

Minutes of meeting of the Executive Committee of the Municipal Association held at Braddan Commissioners' Office on Thursday 28 April 2011 at 7.30pm

Present

Robert Moughtin	Maughold Commissioners (Chairman)
Mike Berry	Arbory Commissioners
Kate Beecroft	Braddan Commissioners
Bob Pilling	Malew Commissioners
Roy Kennaugh	Michael Commissioners
David Talbot	Patrick Commissioners
Bernadette McCabe	Port St Mary Commissioners (President)
Helen Kinvig	Port St Mary Commissioners
Peter Gunn	Rushen Commissioners
Barbara Dunworth	Secretary

In Attendance

Graham Cregeen MHK
Amanda Craig – Department of Infrastructure

Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Kathryn Edds of Arbory Commissioners, John Faragher and Carol Malarkey of Douglas Borough Council, and Paul Craine of Marown Commissioners.

Welcome

The Chairman gave a warm welcome to Mr Graham Cregeen who was accompanied by Mrs Amanda Craig, Strategic Planning and Governance Manager of the Department of Infrastructure. Mr Cregeen and Mrs Craig were very pleased to meet with the Members. The Chairman asked for an update on items discussed at the previous meeting with Mr Cregeen.

1. **Audit Fees:** Mr Cregeen had previously indicated that he would review the banding. He reported that there had been a number of outcomes at the Department to ensure that local Authorities receive appropriate and timely information on the training of Officers to undertake audits. The audit contract is set until 2012 when it will possibly be renewed or put out to tender and the structure of the next contract is being considered. When local authority fee setting was discussed previously there was no representative from local authorities on the Audit Committee and Municipal Association views had not been fed back into the Committee. There had been a breakdown in communication. In future this will be through Mrs Craig, who said it is their job

now to strengthen that communication and ensure the Municipal Association gets the necessary information in a timely manner.

Mr Cregeen said that possibly, through the Municipal Association, a representative could be appointed to attend while the committee discusses the general processes of audits for local authorities, but there is a difficulty in that other matters are discussed and also some of the local authorities are still outside the Municipal Association. If all local authorities were involved it would be a lot easier.

Member's comments and questions were addressed. There was particular concern regarding narrow banding making it very expensive for smaller authorities that make minimal use of, for example, burial fees. Mrs Craig said she would like this particular area to be the subject of continuing discussion.

1. **Clarification of Responsibilities Passed Over to Local Authorities:** We had asked if the Government budget would be passed on to local authorities. Mr Cregeen said we need to set standards but the budget certainly would be passed on. Local authorities are keen and willing to take on more responsibilities, but it is essential for them to know exactly what those responsibilities are and the related costs. Mr Cregeen said this is something he was trying to progress and he would assist all local authorities to work together. He had asked for renegotiation of the cost of recycling glass in view of recent changes and referred to a recent report. Members could get in touch with Mr John Rigley at WOMU with queries such as: Will we have a use for recycled glass, environmentally and economically?
2. **Delegating Planning to Local Authorities:** Members were concerned that some training would be necessary and Mrs Craig advised that they were planning to meet local authorities and were producing a questionnaire on planning the programme; she said they would like feed-back on topics to be covered and asked "Do you want us to come to you, or have drop-in surgeries?" Courses are being planned which could take place during the day but also evenings or Saturdays if requested. Members were concerned that there could be a conflict of interest where there is an overlap between Highways and Planning. Mrs Craig replied that every application now has to go to the Council of Ministers to overcome that. Work is ongoing within the Department to look at putting out for consultation Permitted Development Orders for domestic properties for conservatories/windows/doors etc. at local authority level without need for planning permission. Members discussed associated rate rises and how they affect sales of properties.
3. **Bye-Laws:** Mr Cregeen advised that a new Enforcement Officer is shortly to start work, and there is a new Director of Planning, Mr Michael Gallagher. Mr Bob Pilling suggested all-Island bye-laws and an all-Island Byelaw Officer. Mr

Cregeen said they were looking at setting up a basic set of Byelaws for all authorities with a draft available by the end of June.

4. **Numbers of Commissioners:** This had previously been discussed and it was agreed that there could be no fixed minimum number due to differing requirements among differently structured authorities.

Mr Cregeen spoke about the following issues he wished to deal with and further discuss at a future meeting:

- (a) From discussions with Local Authorities and the outcome of those discussions issues had arisen regarding the role of Clerks and the responsibilities of Finance Officers. Mr Cregeen said that every effort would be made to offer financial assistance with training the people local authorities rely on as it is essential they are properly trained and know what the requirements are.
- (b) The Department will work with Treasury to provide appropriate guidance for internal audit purposes.
- (c) The Department with the assistance of the Treasury will provide assistance for reducing the burden of audit and things like burial rates. It is the intention of the Department to consult with local authorities regarding burial and housing and also to encourage more authorities to become members of the Municipal Association.
- (d) **Communication:** Mrs Craig said it would be immensely beneficial were they able to come and discuss with an all-Island forum. Communications are now being sent to Clerks and also to Chairpersons to try to improve communications and relationships with local authorities. Mr Cregeen added that indeed it would be nice to sit down with all the local authorities with one representative from each. Mr Cregeen and Mrs Craig both recognised the very important role the Municipal Association plays. It was suggested that when important issues arise a communication could be sent to non-members advising this and saying it would be in their interest to attend.

Mr Cregeen said they were trying to establish trust and a good working relationship with local authorities. He said he was also here to try to clearly establish his role and clarify how we would like him to proceed. Mrs Cregeen said they would like to come and talk about issues local authorities are dealing with and support what we are trying to do.

The Chairman replied saying we could hold a seminar, inviting all local authorities to send in letters raising issues of concern or interest to them, and this could be circulated well in advance so that the response could be adequately determined. It was agreed by all present that communication is the key and it would be very helpful if more information could be placed on the internet making it easily accessible. Mrs Craig said they would like the Municipal Association to

ask for information on issues and next time she could bring the information or ask the appropriate person to come and talk to us. The Chairman added that meetings like this are invaluable.

- (e) **Code of Conduct:** Mr Cregeen referred to a Code of Conduct for Local Authorities saying perhaps this could be made mandatory rather than voluntary, and this could include a declaration of interests. Mrs Cregeen said she would like to talk about Standing Orders asking if we needed help with standardisation here also
- (f) **Rate Setting:** Mr Cregeen spoke about the rate setting process and Mrs Craig referred to problems experienced in re-setting. This year up to four letters could be received from different departments and she asked if the Municipal could give thought to how to get the system to work properly. To have just one notification would be very helpful rather than three or four at different times
- (g) **Civic Amenity Sites:** Mr Cregeen advised that they were looking at consultation with all the local authorities because they are currently operating differently. It would be nice to have a basic standard and then anything else would be put to the individual committee to deal with. Mr Cregeen asked how could we get better governance on these issues and said it could perhaps be agreed that there needs to be standardisation.

Mr Cregeen concluded by saying they that they would very much like to meet with us on a regular basis. The Chairman replied saying we would be very happy to schedule further meetings. He proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Cregeen and Mrs Craig which was unanimously endorsed.

Mr Cregeen and Mrs Craig left the meeting at this point.

Thanks The Chairman thanked Members for their gift and good wishes for his speedy recovery.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of meeting held 24 February 2011, having been circulated, were approved as a correct record and duly signed.

Matters Arising from Minutes

- (a) **Annual General Meeting:** Members discussed the final arrangements for the meeting.
- (b) **Human Resources:** A meeting will be arranged in due course.
ACTION: Future Agenda

- (c) **Recycling issues:** This matter is still ongoing.
ACTION: Future Agenda

Treasurer's Report

The report had been circulated and was duly noted. Members discussed the Treasurer's recommendation to increase the subscription rate. It was **unanimously resolved** to accept his recommendation to increase the subscription to £260.00 per annum.

Secretary's Report

The report had been circulated and was duly noted

Press/Media/Website

Mr David Talbot of Patrick Commissioners referred to his request for a page on the website. The Chairman replied that this could possibly be arranged but would need approval from all Members. This will be an agenda item at the June meeting.

ACTION: June agenda.

Whitley Council

Mr Robert Moughtin reported that a requisition meeting had been called by the Employees side of the Council to discuss the independent inspector's report on the Island's Railways. It had been agreed to refer this matter to the Health and Safety Committee for consideration.

Waste Management Consultative Group

There will be a further report from Mr Bob Pilling in due course.

Richmond Hill Consultative Committee

There was no further report this month.

Physical Activity Strategy Implementation Group

Mr David Talbot advised that a meeting had been held yesterday to review and complete the formulation of the implementation plan. He said that the people involved work very hard and most are involved in some type of physical sport; they have an active plan in mind to increase opportunities for physical activities and increase awareness and understanding of the importance of physical activity. Through motivation and support they aim to increase the activity of inactive or occasionally active people. Some of this is aimed at young children and some at the elderly with as many different facilities in the community as possible to improve the health of the population. More information is needed to produce specific levels of activity. There are issues of motivation and the

understanding of kinetics. There are plans to target specific groups at risk, such as obese children. The Strategy and Implementation programme will have as wide a range as possible; it is going to Tynwald before June for approval. The argument is that it will cost money now but bring about cost savings in the long run.

Any Other Business

1. Mr Mike Berry of Arbory Commissioners referred to a letter that will be going out from Mr David Trace giving details of the Team Challenge in September. He urged Members to talk to their fellow Commissioners about getting a team together to join in this event. Local Authorities can engage with young people through local policemen and youth clubs. Any queries please e-mail Mr Berry at Ramsey Grammar School.

2. **Private Minutes:** Mrs Kate Beecroft of Braddan Commissioners advised that this arose because some people say there is no such thing as private minutes because any minutes can be made public. But, occasionally, even if you take the name out, people will be able to identify the person. She asked how other Members handle their private minutes. The Chairman replied that Maughold have a private section including anything to do with the Data Protection Act. Other Members shared information. It was noted that some items are private but only until a specific thing has happened, after which they may be made public.

3. **Petition of Doleance:** Mrs Kate Beecroft advised that Braddan Commissioners had won a Petition of Doleance which is of interest to all local authorities. This occurred because a member of the public thought they should be able to sit at a computer and look at anything they wished. Obviously this could not be allowed. The legislation need updating as it refers to manual ledgers before computerization. This is an issue that could be raised with Mr Graham Cregeen at our next meeting with him.

4. **Private Debt Collection:** This was raised by a Member but left over due to the lateness of the hour.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.05pm

Date of next meeting: Thursday, 30 June 2011

Signed..... Chairman