitted to a future meeting.

## **HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT FRAUD STRATEGY**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services seeking approval for the amended Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council.

Having heard the Chair, the Committee agreed to approve the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report.

## **HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT PERFORMANCE 2007/2008**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services updating the Committee on housing and council tax benefit performance for 2007/2008.

Having heard Councillor Rooney, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) to congratulate staff on the dramatic improvement and excellent performance in the key areas of housing and council tax benefit administration.

## **UPDATE ON FINANCE REVENUES COLLECTION 2007/08**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on the collection of the local Council Tax and National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).

Having heard the Chair, the Committee agreed to note the Council Tax and NNDR collection performance to date.

## **TREASURY UPDATE (1 APRIL 2007 – 30 APRIL 2008)**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising about interest rates and the treasury transactions of the Council which have taken place during the period 1 April 2007 to 30 April 2008.

Having heard the Chair, Councillor McLaughlin, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

## **SUMMARY OF VOLUNTARY GRANTS 2007/2008**

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an analysis of voluntary grants approved during 2007/08.

Having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

### GRANTS UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on grants to voluntary organisations through Dumbarton Common Good, Community Council budgets and via delegated Member approval and providing details of relevant grant applications put forward for Committee approval.

Following discussion and having heard the Manager of Accounting in answer to Members' questions, Councillor Bollan, seconded by Councillor McBride, moved:-

That the Committee agrees the following amendment to the recommendations of funding from Dumbarton Common Good Fund:-

- (1) Bellsmyre Community Advice Centre: £20,000.00
- (2) Bellsmyre Digital Community: £30,000.00

As an amendment, Councillor McLaughlin, seconded by Councillor Robertson, moved:-

That the Committee agrees:-

- (1) to note the grants approved under delegated authority through the transitional period of transferring the administration of grants to the CVS; and
- (2) to approve the following recommendations for:-
  - (a) Dumbarton Common Good 2008/2009 - £70,650.00
  - (b) Community Councils 2008/2009 - £4,360.12

On a vote being taken 4 Members voted for the amendment and 5 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

The meeting closed at 11.20 a.m.