

BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**Development Committee Meeting No 186 - 10th September 2007****Table of Contents**

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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of Development Committee Meeting No 186 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House on Monday 10th September at 7.00 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor Stevenson

PRESENT: **Aldermen**
C Connolly, Deputy Mayor
C Cousley
J Simpson

Councillors
P McGuigan
T McKeown
A Patterson
E Robinson

APOLOGIES **Alderman**
F Campbell
Councillors
A Cavlan
J Finlay
B Kennedy
M McCamphill

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

Twinning Association (Item 1)
Ms S Blair
Ms P White

186.1 TWINNING ASSOCIATION PRESENTATION

The Chairman welcomed representatives from the Twinning Association to the meeting to give a presentation to members on the work of the Association and its future aims and objectives (attached as Appendix 1)

* **Councillor McGuigan arrived at 7.10 pm**

Following the presentation, the representatives responded to a number of questions put forward by Councillor Robinson relating to income and expenditure incurred from previous fundraising events, projected income from forthcoming events and the need to widen the profile of the Association within the community and encourage further membership by highlighting the benefits to be gained from the Association. Representatives referred to the borough's excellent twinning links with Vanves in France and Douglas in Isle of Man, and its intention to maintain a friendship link with Benbrook in Texas, tourism having benefited from such links. Thanks were extended to the Mayor for agreeing to host a fundraising event in September on behalf of the Association

Councillor Robinson thanked officers from the Office of the Chief Executive for their work in arranging visits and itineraries for exchange visits.

Councillor Stevenson thanked the representatives for their presentation concluding that further information relating to forthcoming events would be helpful in highlighting the work of the Association to Council.

- * **Representatives left the meeting at 7.30 pm**
- * **Councillor McKeown joined the meeting at 7.30 pm**

186.2 MINUTES OF MEETING NO 185 – 13TH AUGUST 2007

It was proposed by Alderman Cousley, seconded by Councillor Patterson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Meeting No 185 – 13th August 2007, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

1. EU Programmes – Proposed Delivery Arrangements (185.2)

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that discussions relating to the programmes are ongoing and a report will be brought to Committee at a future date.

186.3 NORTHERN CORRIDOR RAILWAYS GROUP LAUNCH – 18TH SEPTEMBER 2007

Members are reminded of the launch of the Railway Group's "Railway Renaissance" Report in the City Hotel, Londonderry, on 18th September. Publicity shots will be taken at this event at 09.45 prior to the commencement of the seminar.

186.4 NORTH EAST PARTNERSHIP

An officer group drawn from Directors/Heads of Service and NEP Councils has been considering project ideas submitted through the strategy consultation exercise, with various project groups working up projects with the assistance of consultants appointed by NEP. The North East will have to compete with other regions for funding and that quality of submissions is key.

The proposed bid will be prepared by the consultants for presentation to the Board on 19 September for approval prior to submission in early October to SEUPB.

The projects to be submitted under phase I are listed below and it is **recommended** that Council express an interest in participation in those projects marked *. Projects will be 100% funded.

Enterprise Programme

1. Absenteeism in Workplace *
2. Business Improvement Districts Pilot Initiative.
3. Technology / Product Transfer *
4. Water Management for LAs and SMEs

Tourism

No projects in the current phase

Co-Operation

1. Creating Bedrock for Lifelong Learning (Health & Wellbeing) *
2. Emergency Planning – Best Practice *
3. Market Towns Co-Operation *
4. Sustainable Homes Pilot Initiative

A further report will be submitted on proposed phase II projects

On the Governance issue the senior officer group was considering three potential governance models and NEP had written to SEUPB seeking further engagement with local authorities on governance issues.

At the request of Alderman Simpson, the Head of Corporate & Central Services confirmed that a region-wide consultation process had taken place relating to strategy development.

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

to recommend that Council express an interest in participation in the following projects

- ***Absenteeism***
- ***Technology/Product Transfer***

- ***Lifelong Learning***
- ***Emergency Planning***
- ***Market Towns***

186.5 RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Correspondence from the NI Leader Network, North Antrim Community Network and North Antrim Leader expressing interest with regard to delivery of the Rural Development programme has been acknowledged and will be reviewed when guidance from DARD on their proposals is received.

The Northern Ireland Leader Network (NILN) has provided Council with a copy of its opinion with regard to the Delivery and implementation of the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 which it has submitted to the DARD Minister requesting the Minister to adopt the LEADER methodology of subsidiarity through the existing 13 LAGs in continued partnership which would in the future be co-terminus with Local Authorities as the pre-requisite for future Local Rural Delivery, and in particular to re-emphasise the NILN commitment to an integrated approach in developing the cultural, social and economic wellbeing of rural areas.

The opinion has been developed over past period through a series of consultations with Local Action Groups (LAGs), Directors and Staff and through participation in the Consultative Partnership Group for Northern Ireland.

NILN proposes that strategic responsibility for Rural Development should rest with Local Authorities (Approval of rural development strategies and budgets) but that, in line with the EU Rural Development Regulation, decisions relating to project selection and delivery of the Programme should rest with the LAGs. This has the added benefit in that decisions can be arrived at quickly, without the need to be ratified by a series of committees.

NILN believe that the significant resourcing of Local Action Groups (LAGs) during the period 1994-2007 during the EU Community initiatives, LEADER II and LEADER + by the Local Authorities throughout Northern Ireland has been crucial to the success of local economic development within rural areas and we believe that increased collaboration at a local level with Local Authorities will be vitally important to any future public interventions.

A summary of the response was circulated to members, a copy of the full report is available.

Committee **AGREED**

to recommend that no action be taken pending receipt of guidance from DARD on the new programme.

186.6 NORTH ANTRIM COMMUNITY NETWORK – APPLICATION FOR FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

An application for financial assistance has been submitted by the North Antrim Community Network for the year 2006/07. Council has decided to undertake an evaluation exercise on benefits from contributions made to various bodies, to be considered before the next rate setting process. Pending this review, it is **recommended** that a contribution of £3,000 be made to North Antrim Community Network for the year 2006/07. The Network has provided a report on work delivered to groups in the borough.

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

to recommend that Council that a contribution of £3,000 be made to North Antrim Community Network for the year 2006/07.

Councillor Stevenson asked members to consider inviting North Antrim Community Network to a meeting of Council to outline the benefits to the borough. It was agreed that this take place following the result of the evaluation and prior to Council's 2008 rates meeting.

* **Alderman Connolly left the meeting at 7.55 pm**

186.7 MINERAL PROSPECTING

The Chief Executive reported to the Consultation Committee on 20th August, correspondence from DETI regarding an application from Lonmin PLC for mineral prospecting licence in respect of lands within the Borough area. Various issues raised by members have been represented to the Department and response has been received as follows:-

1. A consultation list has been provided
2. Any mineral prospecting licence is issued in respect of all minerals bar lignite, as there currently is a moratorium on lignite
3. The foot and mouth disease situation in GB has no impact on the consideration of the licence request. In the event of a licence being granted, Lonmin PLC will carry out its own Health & Safety inspections, prior to accessing land.
4. Lonmin PLC's application for this prospecting licence is for all minerals including gold and silver (which are licensed by the Crown)
5. It is possible for the Department to issue a licence prohibiting prospecting for lignite. There is a moratorium on lignite, which is currently being reviewed by the Department.

A Geology Report relating to the Lonmin Prospecting Licence, requested by Council, has been copied to members.

Council has granted the Committee power to respond on its behalf to the consultation from DETI into the request for the granting of a mineral prospecting licence in respect of lands within Ballymoney Borough Council area to Lonmin PLC.

There was a discussion on the extension of the proposed prospecting area, the Council's existing stand on lignite development and the need for planning permission to follow any granting of licence.

* **Councillor McGuigan left the meeting at 8.00 pm**

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

that Committee respond, on behalf of Council, to the consultation from DETI into the request for the granting of a mineral prospecting licence in respect of lands within Ballymoney Borough Council area by Lonmin PLC, as follows

1. ***Council is extremely concerned about the application for a prospecting licence, given the effect of the granting of an earlier prospecting licence, which led to the zoning of a large area of the borough as a Lignite Resource Area in the North East Area Plan. This area was significantly extended in the draft Northern Area Plan and the effect has been to blight an area of the borough from any new construction. The current application would extend the area liable to be included in the Lignite Resource Area and council would strongly request that lignite be specifically excluded from the licence to prevent any possibility of that occurrence.***
2. ***While the current application is for prospecting and not for mining, Council wants to put on record that it is opposed to any proposals to extract minerals by opencast mining. The community in Ballymoney and the wider area has visibly demonstrated its opposition to this form of mining also, in respect of lignite, and anyone applying for a prospecting licence should be in no doubt of this; opencast mining will be rigorously opposed!***
3. ***Given the level of local feeling generated by the lignite issue, it is important that anyone granted a prospecting licence is aware of the need to communicate with the community in the***

affected area, to give them as much information as possible of the details of any work they propose to undertake.

186.8 PEACE III

In order to ensure progress towards the deadline for submission of Peace III Action Plans a grouping of six councils, Ballymena, Larne, Ballymoney, Coleraine, Moyle and Limavady, are in the process of commissioning a scoping exercise which gives an overview of potential areas of engagement for the group under the Peace III programme. Terms of reference had been developed for a two-phase study and tenders invited, with a closing date of 6th September. The assignment will involve meaningful consultation with relevant stakeholders throughout the participating council areas specifically to:

- identify needs in peace-building and reconciliation issues, in line with the Peace III priorities and themes
- help stakeholders identify practical steps towards applying mutual self-help methodologies within their own communities through a process of peace building and reconciliation activities
- bring communities closer together through Peace III based projects.

The assignment is being led by Limavady Borough Council with the cost being met by the councils concerned. It is expected that funding for the exercise will be available from SEUPB. A copy of the terms of reference is available.

Committee **AGREED**

to endorse the action taken with regard to commissioning a scoping exercise.

186.9 INDUSTRIAL RATES – THE REVIEW

The Economic Research Institute of Northern Ireland (ERINI) has been commissioned to carry out a formal review of the introduction of Rates on manufacturing in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Manufacturing Focus Group (NIMFG) sought this independent review as it believed Government's original analysis of the matter to be deeply flawed. NIMFG demonstrated that, amongst other mistakes, the analysis that underpinned the legislation wildly exaggerated profits in manufacturing in Northern Ireland, by at least £1billion a year.

The current plans to ramp up Rates year after year, more than trebling them by 2011, will devastate industry in the area. In average, Council will see around 1,000 job losses though those along the border will see greater losses as firms will follow lower taxes.

Government has claimed that money would be raised that is needed to balance its books but they have assumed that no factory will close, rationalise or relocate across the border or elsewhere. This is simply not the case. Every factory that closes means less is paid in Rates along with an increase in the unemployed, which adds to Government spending. High Rates means a less successful economy which means less of the other things that a successful economy can support; better roads, ports, education, health and leisure.

In Council areas, high Rates will result in factories lying empty, and empty factories pay no Rates. This will starve Council of the funds that it could deploy to benefit all of residents. NIMFG also believe that manufacturing is vital to sustaining communities as well as the economy as nothing hits a town like the loss of its main employer.

ERINI are asking Council to participate in the consultation process being run by ERINI, by making four key points.

- Manufacturing is important to your area as a source of employment, with all the economic, social and community benefits that jobs bring
- The Review should be comprehensive and fair, looking solely at what is the right level of Rates to charge manufacturing given the benefits it brings Northern Ireland
- Northern Ireland's peripherality means manufacturing has to fight to be competitive as it always starts with a handicap of higher transport costs than its competitors. Increasing Rates will damage local competitiveness so that industry simply chooses to be elsewhere. It is thus not really about profits and being able to pay Rates, but instead in an increasing mobile world the question is where does industry want to be? It is our fast growing firms, looking for new premises, who will be driven out by high Rates.
- That uncertainty is itself damaging and that it is time to settle this matter.

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

to recommend that Council respond to ERINI's consultation and endorse the points outlined above.

186.10 POPULATION STATISTICS

2006 mid-year population estimates recently published indicate that the population of the borough continues to grow. In a period when the population of Northern Ireland increased by approximately 1.0%, the population of Ballymoney grew by 1.7% to an estimated 29,225.

In the 12 months ending June 2007 Ballymoney was the sixth fastest growing local government district, continuing a similar growth rate to that recorded each year since 2001.

Further details on the estimated NI mid-year population statistics can be obtained from the NISRA website on www.nisra.gov.uk

186.11 JOB LOSSES – TYCO HEATHCARE

Members will be aware of the recent announcement by Tyco Healthcare that it is entering a 90-day consultation period with its workforce on a proposal to close down the Ballymoney plant, with the loss of 260 jobs. The Mayor, Committee Chair and Chief Executive have met with the plant management and the Mayor has written to the Economy Minister to urge him to do whatever he can to avert the closure. Invest NI are also having meetings at the Company's headquarters.

186.12 PROGRESS REPORT

Progress report at end of August 2007 together with latest employment statistics was circulated together with a copy of the new marketing brochure for Drumaheglis Marina, produced in association with the Borough Services Directorate.

Town Wayfinder Signage:

The Head of Corporate and Development Services informed members that following discussions with Roads Service about the siting of wayfinder signs and the promotion of Riverside Park signage, one additional sign has been ordered.

Geneology Project:

Following development of this product, the next development phase will look at ways of involving private sector interest, and securing better economic benefits.

186.13 BUSINESS AWARDS

Last year Council participated in North Antrim Business Awards under the auspices of North Antrim Leader. Moyle Enterprise Agency has launched a business awards scheme which is open to companies in Ballymoney and Moyle. It is **recommended** that Council contribute £1,500 towards the Award Scheme, subject to match funding under the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme being available.

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

to recommend that Council contribute £1,500 towards the Award Scheme, subject to match funding under the Building Sustainable Prosperity Programme being available.

The Head of Corporate & Central Services confirmed that the contribution will be made from Council's existing budget.

186.14 REPORTS

The following reports are tabled.

1. Good Practice Guide, "Vital & Viable", for breathing new life into towns and cities, published by DSD
2. Evaluation of NILGA's European Work – Local Government Engagement in EU Programmes
3. EU Town Twinning Conference – Youth in Europe through Town Twinning – 25th – 27th October 2007, St Patrick Centre, Downpatrick.

186.15 CAUSEWAY VISITORS' CENTRE

Councillor Robinson referred to the recent announcement by Minister Foster that she was minded to approve a private sector proposal to build a new visitors' Centre at the Giants Causeway and the announcement by Minister Dodds of withdrawal of DETI support for public sector proposal.

The Chief Executive advised that the National Trust and Moyle Council had been working together with DETI for the provision of a Visitors' Centre and detailed proposals had been drawn up. He had no further information beyond what was in the media today.

Alderman Simpson recorded his opposition to the plan.

This being all the business, the meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

Appendices:
Presentation – Twinning Association

Appendix 1



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