

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL****Table of Contents**

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**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of Corporate & Central Services Committee Meeting No 353 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2007 at 7.30 pm.

**IN THE CHAIR**

A Patterson

**PRESENT****Aldermen**

F Campbell  
H Connolly  
C Cousley  
J Simpson

**Councillors**

A Cavlan  
J Finlay  
E Robinson  
I Stevenson

**APOLOGIES**

B Kennedy  
P McGuigan  
D McKay, MLA  
M Storey, MLA  
R Wilson

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Chief Executive (353.5 – 353.10)  
Director of Central & Leisure Services (353.1 – 353.5)  
Head of Corporate & Development Services (353.5 – 353.10)  
Committee Clerk

**353.1 MINUTES OF MEETING NO 352 – 26<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007**

It was proposed by Alderman Connolly, seconded by Alderman Campbell and  
**AGREED:**

*to recommend to Council that the minutes of Meeting No. 352 –  
26<sup>th</sup> February 2007, as circulated, be approved.*

## CENTRAL SERVICES

### 353.2 ACCOUNTS FOR PAYMENT

Treasury advice schedules detailing payments for Period 12(1), 2006/07 drawn on the Council's Capital and Revenue Bank Accounts were circulated at the meeting.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED** that payment is made.

\* **Alderman Cousley arrived at 7.43 pm.**

The Director of Central & Leisure Services responded to a number of queries from members and at the request of Alderman Campbell, agreed to provide a report on payments made to Employment Agencies for service and other bought in labour for 2006/07. At the request of Alderman Simpson, the Director agreed to provide information to the Leisure & Amenities Committee relating to the Art of Regeneration Project.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

***to recommend to Council that accounts to the value of £500,782.09 from the Revenue Account and £232,368.78 from the Capital Account be approved for payment.***

### 353.3 DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (GENERAL GRANT) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS (NI) 2007

The Department intends bringing forward the Draft Local Government (General Grant) Amendment Regulations (copy circulated) to amend the Local Government (General Grant) Regulations 2003.

General Grant is made up of two elements – derating element and resources element. The derating element compensates district councils for loss of rate income due to statutory derating of certain properties. The resources element provides additional finance to those district councils whose needs exceed their wealth base.

In March 2005, the then Minister, Angela Smith, formally undertook to examine the measures and weightings used in the formula for the distribution of the resources element. A working group was established to review and where appropriate update the “needs” measures of the General Grant (resources element) formula.

The following two legislative changes have been agreed by the Group to update the measurement of one of the additional needs – deprivation

1. Key service calculation – economic development  
In the key service calculation to adjust each council's population in proportion to the level of economic development expenditure, the

domestic Net Annual Value (NAV) and the employment index extracted from Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure (NIMDM) both carry a 50% weighting.

The NIMDM employment index is a measure of the number of unemployed people under 60, including those not able to work through illness and the domestic NAV is an indicator of the need for more industry in a council area.

The Group did not consider it appropriate to continue to use the domestic NAV data set.

Consequently the domestic NAV data set will be removed from the economic development key service calculation and the NIMDM employment index previously weighted at 50% would now be increased to 100%.

2. Key service calculation – community services

In this key service calculation in NIMDM employment index is currently weighted at 100%. The Group decided to introduce the NIMDM income index weighted at 50% and the NIMDM employment index will now be weighted at 50% within the community services calculation.

The NIMDM income index is a measure of the number of people (including children) in income-poor households as indicated by benefit receipt.

A full report on the Group's work is available on request. The implementation date of the revised formula is 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

No comments were made.

#### **353.4 LOANS TO OFFICERS FOR PURCHASE OF MOTOR VEHICLES**

The Director of Central & Leisure Services advised that Section 41B of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 provides for a district council to make a loan to an officer, for the purchase of a motor car or motor cycle, subject to such conditions as the Department of the Environment may determine.

The Department has now reviewed the existing interest rates applied by councils and has determined that the interest rate on all such loans granted, with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007 will be 2.95% per annum on the amount of the loan (where it is desired that the repayment of the loan and payment of the interest charge should be undertaken by equal monthly instalments).

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Council apply the interest rate of 2.95% with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007. Council currently has no car loans to officers.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

***to recommend that Council apply the interest rate of 2.95% with effect from 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007***

- \* The Director of Central & Leisure Services left the meeting at 8.25 pm
- \* The Chief Executive joined the meeting at 8.25 pm

## **CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **353.5 NILGA – LOCAL GOVERNMENT MODERNISATION AND RPA IMPLEMENTATION**

The Chief Executive invited members to consider the suggested response to the NILGA consultation on its future and on RPA implementation, details of which were circulated to members on 14<sup>th</sup> March with the following documents.

1. The NILGA consultation paper
2. The IDEA report on the future of NILGA, commissioned by NILGA and presented to it in September. The NILGA paper draws on it but differs in some important areas. The Executive Summary and Recommendations along with details of the “four important areas where NILGA needs to change” (paragraph 65) and of the need “to reconstruct its senior management structure” (paragraphs 96 & 97) were circulated. A complete copy of the report (44 pages) is being issued to each party group leader and can be made available to any member on request.
3. A paper prepared by Colin Knox dated 26 February 2007 for Belfast City Council. This has been shared with the other 25 councils and highlights the differences between the IDEA paper and NILGA’s consultation, as well as the ways in which the other LGA’s seek to connect with local government.<sup>1</sup>

The Chief Executive advised that NILGA has been asked to extend their deadline for comments from 31<sup>st</sup> March to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007 and provided a résumé of suggested responses to the questions put forward in the consultation document as follows:

#### **NILGA’S Consultation on its Restructuring and on RPA implementation and Local Government Modernisation.**

NILGA issued its consultation paper in January 2007 and sought replies from councils by 30 March 2007. NILGA has been advised that this Council’s response will be agreed on 2 April 2007.

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#### **<sup>1</sup> Footnote:**

Additional information about the costs of the structure was issued to members on 21/3/07 together with a copy of NILGA’s draft paper to be presented to its March Executive Meeting .

Members have received a copy of the NILGA paper, the Executive Summary, Recommendations and some key paragraphs from the IDeA report on which the proposals for restructuring of NILGA are based and the briefing paper commissioned by Belfast City Council from Colin Knox, which highlights the differences between the two documents and also how other LGA's seek to engage with their local government sectors.

NILGA's constitution provides for an Advisory Group, which is comprised of the Chief Executives of member councils and whose role is to provide strategic advice to NILGA. That body met in February 2007 to consider the NILGA proposals and the suggested response draws also on the result of that meeting.

## **Proposed Response**

### **Introduction**

Ballymoney Borough Council is pleased to have the opportunity to comment on the proposals for restructuring of NILGA, on Modernisation of Local Government and the implementation arrangements for RPA. Council believes in a strong local government association for Northern Ireland and endorses the view in the IDeA report (paragraph 5) that "a strong visionary and flexible local government association over the next three years is a prerequisite for a strengthened local government in Northern Ireland."

### **Questions 1 & 2**

Council also accepts the "four important areas where NILGA needs to change and develop" in paragraph 65 of the IDeA report. In doing so, it agrees with the proposal in the NILGA consultation to explore the relationship with political parties, but also that NILGA "needs to quickly earn the trust and confidence of local councils", whose voluntary subscriptions provide the bulk of NILGA funding.

Council is concerned that the relationship between NILGA and the 26 councils as separate corporate bodies has not been properly developed and there is a risk that prioritising the link with political parties may result in less attention being paid to this vital area.

### **Questions 6 – 8**

The second important area in the IDeA report is the need to increase officer capacity to improve the confidence and credibility of NILGA. This is elaborated on in paragraphs 96 & 97. Council notes the comment in paragraph 97 that "unless the CMT is reconstructed in this way, it is highly unlikely that key stakeholders will commit themselves and their resources to enable NILGA to perform the role that is required of it.....". Council also notes that IDeA advised that "an open recruitment process is entered into to fill these posts (the new Corporate Management Team of Chief Executive and three Corporate Directors) in line with N I employment and equality legislation ....". Council expects that this process will comply with the LGSC Code of Practice on Recruitment and Selection and that NILGA will use the offices of LGSC to conduct the process. It also believes that these important promotion

opportunities should be available to council staff whose posts are threatened under RPA.

In relation to the question of whether the new structure should be permanent or should be for the interim period up to the establishment of new councils, Ballymoney Borough Council favours an interim arrangement, albeit that the date of 2009 is unlikely to be achieved. The post RPA councils must be free to decide whether and how best they want to be represented by a central body.

Regarding the funding of this enhanced structure, as it is needed to deliver the implementation of RPA in local government, which is being promoted by DOE, Council agrees that funding should be provided by that department in the interim period until the new councils are established. It is Council's understanding that DOE will require the exercise to fill the new management structure to be done in conjunction with the LGSC and Council believes that NILGA, as the representative body for district councils, should comply with the same standards as councils in the recruitment and selection of staff.

### **Questions 3 – 5**

Council agrees that it is important that experienced members and staff from existing councils are involved in the detailed work on implementation of the new structures set out in the RPA. Council believes, however, that there should be a pause at this stage until it is clear what new structures are to be put in place and what powers are to be devolved. Work should proceed only on those areas which are unaffected by the number and powers of the new councils until there is more clarity on the future.

It is important that council staff who wish to be considered for the posts suggested are totally clear on the terms and conditions that apply and how taking them up would affect their continued employment and their future under RPA. The LGSC is the proper body to advise on that and must be fully involved in the complete process.

### **Questions 9 – 12**

Some mechanism must be found to enable staff to be fairly considered for these opportunities but equally, especially for smaller councils such as Ballymoney, it is impossible for councils to release important staff without making provision for their replacement. Unless there is some mechanism to equalise these costs, they will be borne unevenly by those who agree to release staff.

Ballymoney Borough Council has to take some difficult decisions to ensure that its rate increases have been kept to modest levels over the past two years. In that situation it has no resources to deploy towards RPA implementation but would agree to release staff to assist in the work if funding is provided for their replacement. In relation to modernisation, Council is prepared to devote some of its training budget for members and staff to activities which will contribute to best value and improved service to ratepayers and customers.

A discussion ensued relating to such issues as:

- validation of suggestions only up until the time of RPA
- strength and role of LGA over next three years
- the future role of MLAs following RPA
- the role of NILGA in its present constitution and following implementation of modernization
- cost involved to Council
- standing items from NILGA at monthly meetings with reports provided by board members
- secondment of staff, their selection process and the involvement of the Staff Commission
- staff time and employment of agency staff to cover secondments.

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

***to agree a response to NILGA's Consultation on its future and on RPA implementation at the next meeting of Council on Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2007.***

### 353.6 CONTRIBUTIONS TO OTHER BODIES

#### (a) North Antrim Agriculture Association – Annual Show

An application has been received for a contribution towards this year's show. There will be a varied programme of events and exhibits and the event will attract visitors from across the Province and further afield. This is a special year for the Association, as it will be celebrating 100 Ballymoney Shows. A commemorative book "one hundred Ballymoney Shows" by Local Historian and Author, S Alex Blair, has been published to mark the occasion.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Council contribute £1,200 in respect of the running costs of the show and sponsorship, as provided for in the budget.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Robinson and **AGREED:**

***to recommend that Council contribute an amount of £1,200 in respect of the running costs of the North Antrim Agricultural Show and sponsorship, as provided for in the budget.***

#### (b) Ballymoney Borough Road Safety Committee

An application has been received from Ballymoney Borough Road Safety Committee seeking a grant of £1,000 for 2006/07 towards its programme of projects. The work of the committee is also supported by funding from DOE and through private sector sponsorship.

The projects delivered, which provide Council with the opportunity to show leadership within the community in relation to raising awareness of road safety issues, include:



- A seminar and Exhibition on Safety for Older People, in partnership with PSNI, NIHE, Home Accident Prevention Committee and Community Safety Partnership.
- A Safer Driver Initiative in partnership with PSNI, Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership and the Institute of Advanced Motorists, aimed at improving the driving skills of young people.
- A workshop for young drivers aimed at debating road safety issues relevant to young people to inform future initiatives

**IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Council contribute £1,000 to towards the work of Ballymoney Borough Road Safety Committee, as provided for in the budget.

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

***to recommend that Council contribute £1,000 to towards the work of Ballymoney Borough Road Safety Committee, as provided for in the budget.***

Councillor Finlay commended the valuable work of the Road Safety Committee and endorsed the proposal. Councillor Robinson concurred with these comments.

### **(c) Review of Contributions**

The Chief Executive requested members to note this matter, advising that, arising from consideration of budgets for the incoming year, Council has decided that a detailed analysis of benefits of contributions to partnership and other bodies be carried out. Also, that a protocol for dealing with requests from charities be developed. Management has considered a recommended approach to this task and a report will be presented to committee's May meeting.

### **353.7 BI-LINGUAL SIGNAGE**

The Chief Executive advised members to note that the Equality Commission has advised of its decision in relation to a request by an individual from the borough to investigate a complaint alleging that Council had failed to comply with its approved equality scheme in relation to an application by the complainant for signage for the street upon which she lives to be erected in Irish.

The Commission's Statutory Duty Investigations Committee has decided not to authorize an investigation into the complaint.

**353.8 REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BOUNDARIES**

The Boundaries Commissioner has advised that the consultation period on his provisional recommendations, including the programme of public hearings, has been completed and following consideration of the reports of the seven Assistant Commissioners who conducted the hearings, the Revised Recommendations will be published by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. Copies of the revised recommendations will be exhibited for public inspection in public libraries, Council Offices, the Electoral Office and the Office of the Electoral Commissioner in Belfast.

At the request of Councillor Stevenson, the Chief Executive agreed to look into the publication date and deadline date for comments on district electoral areas.

**353.9 MARKETING SUB-COMMITTEE**

Report of Marketing Sub-Committee 23 March 2007 was presented at the meeting for information and adopted (attached as Appendix A).

**353.10 ANNUAL SOMME PILGRIMAGE**

Committee's additional nomination to this event, Alderman Cousley, has been placed on the reserve delegate list.

**This being all the business, the meeting closed at 9.40 pm.**

**APPENDIX A****Marketing Sub-Committee – Meeting held Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2007**

Present: Councillor Patterson (Chair), Alderman Campbell, Alderman Connolly,  
Councillor Finlay (Mayor)  
Head of Corporate & Development Services, Corporate Project Officer

**1. Ballymoney Bulletin (Spring 2007 edition)**

Members were advised of the items to be included in the next edition of the Bulletin, which will include:

Going Smoke Free – 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007  
'Slim your Bin' – recycling information including food waste and home composting  
Rates information  
Treasure Island JDLC  
Community Safety – Bonfire Competition  
Home Accident Prevention – Burns & Scalds information  
Warm Homes Scheme

Members agreed the items for inclusion.

**2. Freedom of the Borough – Dr Robert Dunlop**

The Head of Corporate & Development Services outlined plans made for the Freedom Ceremony to be held on Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2007.

Members agreed to meet again on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> April and Friday 20<sup>th</sup> April to be updated on arrangements for the ceremony.

**3. Council Tie**

The Head of Corporate & Development Services agreed to make enquiries regarding costs and design of a new Council tie at the request of members.

**4. Branding**

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised of progress on a paper on branding across all media, including signage and facilities and publicity guidelines for organizations in receipt of grants from Council. This would be presented to the sub-committee for comment within the next month or so.