

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**Development Committee Meeting No 178 – 8th January 2007****Table of Contents**

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178.3	Product Transfer Programme	<i>Council fund a second Company from 2007/08 budget - £1,400</i>
178.4	Ballymoney Music Centre Property/Community Hub Project	<i>No further action to be taken on this project. Inform LSP that we will not be taking up their offer of grant aid.</i>
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178.6	North East Partnership (NEP)	<i>Revised constitution be endorsed. Chief Executive be nominated as officer representation on the partnership.</i>
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178.8	International Links - Benbrook	<i>Chairman and Representative of the Twinning Association be invited to meet with the Mayor, Committee Chair to consider options and report back to committee.</i>
178.9	Northern Corridor Railways Group	<i>For information</i>
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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of Development Committee Meeting No 178 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House on Monday 8th January 2007 at 7.30 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor I Stevenson

PRESENT:

Aldermen
H Campbell
H Connolly
C Cousley, Deputy Mayor
J Simpson

Councillors
J Finlay, Mayor
B Kennedy
M McCamphill
A Patterson
E Robinson
M Storey

APOLOGIES:

Councillors
R Wilson
P McGuigan, MLA
T McKeown

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Head of Corporate & Development Services
Committee Clerk

178.1 MINUTES OF MEETINGS NO. 176 – 11th December 2006

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

that the minutes of Meeting No 177 – 11th December 2006, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

178.2 POST BUSINESS START UP SUPPORT AND MENTORING PROGRAMME

Terms of reference have been developed for external consultancy support to deliver this reserve project. The programme will provide support for up to 20 new-start businesses in the Ballymoney area to include the delivery of business strategy workshops and the provision of specialised individual mentoring. It is expected that by the end of the programme participating companies will have developed skills and expertise which will improve their viability and sustainability and will consequently be better positioned to contribute to the economic development of the borough as potential employers and as effective contributors to the GDP of the borough.

Target companies will adhere to the following criteria~

- New-start businesses based in the Ballymoney Borough Council area
- New-start micro-businesses with less than 10 employees
- Non-Invest NI Clients
- New-start micro-businesses committed to business development and growth
- Particularly, though not exclusively, business which have completed the Start-a-Business Programme.

The programme is expected to result in the following outputs:

- Up to 20 eligible businesses:

- identifying barriers to business growth and development
- acquiring enhanced knowledge and skills in, though not exclusively, the core business areas of strategy development, product development, marketing, networking, personnel issues and financial planning and control
- receiving one-to-one mentoring advice and support to address specific identified barriers to their particular business' development, growth and sustainability.
- implementing knowledge and skills acquired through participation in the programme resulting in enhanced business sustainability

The project is targeted to be completed by end of October 2007 with project evaluation completed by end of May 2008.

IT IS RECOMMENDED: that the terms of reference be approved and tenders be invited from the Councils select list for the delivery of the Post Business Start Up Support and Mentoring Programme for 10, 20 and 30 participants.

This project is funded by Ballymoney Borough Council and the European Union Building Sustainability Programme with participants contributing £200 each.

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

to recommend to Council that the terms of reference be approved and tenders be invited from the Councils select list for the delivery of the Post Start Up Support and Mentoring Programme for 10, 20 and 30 participants.

178.3 PRODUCT TRANSFER PROGRAMME

Council agreed to fund one place on this programme for a Ballymoney Company. As the result of a recruitment exercise two Companies have been successful.

IT IS RECOMMENDED that Council fund a second company from the 2007/08 budget - £1,400.

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

to recommend that Council fund a second company from the 2007/08 budget - £1,400.

178.4 BALLYMONEY MUSIC CENTRE PROPERTY/COMMUNITY HUB PROJECT

The letter of offer from LSP for an increased allocation of £150,000 for the proposed community hub project, based in Ballymoney Music Centre, has been received and signed on behalf of the Council.

The condition report on the property has now been received from Council's Architects. Taking account of this and confirmation of the valuation determined by the District Valuer the following are the revised costs of acquisition, repair and adaption of this property for use as a community hub.

Acquisition costs	£400,000
Phase I Works – maintaining a wind and watertight envelope and DDA compliance	£407,000
Phase II Works – remedial works required within a 2-4 year period	£517,000
Phase III Works – External Stores	£88,000
Statutory Fees	£5,500
Total Costs	£1,417,500
Less Funding Allocation from LSP	£150,000
Council / Other Funder(s)	1,267,500

Costs are inclusive of professional fees and exclusive of VAT and legal fees involved in the transfer and building contract.

In relation to acquisition costs Council has decided to make representations to the Department of Financial & Personnel to secure a reduction in the transfer value. No progress has been made on this matter pending a decision, in principle, by Council to proceed with the project.

IT IS RECOMMENDED that Committee consider the proposed project and make a recommendation to Council.

The Chief Executive and Head of Corporate and Development Services responded to questions on the proposed project and the costs involved. After a

lengthy discussion it was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Kennedy and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Council take no further action on this project and inform LSP that Council would not be taking up the offer of grant funding.

10 members voted for the motion and one member voted against.

Councillor Simpson asked that his objection to this recommendation be noted.

178.5 DEVELOPMENT BUDGET 2007/08

Details of project costs recommended for inclusion in the development budget which will be included in the rates book was circulated. A budget of £127,500, the same as in the current year, uplifted by inflation, £131,550, has been included.

This level of funding would not enable match funding to be provided for all monies expected to be allocated by DETI and match funding for Interreg projects in which interest had been expressed. The situation would be presented to Committee for review when budgets were fixed by Council.

Councillor Kennedy left the meeting at 8.30 pm

178.6 NORTH EAST PARTNERSHIP (NEP)

The Partnership has decided to increase member council representation on the NEP Management Committee for a maximum of twelve to sixteen and allow for an equivalent number of sixteen from social partners. The constitution has been revised accordingly. Council has an elected member on the Partnership (Ald Frank Campbell) and is invited to nominate an officer representative to the Partnership.

IT IS RECOMMENDED: that the revised constitution be endorsed and that the Chief Executive be nominated as Council's officer representative on the Partnership.

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

to recommend that Council endorse the revised constitution and that the Chief Executive be nominated as Council's officer representative on the Partnership.

178.7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF HM REVENUE & CUSTOMS APPROACH TO RELOCATION AND RESTRUCTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT

IT IS RECOMMENDED: that committee consider suggested comments, set out below, and that these be referred to the Consultation Committee for approval.

Arising from representations by the Public and Commercial Service Union about job losses in Revenue and Customs, Coleraine (CM.852 refers) Council agreed to consider and respond to the equality impact assessment on HM Revenue and Customs proposed approach to relocation and restructuring, issued for consultation. The closing date for the receipt of comments is 13th February 2007.

HMRC was formed on 18th April 2005 from two former departments – Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise. The strategic aim of the new department is to integrate fully through reorganization and restructuring in order to create a more effective organization, able to provide an improved and more efficient customer service.

The purpose of the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) is to consider relocation and restructuring changes implemented to date in order to highlight and comment on known and potential equality impacts arising, identify gaps in information and put forward proposals to ensure HMRC future business plans meet the duties described by the NI Act 1998 and the Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended).

A summary of the findings of the EQIA was circulated.

The restructuring will result in Revenue and Customs Offices at Mill House and Fern House Coleraine closing, with the loss of 84 jobs in our neighbouring borough of Coleraine. Ballymoney is in the Coleraine Travel To Work Area and some 10% of the staff reside in Ballymoney.

It is noted that HMRC expects to reduce its workforce through natural attrition, restricted recruitment and voluntary approved early retirement schemes' in order to avoid redundancies as far as possible. At this stage no redundancies have been made as a result of implementing relocation and restructuring plans. As work is relocated around the UK HMRC indicate they will, as far as possible, avoid asking employees to relocate to a location, which will require a change of residence. If such a move is required it will only be made in exceptional circumstances and where funding allows. Instead, where work is relocated out of an area the employees remaining receive assistance and support from their managers to identify re-deployment options.

The impact in the local community is far reaching.

- the loss of jobs in an region which had already suffered substantial loss of jobs.
- The closure of the two offices in Coleraine and the loss of 84 jobs will mean £2-£4M per annum will be lost to the local economy. (*as advised by Public and Commercial Service Union*)
- The prospect of the staff securing an alternative job in the public sector is limited, particularly given that there is a low level of public sector jobs located in the region because of the trend to centralize jobs in and around Belfast and, additionally, no system of transferring from the UK Civil Service to the NI Civil Service.

- The make-up of the workforce in the two offices in Coleraine is mainly women, including single parents, some of whom are main breadwinners, ethnic minorities and disabled persons. Women who mainly have a caring family role and work flexible work patterns to sustain this. Even if transfer to another office was offered most of these women would not be able to travel.
- The loss of accessible service to the community by way of advice and assistance for people on tax credits and child benefit, by definition, low income families. The number of individuals seeking advice and assistance on tax credit alone in the last six months number 1838.
- The loss of accessible service for the increasing number of migrant works coming to the region, many of whom, when they arrive, have no knowledge of the taxation system. In the last six months the number of migrant workers seeking help at the office was 984.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Storey and

AGREED:

to recommend that the above comments be referred to the Consultation Committee for approval.

178.8 INTERNATIONAL LINKS - BENBROOK

Further to the City of Benbrook's decision to terminate its link with Ballymoney and the Mayor's letter of representation a further communication has been received from Benbrook City Council stating that it is the clear resolve of the majority of the Benbrook City Council that Benbrook will no longer participate in Sister Cities International "Friendship" and "Sister City" Agreements and the decision is final. They reaffirm that the Friendship Agreement terminates on 31st December 2006.

Council sought a Sister City link for the benefit of the people of Ballymoney Borough and one exchange visit of students in each direction has taken place and two community police officers visited Benbrook in 2006.

Benbrook decided to terminate both its Sister City links and the reason given for the decision is "financial and liability concerns". The Mayor of Benbrook expresses the hope that the bonds of friendship between the two areas remains strong even in the absence of a formal agreement.

While the formal agreement was at City and Borough level it was taken forward by the Sister City Organisation in Benbrook and the Ballymoney Borough Twinning Association. Both have expressed the view that they hope the link will continue.

IT IS RECOMMENDED: that the Chairman and a representative from the Twinning Association be invited to meet with the Mayor and Committee Chair to consider options and report back to committee.

In the ensuing discussion it was suggested that input be sought from local historian S A Blair and the Museum Manager in researching American links with potential for economic/tourism development.

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

to recommend to Council that the Chairman and a representative from the Twinning Association be invited to meet with the Mayor and Committee Chair to consider options and report back to Committee.

178.9 NORTHERN CORRIDOR RAILWAYS GROUP

Coleraine Borough Council have advised that all Councils have now committed to fund, to the value of £30,000, the agreed action plan for the Group (ie):

- commence a programme of work to update the investment case, incorporating cross-border and EU aspects particularly – BDP Planning to carry out this work;
- organise a major seminar/conference in early 2007 to launch the subsequent report;
- use the report in a sustained political lobbying exercise during 2007.

BDP Planning have been asked to commence preparation of the investment case. Work will also start on arrangements for the seminar, perhaps spring/early summer 2007. Two Chief Executives will meet to move things on.

178.10 PROJECT – PROGRESS REPORT

A progress report at end of December 2006 together with employment statistics was circulated and noted.

This being all the business the meeting closed at 8:50 pm