

RESOURCES TASK GROUP

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RESOURCES TASK GROUP

Report of meeting of Resources Task Group held in the McKinley Room, Riada House, on Thursday 22nd May 2008 at 3.00pm.

Chair: Alderman J Simpson

Present: Aldermen: F Campbell, C Cousley
Councillors: A Cavlan, J Finlay (Mayor) M McCamphill
E Robinson

In attendance: Chief Executive
Director Borough Services
Director Central & Leisure Services
Head of Corporate & Development Services

1. Minutes – Meeting 3 April 2008

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell seconded by Councillor Robinson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of meeting on 3rd April 2008, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

2. Staff Matters

2.1 Additional Fulltime Finance Clerk

The Director of Central and Leisure Services submitted report, as follows, to support the case for increasing the finance staffing resource by the recruitment on a three year fixed term contract basis of an additional finance clerk.

The staffing compliment in the Finance Department was last reviewed in 2002/03 which resulted in the recruitment of the Finance Clerk post.

In the 5 year period from 2002/03 to 2007/08 there has been a substantial increase in the work load of the department.

The following is a list of the functions where there has been a significant increase in the volume of work –

- 30% increase in Gross Expenditure
- 39% increase in Income from council services – requiring receipting, lodging, coding and accounting for through the cash book, debtors ledger and general ledger.

- 77% increase in the number of Receipts issued.
- 10% increase in the number of Invoices processed.
- 9% increase in the number of full times equivalent employees – including accounting for tax, national insurance, superannuation, tax credits, student loans, SSP and SMP.
- 80% increase in the value of outstanding debt – requiring recovering – on occasions through the courts.

In addition the following functions have been added –

1. payment of all weekly paid employees by BACS – strict deadlines to be met so that employees are paid weekly.
2. the introduction of committed accounting – additional work involved with the processing of orders and the reconciliation of expenditure monthly.
3. HM Revenue & Customs requirement to tax all travelling expenses at source – Officers and Councillors.
4. a significant number of financial and statistical returns to DOE, DFP and HM Treasury.
5. freedom of information requests.
6. new financial systems.

An increasing amount of overtime is being worked in order to meet the various deadlines which is certainly not the most efficient way of working.

During the past 2 years there have been major difficulties when there has been periods of sickness absence.

Both internal auditors and external auditors have commented on the lack of segregation of duties with the payroll, creditors, debtors and cash book functions. With the existing level of staff it is not possible to segregate the duties. The auditors have also commented that staff are checking their own work. Again, with the existing level of staffing there is no one else to check the work within the timescale available.

Having sought information from other councils about staffing levels in their Finance Departments Ballymoney has the lowest level of staffing.

In Ballymoney the Director has a much larger remit than counterparts in the other councils therefore has less time to direct to Finance Work.

The Director of Central/Leisure Services recommends that Council approve the establish of a full time Finance Assistant post. The estimated cost is £20256 per annum.

The Chief Executive advised that the recommendation was supported by Corporate Management Team.

The Chief Executive explained that the consideration of the application for the additional staff member had been deferred pending the Director's return to work from sick leave.

After discussion **AGREED:**

To recommend that the establishment in the finance section be increased by an additional full time Finance Clerk, Scale 4, the post being filled on a three year fixed term contract basis, the cost to Council of £20,256, to be met from reserves.

2.2 Replacement Office Administrator – Borough Services

The employment of the current postholder terminates on 8th June, due to premature retirement having been sanctioned by NILGOSC on grounds of permanent ill-health. The Borough Services Director advised that the post was essential to provide Council's Building Control Service with essential administrative support and services and recommended that the post be filled.

It was **AGREED:**

to recommend that the vacant post of Office Administrator in Borough Services Directorate be filled.

2.3 Home Safety Officer Post

The Borough Services Director explained that the Home Safety Officer (job share Wednesday – Friday) recently tendered her resignation with effect from 1st June 2008 having secured other employment.

The Home Accident Prevention Officer post was established in 2006 on a 3 year contact basis, with a full time officer commencing duties on the 1st July 2006. It is a jointly funded post between Investing for Health (£9,000.00 p.a.) and the remainder by Ballymoney, Moyle and Coleraine (circa £6,800 each year 3 costs).

The Contribution from Coleraine Borough Council for years 2 and 3 remains outstanding. A request has yet to be made to Investing for Health for support costs for year 3.

The post has a definitive work plan through to 30th June 2009, across all three Councils particularly in delivering Home Safety Equipment schemes, through funding from IFH to the value of approximately £45,000.

There is no budgetary provision to carry out a normal recruitment exercise. Such an exercise would take a minimum of 12-16 weeks to complete and with the contract duration being less than 12 months, success could not be guaranteed. The job share partner has indicated that she does not wish to return to full time hours.

IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT

- (1) The funding for years 2 and 3 be secured from Coleraine Borough Council.
- (2) The funding for year 3 be requested from Investing for Health Partnership.
- (3) The vacant post be filled through the Services of a Recruitment Agency capable of providing candidates to match the personnel specification and to discharge the duties of the post.

After discussion it was **AGREED:**

- (1) ***The funding for years 2 and 3 be secured from Coleraine Borough Council.***
- (2) ***The funding for year 3 be requested from Investing for Health Partnership.***
- (3) ***The vacant post be filled through the Services of a Recruitment Agency capable of providing candidates to match the personnel specification and to discharge the duties of the post.***

3. Capital Spend 2007/08

A table of capital projects 2006/07 and 2007/08 was circulated and discussed, the Chief Executive and Directors responding to members questions.

4. Contributions to Other Bodies

A table of contributions to other bodies included in the 2008/09 budget and contributions paid 2007/08 was circulated by the Director of Central and Leisure Services.

5. Date of next meeting

Thursday 28th August at 3.00 p.m.

RTG 220508

The meeting closed at 4.40pm

JD/PML

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