

Minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee of the Municipal Association held at Braddan Commissioners' Office on Thursday 27 October 2011 at 7.30pm

Present

Robert Moughtin	Maughold Commissioners (Chairman)
David Talbot	Patrick Commissioners (Vice-Chairman)
Margaret Hodge	Braddan Commissioners
Carol Malarkey	Douglas Borough Council
Rachel Bailey	Lonan Commissioners
Bob Pilling	Malew Commissioners
Paul Craine	Marown Commissioners
Steve Hamer	Michael Commissioners
Rodger Gimbert	Peel Commissioners
Bernadette McCabe	Port St Mary Commissioners (President)
Helen Kinvig	Port St Mary Commissioners
Barbara Dunworth	Secretary

In Attendance

Graham Cregeen MHK
Amanda Craig and Jeff Robinson – Department of Infrastructure

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from: Alan Jones of Peel Commissioners, Katherine Edds of Arbory Commissioners, John Faragher of Douglas Borough Council, Roy Kennaugh of Michael Commissioners, Brian Byers of Lonan Commissioners, and Peter Gunn of Rushen Commissioners

Meeting with Graham Cregeen MHK, Amanda Craig and Jeff Robinson

The Chairman welcomed Mr Cregeen, accompanied Amanda Craig and Jeff Robinson from the Department of Infrastructure. In response to a request from the Department the main purpose of tonight's meeting is a presentation on the provisions made for snow and flood conditions.

Mr Robinson gave details of revised and augmented arrangements and provisions made to improve distribution and availability (free of charge to the public) of vastly increased stocks of salt following the past two severe winters, with new provisions and equipment to service estates and difficult to access areas. Mr Robinson outlined all the plans made, which have been amended in the light of difficulties experienced across the Island in unusually severe conditions recently. Priorities will be to keep transport running on main routes, maintaining access to hospitals, nursing homes and all essential facilities. Relevant literature was distributed and has been circulated, including links to the

Government website and the slide presentation which Mr Robinson was unable to give at the meeting. Mr Robinson and Mrs Craig answered questions and discussed issues raised by Members.

Brief Update

Due to time constraints, Mr Cregeen gave a very brief update on matters previously raised or pending; these will be further discussed at our January 2012 meeting. Included were amendments to legislation, revised election fees in light of the rise in inflation and some small amendments to local election rules which will be put to Tynwald in January. A training event is to be presented by Mr Mike Kewley of Port Erin Commissioners early next year. Training is planned for Responsible Finance Officers although the cut in budgets may cause a delay: it is being arranged through PKF and is expensive. Mr Cregeen commented that five sessions were offered this year and still people did not support them: it may not be possible to fund these again and the responsibility then will have to lie with local authorities as the Department of Infrastructure is not obliged to provide training.

Relating to pensions a document is due to be sent out for consultation in the coming months with a number of changes proposed in line with changes in the UK.

Work is ongoing on byelaws and is near to completion. Audit procedures are moving towards the deadline of 31st October with a report to Tynwald in February 2012.

A brief discussion followed during which Members raised queries and issues and Mr Cregeen responded.

Mr Cregeen requested feedback on the draft planning policy statement. He went on to say that this may be his last meeting with our Members and sincerely thanked them for their time which has been greatly appreciated. However, Mr Cregeen would like to be allowed to introduce the Member appointed to meet with the Municipal Association.

Thank You

The Chairman thanked Mr Cregeen and his associates for attending the meeting and providing much useful information which would be very helpful during the winter months. He commented that our meetings with Mr Cregeen have been most beneficial to all concerned. The Members of the Department then departed.

The meeting continued with the monthly agenda.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of meeting held 25 August 2011, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record and duly signed by the Chairman who took the opportunity to thank

Members for the letters, cards and gifts he received during his illness, which were much appreciated.

Matters Arising from Minutes

- (a) Meeting with Jenny Oram: Members agreed that it had been an excellent and beneficial presentation.
- (b) Rate Arrears: Members discussed issues which had arisen in their rate collection procedures and it was clear that a list of defaulters sent with the annual rate statement would be of assistance. Auditors would then be in a position to consider write-offs. A Member asked whether any prosecutions take place; it was felt this could happen, with adequate follow-up procedures and is sometimes the case. Amanda Craig made a note regarding provision of such a list at the last meeting.
- (c) Possible Sewerage Rate: Mrs Carol Malarkey spoke about the concern of Douglas Borough Council that this could lead to redundancies. The PowerPoint presentation in August brought up the fact that there could be a substantial sewage rate in addition to the water rate. Members discussed the issue and felt that big changes are afoot. Mr Talbot requested Members to write stating their concerns.
ACTION: Members
- (d) The discussion turned to possible amalgamation of local authorities. Mr Bob Pilling of Malew Commissions raised his concern regarding what would happen to the assets of local authorities. Members talked about sharing services and equipment. It was clear that Members were happy to work together to provide services in the most economical way. Mr David Talbot of Patrick Commissioners felt it vital that Members make clear their reasons why we should be kept separate. Members suggested this could be a way to bring more Members into the Municipal Association. It may be a good time to write to non-members pointing out the benefits of Membership in such matters and/or hold a seminar. This will be an agenda item in November.

ACTION: November Agenda

Treasurer's Report

The report had been circulated and was duly noted.

Secretary's Report

The report had been circulated and was duly noted

Press/Media/Website

A report will be prepared by the Chairman and Secretary, pending appointment of a Press Officer following the departure of Kate Beecroft, now an MHK, who had done such an excellent job in this respect.

ACTION: Chairman/Secretary

Waste Management Consultative Group

Mr Bob Pilling advised that the consultation document did not provide the required answers and said he would provide details of queries raised. He commented that the four Amenity Sites were not all run on the same basis, which raises issues.

Whitley Council

Mr Robert Moughtin advised that a meeting had been held two weeks ago concerning pensions; a further meeting is due to be held. It emerged that if someone on (say) Grade 5, had their grade reduced due to ill health, and the job they were offered was at a lower grade, their wages would drop and have a detrimental effect.

Richmond Hill Consultative Committee

Mr Paul Craine had no report as the group has moved to six-monthly meetings. No major issues had emerged but Mr Craine plans to ask a few questions and will report at the next meeting. Figures suggest the plant has been running very well.

Mr David Talbot of Patrick Commissioners asked how much oil is burned and Mr Craine replied that oil is burned only when there has been a shutdown, and this is what leads to the dioxin number seeming artificially high. Mr Talbot suggested it may be of benefit for the Municipal Association as a group to visit the Meary Veg Plant. Members showed interest in this suggestion and the Secretary was instructed to enquire the procedure for such a visit.

ACTION: Secretary

Any Other Business

1. Mr David Talbot of Patrick Commissioners said he would like to see the rules change regarding occasions when a vacancy arises after local elections and we are very close to a general election; at present this has to be within six months. Members discussed.
2. Mr Steve Hamer of Michael Commissioners suggested, and all Members present agreed, that a letter of thanks should be sent to Mrs Kate Beecroft in recognition of her commitment to the Municipal Association over many years.

ACTION: Secretary

3. Mrs Helen Kinvig of Port St Mary Commissioners asked for suggestions relating to problems with dog fouling which cost Port St Mary £14,500 last year. It was commented that Ramsey Commissioners employ sub-contractors and seems to be working well. It was noted that prosecutions are difficult due to dogs having to be “caught in the act”. DNA testing could be very effective but only if the faeces are freshly deposited. Members discussed the “right to fine” and Mr Steve Hamer of Michael Commissions advised that byelaws lapse after a period of time.

Date of next meeting: 24 November 2011

There being no further business the meeting was declared closed at 10.00pm

Signed..... Chairman