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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of Development Committee Meeting No 221, held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 15th November 2010 at 4.00 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor Finlay

PRESENT: **Aldermen**
C Cousley, MBE, Deputy Mayor
J Simpson
H Connolly
F Campbell

Councillors
A Cavlan
R Halliday
B Kennedy, Mayor
M McCamphill
A Patterson
E Robinson
I Stevenson

APOLOGIES: **Councillors**
P McGuigan
T McKeown
C McLaughlin
M Storey, MLA

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Head of Corporate & Development Services
Mr G Earls (Geological Survey NI – Lignite) [Item 2]
Committee Clerk

221.1 PRESENTATION – GEOLOGICAL SURVEY NI – LIGNITE

Mr Gareth Earls gave a presentation on lignite in Northern Ireland adding that the best deposit was in Ballymoney Borough. He explained that recently DETI had recommended that the moratorium on mining stay in place for another three years minimum.

Mr Earls responded to questions from Councillors on a range of issues including:

- * Methane pollution;
- * Environmental pollution;
- * Adverse impact on house prices and housing development in this particular area;
- * Lignite extraction techniques;

* Current laboratory testing in Wyoming in America and also near Melbourne in Australia.

* **Councillor Cavlan left the meeting at 4.25 p.m.**

* **Councillor Kennedy left the meeting at 4.25 p.m.**

Councillor Finlay thanked Mr Earls for the presentation.

* **Mr Earl left the meeting at 4.25 p.m.**

* **Alderman Connolly left the meeting at 4.25 p.m.**

221.2 MINUTES – MEETING No 220 – 18th OCTOBER 2010

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

that the minutes of Meeting No 220 – 18th October 2010, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

221.3 CONDOLENCE

The Chairman advised that with the Mayor and Twinning Association Representatives he had attended the funeral of Councillor Dott Pitts in Douglas. Paying tribute to Councillor Pitts' service to her local community and to twinning activities between Douglas and Ballymoney he invited members to stand as a mark of respect. Members stood in silent tribute.

221.4 REPORT ON TENDERS FOR PROVISION OF VALUATION AND ASSOCIATED SERVICES

Head of Corporate and Development Services advised that to facilitate an early decision on award of tenders the Consultation Committee had received report on 5 No. tenders received and the tender awarded to McAfee Auctioneers and Valuers Ballymoney (min Ref CC 56.3 refers).

221.5 MAXIMISING THE IMPACT OF EU FUNDS – NILGA EVENT

NILGA held a conference for councillors and officers on the above subject. A copy of the press release dated 09/11/2010 after the event was circulated. The Head of Corporate and Development Services advised that the conference had been very informative and a DVD of the event would be provided to Councils.

221.6 INVEST NI/COUNCIL ENGAGEMENT

Following on from the meeting with the Economy Minister and presentation to committee from Invest NI (INI) council officers have met with INI officers from the Regional Office to further explore collaborative working. The matter of Invest NI/Council engagement was considered on a NI basis at a meeting hosted by DETI on the EU Competitiveness Programme (item 7b of this minute refers).

Members' attention is drawn to relocation of Invest NI Ballymena Regional Office to Suite 4, First Floor, Thomas House, 32 Thomas Street, Ballymena BT43 6AU (at the right of the Fairhill roundabout in Ballymena).

221.7 PROGRAMME REPORTS**a TOURISM****i Review of Regional Tourism Delivery**

Committee was previously advised (DC219.15) of publication of an interim review of the Causeway Coast & Glens Masterplan, and that local ownership of delivery was now being sought, DETI & NITB having led on the initiative. Officers have been considering draft terms of reference for the review of regional tourism delivery and contributions to regional tourism bodies, also taking account of DETI's draft tourism strategy, which recommends a destination management approach and other issues and liaising with DETI and NITB. The objective of the review is to assess value for money, efficiency and effectiveness of existing delivery. It is intended that the review will be funded from contributions by Councils to the Causeway Coast & Glens (RTP £600 per council), with match funding from NITB. **IT IS RECOMMENDED** that Committee approve the proposed review of tourism delivery and structures in the Causeway Coast & Glens Region, in accordance with the terms of reference developed, and that Coleraine Borough Council act as lead Council for the procurement and delivery of the assignment.

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

to recommend that Council approve the proposed review of tourism delivery and structures in the Causeway Coast & Glens Region, in accordance with the terms of reference developed, and that Coleraine Borough Council act as lead Council for the procurement and delivery of the assignment.

ii International Appalachian Trail – Extension to Ireland

Causeway Coast & Glens have been participating in meetings comprising, amongst others, Irish Sports Council, tourism Ireland, NITB, NI Geological Society, CANN. Councils, NE Rural Development, NE Partnership, NI Environment Agency and Failte Ireland to discuss the possibility of extending the International Appalachian Trail to Ireland. Draft proposals are now being circulated to interested parties. A copy of the consultation letter and press release was circulated. Comments are invited. No comments were offered.

iii Tourism Accommodation – New Fire Safety Regulations

The Fire Safety Regulations (NI) 2010 come into effect on 15 November 2010 and apply to almost all premises which are not public dwellings, including tourist accommodation. The regulations put the emphasis on fire prevention and risk reduction by placing responsibility on the owners of accommodation or anyone in control of premises to ensure fire safety. Tourism accommodation providers will no longer be issued with a fire certificate but must have a "suitable and sufficient" fire risk assessment in place that includes all matters relating to fire precautions. The NI Fire and Rescue Service are running a series of information days to educate and inform businesses on the new regulations. We have notified all tourist accommodation providers in the area of the new regulations and the

information days and placed information on the new regulations on our website.

iv Tourism Performance

The Head of Corporate and Development Services advised on tourism insights published by NITB which reported tourism performance, based on research, which revealed that business travel had increased by 3% over the first six months of the current year; with spend on travel increasing by 7%; the UK's largest hotel operator had reported a 20% increase in trade from business customers during the same period. It was noted, however, that cross-border trade had declined by 35% with over a third of customers from ROI no longer making regular shopping trips to NI. Economic indicators show this trend looks likely to continue with UK inflation figures rising at 3.1% and the UK VAT rate set to increase further in January. A recent NITB passenger survey suggests a fall in visitors from Great Britain and overseas during the first six months of 2010, down by 5.9%, compared with the same period in 2009.

*** Councillor Kennedy returned to the meeting at 4.35 p.m.**

v Event Funding

Councillor Robinson suggested that Council write to the appropriate Minister and point out the economic benefits of major events in the Borough and region in particular the North West 200 and ask that special consideration to support continuation of the events be given to maintain funding.

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

to recommend that representations be made to the Minister on maintenance of funding support for events providing major economic benefits to the region.

vi Hotel Accommodation

There was discussion regarding the benefits a new hotel would bring to the area. The Head of Corporate and Development Services advised on promotion of case for hotel to developers and operators based on study prepared on Council's behalf and that some investment proposals had resulted. However, to date only one investor had decided to locate in the town area, but the proposal had unfortunately since been abandoned due to failure to secure planning approval. Approaches continue to be made to developers/investors as opportunities arise.

b EU COMPETITIVENESS PROGRAMME – REVIEW AND PROPOSAL FOR COLLABORATIVE WORKING ON LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Over the last three months DETI EU programmes branch officials met with economic development staff from councils across the province to discuss the future rollout of the local economic development measure of the sustainable competitiveness programme. In addition representatives from Invest NI attended meetings and discussions centred on how councils and Invest NI can work collaboratively to develop a programme of high quality support for local economic development across the region. These meetings have been

positive and constructive with a consensus that there is real potential to improve the reach and quality of support available to local businesses. There has been broad agreement on the value of having a core support offering available to businesses across NI, backed up with tailored support at sub-regional or Council level to reflect the specific needs of local economies.

Representatives from Councils attended a workshop organised by DETI to build on the progress made on the future rollout of LED funding. Discussions were robust but positive and a proposed way forward to design and develop a collaborative approach to future activity under the local economic development strand of the sustainable competitiveness programme was agreed. DETI will now prepare a paper to be considered by Councils setting out the background to the proposed way forward and a view on the next steps needed. Views had been invited by 19th November. No specific comments are offered.

The following documents were circulated to members:

- NILGA paper on Local Government /Invest NI Council Local Economic Development Partnership (EU Competitiveness Programme);
- DETI paper on Review of the Local Economic Development Measure within the EU Sustainable Competitiveness Programme
- Invest NI Presentation at Workshop.

c TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS

i Townscape Heritage Initiative –

Properties to be included in the proposal have been identified, assessed, indicative costs prepared and properties ranked. The report has been considered and approved by the project team. Work is continuing on the preparation of the bid document and supporting information and will be reviewed with HLF prior to submission. The bid includes match funding from Council, including contributions in kind, and contributions from other agencies to support the implementation of the bid.

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

to recommend that Council endorse the bid in respect of the Townscape Heritage Initiative Project.

Councillor Robinson asked to be recorded as abstaining from the position on this project.

- ### **ii Christmas Marketing and Events Programme –** The Christmas shopping and events programme was launched on 10th November and has been distributed to 27,000 homes in the borough and wider catchment.

d RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

- ### **i Village Renewal Projects –** Council considered at its meeting on rate estimates for 2011/12 requests from community groups for match funding for

village renewal projects (total: £89,667, detailed below) and referred the projects back to committee.

4 No. village action plans – total £7,000

4 No. village regeneration projects – total £82,667

It was proposed by Councillor McCamphill and seconded by Councillor Kennedy

that provision of £7,000 for mileage plans be approved and included in rate estimate 2011/12.

However, not all the Councillors were in agreement and therefore a vote was taken by the Chair.

FOR

Councillor McCamphill
Councillor Kennedy,

AGAINST

Councillor Stevenson
Alderman Simpson
Councillor Halliday
Councillor Robinson

The Chair declared the motion lost.

Councillor Kennedy, stated that the matter could be discussed further at the rates meeting with other proposals in the draft estimate.

- ii **Bygone Ballymoney Project** – A revised project proposal has been developed and submitted to NE RDP. It is expected a letter of offer will issue shortly to allow the project to progress.
- iii **Rural Tourism Initiative (IndiGENous Project)** – Revised options for delivery of this cluster-wide project have been developed and forwarded to partners for comment.
- e **INTERREG IVA –**
- i **Inland Waterways Project** – This project has been assigned to KPMG for economic appraisal. In advance of this some further work will be done to review project proposals and reduce budget. The project includes a project at Drumaheglis Marina and Balnamore village, including a cycle/footway link between the facility and the village.

The Head of Corporate and Development Services advised that SEUPB had reduced the project budget by 50% and in view of this and the limited time to rework the projects it is uncertain if Councils will be able to deliver a revised project proposal within the short timescale set down by SEUPB. It was anticipated that the completed project would have produced maximum benefits to Balnamore and the surrounding area and there was concern that a reduced project would have a reduced impact. An extension of time to respond to queries has been requested.

Councillor Robinson expressed her wish that the project would be given serious consideration particularly as it would enhance the whole area and benefit the village.

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

to recommend that a letter regarding the reduction in budget, delay in roll out of the programme funding and timelines being prescribed for reworking the projects be sent to the relevant Minister.

- ii **NEP** – Pat Mulvenna has been appointed as NEP Manager and has taken up post.

f INLAND WATERWAYS PROJECTS –

Waterways Ireland has announced availability of funding and support to groups, associations and clubs or other appropriate bodies to assist with events which meet the aims of the Waterways Ireland Sponsorship Programme and enhance the use of the waterways principally for recreational purposes. Waterways under the remit of Waterways Ireland include The Lower Bann Navigation. The development of an event which would meet the criteria and benefit the area is being explored. **Committee's endorsement is sought.** The closing date for applications is 13th December.

The Head of Corporate and Development Services informed the Councillors that Coleraine Borough Council have already received funding and there may be an opportunity to work in collaboration with them or to develop a complementary proposal.

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

to recommend that options to take up Waterways Ireland be explored.

g JOINT STRATEGY – CAUSEWAY COUNCILS

Work is continuing on finalising the final draft strategy for consultation. The themes identified for collaborative actions are: ICT, Improving the business environment, emerging sectors and business growth and development. The Council's indicative action plan identifies indicative strategic actions under the following 6 key themes:

- 1) Enterprise Development – *Creating and developing new and existing business*
- 2) Tourism - *tourism development and marketing*
- 3) Town Centre - *strengthening town competitiveness*
- 4) Community Planning – *community development and regeneration*
- 5) ICT – *raise general level of e-commerce and stimulate new e-commerce based businesses*
- 6) Partnership working – *collaborative innovative solutions to shared problems.*

h ACORN PROGRAMME

DECLARATION OF INTEREST

***The Chief Executive declared an interest as a Board Member of Acorn Business Centre during consideration of this item and left the meeting at 5.05 p.m.**

The Head of Corporate and Development Services advised regarding Council's support to this programme and that they have already assisted with the marketing and publishing of their information material. The officer also added that she had been reviewing the budget in order to try to secure support for this programme which commences in 2011/2012.

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

to recommend that Council lends its support to the Acorn Programme and the officer report further on budget provision for business programmes.

221.8 NI CHAMBER OF COMMERCE ENABLING ECONOMIC EXCELLENCE MANIFESTO FOR GROWTH AND JOBS

The NI Chamber of Commerce has outlined to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister a pathway which will rebalance the Northern Ireland economy. It has called for the establishment of "Special Opportunity Zones" to include fast-tracked planning, 100% rates relief for three years for new and expanding firms, national insurance relief, a jobs fund and financial support for growth and export, to ensure these areas become incubators for home business and magnets for international investors. Further proposals are outlined in the manifesto circulated **The Chamber would welcome the opportunity to discuss the manifesto with Council.**

It was agreed that the Chamber be invited to present to Committee on the subject.

221.9 DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITY SITES

Examination of proposals was ongoing and progress will be reported to committee.

221.10 FLOODING – MEADOWS, BALLYMONEY

The Rivers Agency have advised that the flood defence works to the existing earth floodbank at the Meadows are now complete. There are some minor landscaping works outstanding, and these will be carried out in conjunction with the developer of the adjacent lands to tie in with his development as that work proceeds.

Councillor Kennedy, said that it was important for the Councillors to be aware of when this work will be completed in order to share this information with people who have concerns. Councillor Patterson agreed indicating that residents did not believe all works were complete.

Councillor Finlay added that a developer at a recent planning office meeting had advised that he would do work on behalf of Rivers Agency, this was contingent on planning issues being resolved.

It was agreed to seek clarification from Rivers Agency as to the current status of flood defence works.

221.11 FIRMUS ENERGY – LAUNCH OF GAS OFFER TO DOMESTIC CUSTOMERS

Firmus Energy have launched a natural gas offer to domestic customers in the greater Belfast area. A copy of their press release was circulated.

221.12 INTERNATIONAL LINKS PROGRAMME

- a **Douglas** – Councillor Finlay expressed regret on learning of the passing of Councillor Dorothy Pitts. Dot, as Chair of the Twinning & Affiliations Sub-Committee, devoted much of her time to developing the link between our two boroughs, formalised in 2006. Since then she was a valuable supporter of the various activities which saw exchanges of groups and individuals of all ages and backgrounds greatly contributing to friendship links between our communities. The Mayor has written on behalf of Council conveying sympathy to Councillor Stephen Pitts and the family circle on the sad loss they have sustained. Councillor Finlay and Alderman Campbell had attended the funeral service in order to represent the citizens of the Borough.

- b **Belguim** – Following the meeting between representatives of the town of Heuvelland and the Chair and Councillor McCamphill further information has been provided and further exploratory discussions will take place, with further report to committee in due course.

This being all the business the meeting closed at 5.20 p.m.