

CORPORATE SERVICES COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held in the Council Chambers, Clydebank Town Hall, Dumbarton Road, Clydebank on Wednesday, 28 March 2007 at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillors Tony Devine, Duncan McDonald, Craig McLaughlin and Martin Rooney,

Attending: David Connell, Head of Finance; Stephen Brown, Head of Legal and Administrative Services; Angela Clements, Head of ICT and Business Development; Vincent Gardiner, Manager of Exchequer; Gillian Jump, Manager of Accounting; Stephen West, Manager of Resources, Social Work Services; Liz Cochrane, Policy Manager; Marion Smith, Section Head (Revenues HR & ES); Francine Ewen, Interim Personnel Manager; Donald Gordon, Personnel Advisor, Employee Development; Ian Hutchison, Procurement Team Leader; Lesley-Anne Haigh, Grants Administrator and Shona Barton, Administrative Officer.

Apologies: Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Denis Agnew, Margaret Bootland, Geoff Calvert, Dennis Brogan and Andy White.

Councillor Tony Devine in the Chair

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held on 31 January 2007 were submitted and approved as a correct record.

VARIATION IN ORDER OF BUSINESS

Having heard the Convener, Councillor Devine, the Committee agreed to vary the order of business as hereinafter recorded.

FORMER TENANT RENT ARREARS – QUARTER 3 AND QUARTER 4 WRITE-OFFS

A report was submitted by the Acting Director of Housing, Regeneration and Environmental Services (Housing and Regeneration Services) seeking approval for rent arrears write-offs for the third and fourth quarter of 2006/2007.

The Committee agreed to approve the cases submitted for write-off.

REMIT FROM COMMUNITY SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE : CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRES – CORPORATE BUILDINGS AND RECEPTION SERVICES

In terms of remit from the meeting of the Community Safety and Environmental Services Committee held on 7 February 2007, there was submitted the relevant Excerpt Minute together with a report by the Chief Executive providing costs for the provision of a reception service in Clydebank Town Hall and detailing proposals on how parking at the Municipal Buildings, Dumbarton could be improved.

Having heard the Head of Legal and Administrative Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to remit this report to the next ordinary meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council.

GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITY GROUPS – UPDATES TO CURRENT PROCEDURES

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held on 31 January 2007 (Page 2972, paragraph 11343 refers), a report was resubmitted by the Chief Executive recommending new procedures to be introduced in respect of grants to voluntary organisations and community groups.

Members were asked to note that this report had been referred for comment to the meeting of the Community Participation Committee held on 21 March 2007. An extract minute from that meeting was circulated for Members' information.

Having heard the Convener, Councillor Devine, the Committee agreed that:-

- (1) grant application information and awards would be advertised by a variety of appropriate methods, within a limited budget of £500;
- (2) there would be one point of contact and a central database introduced by the Council, with link officers identified where appropriate;

- (3) it would not be normal practice for grants to be awarded at 100% of expenditure and that evidence of seeking other funding sources would be requested;
- (4) the application form would be amended to incorporate a request for information on Council priorities and additional criteria identified;
- (5) additional criteria would be considered as detailed in paragraph 3.1(e) of the report;
- (6) a report be brought to Committee after the year end detailing the breakdown of grants by different categories;
- (7) grants in excess of £10,000 would be considered once per annum, with the Council making every effort to advertise and inform relevant groups of deadlines within appropriate timescales;
- (8) delegated powers should remain as they are at present;
- (9) appropriate information would be given in the application pack to ensure applicants were aware of the appeals procedure;
- (10) the three grant thresholds be revised as detailed in paragraph 3.1 (j) of the report,
- (11) monitoring procedures based upon the new thresholds would be revised to allow more ad hoc monitoring visits and checks; and
- (12) the policy wording would be amended to allow grant applications to be made at other points throughout the year under exceptional circumstances.

BEST VALUE AUDIT – COSTS OF PREPARATION OF RESPONSE

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held on 31 January 2007 (Page 2970, paragraph 11323 refers), a report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing information in relation to the cost of the preparation of the response to the Best Value Audit report.

Having heard the Head of Legal and Administrative Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the information contained in the report.

RECOVERY OF ARREARS

With reference to the Minutes of Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held on 31 January 2007 (Pages 2970/2971, paragraph 11329 refers), a report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the recovery of arrears in respect of residual Community Charge (Poll Tax).

Having heard the Manager of Exchequer in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the level of poll tax arrears; and
- (2) that a review would be undertaken of the caseload currently lodged with the Sheriff Officer.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT – QUARTER 3 PERFORMANCE REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the performance of the Chief Executive's Department in the third quarter of 2006/2007 for the period from 1 October to 31 December 2006.

The committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

CORPORATE PROCUREMENT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the progress to date of the Corporate Procurement Strategy, the Corporate Procurement Unit and related developments.

Having heard the Procurement Team Leader and the Head of Finance in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to instruct that a formal revision of the Corporate Procurement Strategy takes place to embrace the recommendations from the McClelland Report; and
- (3) that reports on Corporate Procurement be submitted to Committee on a twice yearly basis.

RENEWAL OF INSURANCE CONTRACTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive seeking approval to renew and, where appropriate, re-tender the Council's Insurance Contracts.

Having heard the Head of Legal and Administrative Services in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to re-tender the Council's main Insurance Contracts and re-tender particular Insurance Contracts where this is considered to be in the best interests of the Council;
- (2) to delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to renew Insurance Contracts which are the subject of Long Term Agreements and, if appropriate agree an extension;
- (3) to authorise the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, to accept the most economically advantageous Tenders, the outcome of which will be reported to the Corporate Services Committee;
- (4) to note the position with regard to the renewal of the Mortgage Property Blanket Insurance Contract on 1 April 2007;
- (5) to note that the tendering process would involve interviews with those companies who had tendered, and that Members of the Committee would be asked to provide details of any concerns they have which will be put to the relevant companies;
- (6) that the Policy Unit be instructed to seek feedback on the service provided by the Council's insurers via consultation with the Citizens Panel; and
- (7) that clear guidelines on performance standards, particularly in relation to responding to enquiries and correspondence would be written into any contracts agreed.

VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE/VOLUNTARY EARLY RETIRAL EXERCISE – 2007

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the Scheme of Voluntary Early Retirement and Voluntary Severance which was agreed by the Corporate Services Committee on 28 November 2006.

Having heard the Interim Personnel Manager in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and

- (2) that a further report be submitted to a future Committee providing more details with particular reference to the costs/savings associated with the scheme.

POLITICALLY RESTRICTED POSTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the revisions made to the Council's Guidance on Politically Restricted Posts.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report and the actions which would be undertaken by Corporate Personnel.

PROCUREMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE HR MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the progress being made to specify and procure an HR Management Information System in line with the timescales indicated within the Best Value Improvement Plan.

Having heard the Interim Personnel Manager in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

CORPORATE EYECARE PROCEDURES

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive on proposed revisions to the Council's current procedures for eyesight tests for employees who are (habitual) display screen equipment (DSE) users and require spectacles exclusively for use with display screen equipment.

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the proposal to select Specsavers Opticians to provide a corporate eyecare scheme for employees who are defined as DSE users; and
- (2) that the Scheme be reviewed 2 years after introduction.

CLYDE VALLEY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing information on the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Consortium and making recommendations thereon.

Having heard the Convener, Councillor Devine, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report;
- (2) to formalise the Council commitment to the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Consortium through a Memorandum of Understanding/Minute of Agreement; and
- (3) that the nomination to the proposed Joint Committee referred to in Section 3 of the report be made by the new Council following the Election.

COSLA STAFFING WATCH SURVEY (DECEMBER 2006)

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising on the size of the Council's workforce as at 9 December 2006.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

RELEASE OF RETROSPECTIVE EUROPEAN REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FUNDING TO COMM-IT

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive seeking approval to provide retrospective European Regional Development Funding (ERDF) to Comm-it, a not for profit Social Economy organisation that provides IT support and services to other social economy organisations in the West Dunbartonshire area.

Having heard the Head of Finance in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to remit the report to the next ordinary meeting of West Dunbartonshire Council together with a further report providing additional information on the organisation, what the money will be spent on and how much funding they have already received.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE BUDGETARY CONTROL REPORT: PERIOD 10 (2006/07)

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the performance of the Chief Executive Department's budget for the period to 15 February 2007.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

UPDATE ON FINANCE REVENUES COLLECTION 2006/07

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

Having heard the Manager of Exchequer in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the Council Tax and NNDR collection performance;
- (2) to pass on congratulations to the staff involved; and
- (3) that the Manager of Exchequer would supply information on the breakdown of Council Tax arrears to Councillor McLaughlin.

INTEREST RATE REPORT (1 APRIL 2006 – 15 FEBRUARY 2007)

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising on interest rates during the period from 1 April 2006 to 15 February 2007.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

TREASURY TRANSACTIONS (1 APRIL 2006 – 15 FEBRUARY 2007)

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the treasury transactions of the Council for the period from 1 April 2006 to 15 February 2007.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

DUMBARTON COMMON GOOD FUND – MONITORING REPORT TO 15 FEBRUARY 2007

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing details of income and expenditure on the Common Good Fund Account to 15 February 2007.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

TRADING ACCOUNTS ANNUAL REVIEW

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the review undertaken of the Council's trading activities.

The Committee agreed to the changes as detailed in the report which would result in only two proposed Statutory Trading Operations – Housing Maintenance and Grounds Maintenance.

NEW SERVICE DISRUPTION PROCEDURE

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive advising of the Service Disruption Procedure recently introduced by ICT & Business Development.

Having heard the Head of ICT & Business Development in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the contents of the report; and
- (2) to request that a report be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee providing further information on contingency plans and responses to various scenarios.

ICT & BD ELECTRONIC PURCHASE ORDER AUTHORISATION

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the introduction of electronic authorisation of Purchase Orders raised through the ICT & Business Development HEAT Helpdesk system, as a further efficiency to the existing process.

Having heard the Head of ICT & Business Development in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

INAUGURAL 'CELEBRATION OF LEARNING' EVENT UPDATE

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the recent inaugural 'Celebration of Learning' event which was developed by West Dunbartonshire Council in partnership with Learndirect Scotland, to celebrate ICT learning within the Council.

Having heard the Convener, Councillor Devine, and the Head of ICT & Business Development, in further explanation and in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

COMMUNITY COUNCIL GRANT – CLYDEBANK EAST COMMUNITY COUNCIL

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing details of a request for urgent funding received from Clydebank East Community Council.

The Committee agreed to award a start-up grant of £200 to Clydebank East Community Council.

GRANTS TO VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive providing an update on the budget position of Grants to Voluntary Organisations and providing details of grant applications put forward for approval.

Having heard the Manager of Resources and the Manager of Accounting in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the current budgetary position on Grants to Voluntary Organisations and Community Council Grants as detailed in Appendix A to the report;
- (2) to award grants to Duntocher Out of School Care and Victim Support West Dunbartonshire as per the officers' recommendations (as detailed in Appendix 1 to this Minute), but that the remainder of the grant requested by these organisations be paid from the 2007/2008 Grants budget; and
- (3) that the Grants to Voluntary Organisations for 2007/2008 be dealt with as shown in Appendix 2 to this Minute.

WRITE OFF OF NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive seeking approval for the write-off of debts in respect of National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR).

The Committee agreed to approve the write-off of NNDR debts totalling £614,039.02

WRITE OFF OF MISCELLANEOUS INCOME DEBTOR ACCOUNTS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive seeking approval for the write-off of debts in respect of miscellaneous income debtor accounts.

The Committee agreed to approve the write-off of miscellaneous income debtor accounts totalling £140,619.11.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

The Committee agreed to approve the undernoted Resolution:-

"That in terms of Section 50 (A) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act, 1973 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it may involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 2 of Part 1 of Schedule 7A to the Act."

WRITE OFF OF MISCELLANEOUS INCOME DEBTOR ACCOUNTS – DECEASED PERSONS

A report was submitted by the Chief Executive seeking approval for the write-off of debts in respect of miscellaneous income debtor accounts.

The Committee agreed to approve the write-off of miscellaneous income debtor accounts totalling £31,150.19 in respect of deceased persons.

CONVENER'S REMARKS

The Convener, Councillor Devine, thanked officers for their assistance in facilitating the work of the Committee over the past four years and expressed special thanks to Ms. Haigh, Grants Administrator, for her work with grant applications.

The meeting closed at 11.00 a.m.