

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 170 – 8<sup>th</sup> May 2006**

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**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of Meeting No 170 held in the McKinley Room, Riada House on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at 6.00 pm.

**In the Chair:** Alderman J Simpson (Vice Chair)

**Present:** **Aldermen**  
F Campbell  
C Cousley

**Councillors**

Mrs Robinson  
I Stevenson (Deputy Mayor)  
J Finlay  
M Storey, MLA

**Apologies:** M McCamphill  
P McGuigan  
R Wilson

**In Attendance:** Chief Executive  
Corporate Services Officer  
Committee Clerk

Mr B Farren, Acorn The Business Centre (170.2)

**170.1 Minutes – Meeting No 169 – 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006**

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

*That the minutes of the Committee's meeting No 169 on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2006, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.*

\* Councillor Storey arrived, the time being 6.15 pm

## 170.2 Acorn The Business Centre

Bobby Farren gave a presentation on the uptake of the Phase II units. Members were pleased to note that at 10th April, 20 of the 23 units are occupied, which is 86%. Acorn continues to market the units through the Start A Business Programme and press releases in the local media. All promotions refer to Ballymoney Borough Council, International Fund for Ireland, Invest Northern Ireland and the European Union funding support.

Employment within the new development has increased to 23, bring the total employed at Acorn The Business Centre to 116.

Mr Farren also updated the meeting on the performance of the Start A Business Programme, revealing a 90% success rate of businesses in the five year programme for 2001 to date.

## 170.3 Reserved Projects – EU Building Sustainable Prosperity

Following review of programmes and targets with DETI EU Programmes the following projects are submitted for approval. It was noted some will require further development.

<b>1. Tourism Activity Development</b>
1.1 Production of fishing product brochure and inclusion on visitballymoney website, under strengthening enterprise base programme.
1.2 Development of activity packages to address the lack of in-borough tourism product identified in our borough strategy, under creating and supporting infrastructure programme.
1.3 Development of town walking guide/map and inclusion on visitballymoney website, under town competitiveness programme.
1.4 Promotional campaign to coincide with launch of covered amenity area and highlighting tourism attractions and activities.
<b>2. Business Development</b>
2.1 Development of programme in consultation with Invest NI & DEL to address low level of earnings and job losses arising from loss of manufacturing jobs in the borough, under strengthening the enterprise base programme.
<b>3. Town Development</b>
3.1 Town audit to identify gaps, production of investment brochure and targeted sales pitch, under town competitiveness programme.
3.2 Awareness raising of town product amongst attraction/accommodation providers in the region, under town competitiveness programme.
3.3 Marketing plan for new covered amenity area, under town competitiveness programme.
3.4 Resurvey of customer service levels to evaluate success of development and marketing activities, under town competitiveness programme.

The projects would be funded from existing budgets and developmental work would include consultation with relevant sectors and stakeholders.

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

***that the outline projects be approved in principle and submitted to DETI for funding support.***

#### **170.4 Rural Development Strategy**

The present Rural Development Strategy covers the period up to end of 2006. At present the EU, DARD and other agencies are considering future rural development policy, funding and delivery for the period 2007-2013.

North Antrim Leader (NAL+) have been involved in delivering the Leader Programme in Ballymoney, Ballymena, Larne and Moyle Council areas over the last 10 years. They have also been involved in other rural development initiatives in the area over that timescale.

It was **agreed** that Andrew McAlister, Manager NAL+ be invited to make a presentation to Council on the achievements of the Leader programme and NAL+ in the area. The opportunity could also be taken to consider the future options for rural policy, budget and delivery over the 2007-2013 period and also to identify how any new strategy will link into the RPA proposals which give Councils more input into this area.

A report on the Rural Development Strategy 2007-2013 consultation document was circulated and discussed. (Appendix DC170A refers) In general the contents of the document are welcomed and the approaches contained in the draft document are in the main to be commended.

North Antrim Leader+ Ltd. has prepared a response to the consultation document whose tenor is broadly in line with the report circulated and was endorsed. It was agreed that this be further discussed with the Manager.

The Rural Development Council have written seeking Council's support for their case as the regional rural agency and to write accordingly to the Secretary of State, the Minister and DARD. It was agreed that a representative from the RDC be invited to address committee on the subject.

#### **170.5 Request for Taskforce**

In response to Council's request to the Enterprise Minister to establish a taskforce to address economic and social issues in the borough following the recent job losses in the healthcare sector and closure of textile manufacturing operation, the Minister's Office has responded advising that INI and DEL have been working with both companies to secure the best possible outcome for those affected and to help them find alternative employment as quickly as possible.

The Minister notes Council's concerns for the future of manufacturing in Ballymoney. Pointing to the important part the manufacturing sector has to play in Northern Ireland's economic future it refers to independent research published by DETI which found that while employment in the Northern Ireland

manufacturing sector has declined by half in the last 20 years, 2000 jobs have been created in the sector on average each year since 1998 and manufacturing output has continued to grow. Manufacturing will remain an integral part of the Northern Ireland economy – it is currently responsible for over £4.5b of export sales and generates almost 30% of the total economic activity of Northern Ireland business.

It is, however, clear that manufacturing is changing fundamentally. For manufacturing companies to survive, they must move up the value-added chain and embrace knowledge intensive, higher skilled practices. At the launch of the manufacturing report the Minister outlined Government's future approach to the manufacturing sector including the establishment of a new regional Science/Industry panel to develop a more productive relationship between industry and the Northern Ireland R&D and science/technology base and the use of the new Skills and Science Fund to exploit a number of niche technologies in which NI has a comparative competitive advantage.

DETI point to the fact that future economic growth will be dependent on the ability of indigenous companies and particularly those at SME and micro-business level to be more outward looking, enterprising and market aware. The Minister is therefore particularly pleased to note that the local enterprise agency, Acorn, completed an expansion of its business centre in 2005 adding an additional 20,000 sq ft of incubation units and that there has been a high level of interest in the new units with over 80% already let. This represents an encouraging level of entrepreneurial activity within the local community.

Referring to the economic benefits of tourism to the borough the Minister points to the potential spin-off benefits from its location close to one of the scenic loops which runs of the Causeway Coastal Route and the planned marketing and promotion of the short break, activity tourism and cultural and heritage themes.

The Minister has asked Invest NI's North East Office to contact the Chairman to discuss the relevant economic development issues within the borough.

It was **AGREED**:

***that the various economic and social issues be further considered following the meeting with INI, which would be arranged in consultation with the Chairman.***

#### **170.6 Ballymoney Music Centre**

In response to Council's application to have this property transferred from the NEELB to Council for community use the Department of Environment have sought additional information, in particular with regard to the market value of the property and the compulsory acquisition powers Council is relying on in this case, which were confirmed as The Local Government Act (NI) 1972, Art 97 and The Recreation & Youth Services (NI) Order 1986, Art 10. Committee also received preliminary advice from the Council's Architects with regard to repairs necessary to the property. It was agreed that detailed consideration of the issues be deferred pending a response from DOE on the application for

the transfer of the property. It was also agreed that the LSP be invited to provide information on the various prospective tenants who might occupy the proposed community hub facility.

**\* Councillor Stevenson, Councillor Storey and the Mayor retired from the meeting, the time being 7.47 pm.**

#### **170.7 Origin Farmer's Market**

Following issues raised by the Vice Chair, it was agreed he be supplied with details of the stallholder criteria and the origin market concept.

#### **170.8 Visit to Douglas, Isle of Man**

The Chief Executive has received an invitation from Douglas Borough Council to visit Douglas, Isle of Man from 25 – 26 May 2006. Ballymoney Borough Council signed a Friendship agreement with Douglas in June 2002.

Representatives from the Twinning Association have also been invited and the purpose of the visit is to discuss ways to strengthen the link and to share with Douglas how Ballymoney Borough Council facilitates and co-operates with the local Twinning Association.

Douglas Council would provide accommodation and hospitality for the duration of the visit. The cost of return flights is estimated at £110.

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

***that approval be given for the visit and that Council meet the travel costs involved.***

#### **170.9 Project Progress Report**

A progress report at 30/4/06, circulated, was tabled. A number of members expressed complimentary comments on the recent TV advertising campaign.

#### **170.10 Gas – Regulation (EC) No. 1775/2005 – Impact on NI's Gas Transmission Network**

The Northern Ireland authority for energy regulator has published a consultative document examining the above regulation and its impact on Northern Ireland's gas transmission. Comments are invited by 2<sup>nd</sup> June. A report will be submitted to the committee's next meeting.

#### **170.11 Start A Business Programme**

It was reported that an evaluation of the Start A Business Programme had been produced on behalf of BDO Stoy Hayward and comments were invited. It was agreed that comments on the evaluation be submitted with a report to the next meeting for endorsement.

**170.12 Contribution – Ballymoney Borough Twinning Association**

At its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> May Council approved a contribution of £4,000 to the Ballymoney Borough Twinning Association

**170.13 Consultation on Draft National Strategic Reference Framework**

At its meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> May Council appointed the following delegates to attend the NILGA consultation event on the draft National Strategic Reference Framework (NSRF) on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May 9.30 am – 12.30 pm in the Guildhall.

Committee Chairman – Councillor M Storey, MLA  
 Committee Vice-Chairman - Alderman J Simpson  
 Councillor E Robinson  
 Corporate Services Officer, Council's representative on the NILGA EU Working Group. The NILGA Response will be reported to committee.

A copy of the Ministerial Statement by Alun Michael, Minister of State for Industry and the Regions, together with news release and copy of slides of presentation on the subject by Kirstin Blagden, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister were circulated.

**170.14 REPORTS**

The following reports were tabled

- Draft Regional Sub-Transport Plan Technical Supplement. – Copy of the Technical supplement circulated, full plan is available for reference in the Members Room and also on the DRD website drdni.gov.uk
- Concordia – The Path to Partnership – A research report and briefing paper documenting what social partnership is and its future role within the NI context, circulated.
- Labour Market Report for Northern Ireland - summary of key points of the report, circulated. Employment by sector, travel to work analysis, labour market forecasts discussed. Matters arising with regard to the growth areas and weakness in employment sectors to be discussion at forthcoming meeting with INI.
- Review of Public Administration – INI confirmation of the functions which will transfer to local government. Copy of INI submission to the RPA Team circulated.
- “Sustaining Rural Communities” – A mid term profile of the Rural Development Programme 2001-2006 and the Peace II Measures for Farmers and Farm Families.
- “Sharing This Space” – a strategic framework for action 2006-2010 – Major achievements of the International Fund for Ireland since inception.

This concluded the business of the meeting the time being 7.45 pm.