

CORPORATE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of the Corporate and Efficient Governance Committee held on Wednesday, 20 June 2012 in Meeting Room 3, Council Offices, Garshake Road, Dumbarton at 10.00 a.m.

Present: Provost Douglas McAllister *, Councillors George Black, Jim Finn, David McBride, Jonathan McColl, Patrick McGlinchey, Lawrence O'Neill, Gail Robertson, Martin Rooney, Kath Ryall and Michelle Stewart.

Attending: Angela Wilson, Executive Director of Corporate Services; Lorraine Coyne, Head of Audit, Performance & Strategic Planning; Andrew Fraser, Head of Legal, Democratic & Regulatory Services; Tricia O'Neill, Head of Human Resources and Organisational Development; Stephen West, Head of Finance & Resources; Peter Barry *, Community Planning and Policy Manager, Vincent Gardiner, Client & Support Manager, Colin McDougall, Manager of Risk & Performance, Gillian McNeilly, Finance Manager; Patricia Marshall, ICT Manager, and Christine McCaffary, Senior Democratic Services Officer.

Apology: Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Councillor John Mooney.

* Arrived later in the meeting

Councillor Kath Ryall in the Chair

CHAIR'S REMARKS

Councillor Ryall, Chair, welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Committee since the local government elections in May, particularly to new members and also thanked existing members for their past contributions to the business of the Committee.

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Councillor McBride declared a non-financial interest in the item "Update on Elderly Welfare Grant" as his wife was on the committee of one of the organisations. He would continue to take part in consideration of this item.

UPDATE OF VOLUNTARY GRANTS 2011/12 AND 2012/13

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an analysis of voluntary grants approved during 2011/12 and grants made from the Community Council and Dumbarton Common Good budgets.

Following discussion and having heard officers in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note the position of the grants paid out in 2011/12, as detailed in Appendix A of the report;
- (2) to note the update on Bellsmyre Schools Out Club and agree that the power delegated to officers to provide any urgent funding be extended to cover the summer months with any additional funding being reported to a future meeting of the Committee;
- (3) to approve the grants to be awarded for Community Councils (totalling £3,710);
- (4) to approve the grants recommended to be awarded from the Dumbarton Common Good Fund (totalling £17,500) and to advise the Brain Injury Experience Network (BIEN) to apply for the remainder of the funding sought from the community chest fund through application to the Community Volunteer Service (CVS) and that confirmation be obtained from the CVS on the outcome of that application;
- (5) that the Executive Director of Corporate Services issue a Briefing Note to Members before the next meeting of the Committee, providing information on the compliance of the grants awarded in 2011/12 in relation to the terms of the Dumbarton Common Good Fund;
- (6) that Councillor Ryall, Chair, write to the CVS congratulating the group on its success in identifying an additional £92,000 from external sources that was then awarded to groups in the area during 2011/12.

WRITE OFF OF MISCELLANEOUS INCOME DEBTOR ACCOUNTS

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services recommending for approval the write off of debts in respect of miscellaneous income debtor accounts, details of which had been issued previously to Members of the Committee.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the write off of miscellaneous income debtor accounts totalling £119,577.50; and

- (2) that, in future, lists of accounts being recommended for write-off be provided to all Elected Members.

WRITE OFF OF NATIONAL NON-DOMESTIC RATES

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services recommending for approval the write off of debts in respect of National Non-Domestic Rates (NNDR), details of which had been issued previously to members of the Committee.

Following discussion, and having heard the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Client & Support Manager, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the write-off of NNDR accounts totalling £1,023,088.02; and
- (2) that the Executive Director of Corporate Services issue a Briefing Note to Members providing information on the subject of National Non-Domestic Rates.

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 new allocation to the Fund.

The Committee agreed:-

- (1) to approve the transfer of £3,000 from the local Grants budget to the Provost's Fund; and
- (2) to note that any further funding would require another report to be submitted to this Committee.

JOB EVALUATION POLICY AND PROCEDURE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services requesting approval of the Job Evaluation Policy and Procedure for implementation within the Council. A copy of the Policy and Procedure was attached as an appendix to the report.

Following discussion, and after hearing the Executive Director of Corporate Services and Head of Human Resources & Organisational Development in answer to Members' questions, the Committee agreed:-

- (1) to note that consultation had taken place, the policy had been agreed by trades unions and the Policy and Procedure had been applied on an interim basis pending full approval from Committee;
- (2) to note that a communication framework would be put in place to support the implementation of the Policy and Procedure; and
- (3) to approve the implementation of the Job Evaluation Policy and Procedure.

UPDATE ON ELDERLY WELFARE GRANT FUNDING

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services providing an update on the distribution of the elderly welfare grant funding for 2011/12, including budget allocations, process review and on the 2012/13 distribution.

Councillor McBride, seconded by Councillor O'Neill, moved:-

The Committee thanks the officers for the report and the work involved in the payments for 2011/12 when the previous SNP administration forced through significant procedural changes that required a massive increase in work for the elderly groups and Council staff. We also note that funding direct to the groups was lower than they had hoped and this has had a detrimental effect on their annual programme and that £40,890 remains unspent from the 2011/12 budget.

The Committee is committed to assisting elderly groups who provide a much needed welfare service throughout the year and wish to continue to provide this support to volunteers who work so hard providing services for our elderly citizens.

Committee therefore agrees:-

1. to allocate the unspent balance of the 2011/12 budget to the Elderly Welfare Groups, on the basis of funding paid to these groups in 2011/12, as soon as practicable;
2. to make arrangements to pay the 2012/13 payments as detailed in para 3.8 of the report, making the administration for the groups as simple as possible, e.g. provide names and addresses of new and former members only;
3. that the Dumbarton Common Good Fund will make an annual grant of £10,000 paid direct to the Dumbarton Senior Citizens' Committee. The Dumbarton Senior Citizens' Committee will no longer be funded through this budget, nor will the Dumbarton Common Good Fund make any contribution to the Elderly Welfare Grants Budget. This grant should now form part of the Common Good budget and be reviewed annually if additional funding is required.

4. to allocate any unspent balance of the 2012/13 to the Elderly Welfare Groups, on the basis of funding paid to these groups in 2012/13, as soon as practicable.

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

Council notes that the changes made by the previous Administration resulted in a fairer allocation of funds to groups and individuals has allowed many more people to benefit from the Elderly Welfare Grant than under the previous Labour system.

Committee agrees:-

1. to allocate the unspent balance of the 2011/12 budget to the Elderly Welfare Groups on a needs basis with the assistance of the CVS.
2. make arrangements to pay the 2012/13 payments as detailed in para 3.8 of the report, making the administration for groups as simple as possible, e.g. provide names and address of new and former members only; and
3. that the Dumbarton Common Good Fund will make an annual grant of £10,000 paid direct to the Dumbarton Senior Citizens' Committee. The Dumbarton Senior Citizens' Committee will no longer be funded through this budget, nor will the Dumbarton Common Good Fund make any contribution to the Elderly Welfare Grants Budget. This grant should now form part of the Common Good Budget and be reviewed annually if additional funding is required.

Note:- Provost McAllister entered the meeting at this point.

Having failed to obtain a seconder, a second amendment moved by Councillor Black fell.

On a vote being taken, 3 Members voted for the amendment and 6 for the motion which was accordingly declared carried.

HOUSING AND COUNCIL TAX BENEFIT FRAUD STRATEGY

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services seeking approval of the amended Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council, which was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Committee agreed to approve the Housing and Council Tax Benefit Fraud Strategy for West Dunbartonshire Council.

TREASURY UPDATE (1 APRIL 2012 – 30 APRIL 2012)

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 2012 to 30 April 2012.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of this report.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENTAL PLAN 2011/15 – PERFORMANCE REVIEW 2011/12

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services setting out the annual performance review of objectives within the Chief Executive's Departmental Plan 2011/15 for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Following discussion and after hearing the Executive Director of Corporate Services and the Manager of Risk & Performance, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

CORPORATE SERVICES DEPARTMENT PLAN 2011/15 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REPORT

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services setting out the annual performance review of objectives within the 2011/15 Corporate Services Department Plan for the period 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012.

Following discussion, the Committee agreed to note the contents of the report.

PRIVATE HOUSING IN DISREPAIR IN WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE

A report was submitted by the Executive Director of Corporate Services advising of the powers available to Council when considering how best to deal with houses in disrepair that are privately owned.

The Committee agreed to note the contents of this report.

The meeting closed at 11.40 a.m.