

**LIMAVADY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE BHUIRG LÉIM AN MHADAIDH
MONTHLY COUNCIL MEETING**

01 FEBRUARY 2011

Minutes of meeting held in the Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady at 7.30 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

In the Chair: Councillor Carten

Aldermen M Coyle and J Rankin. Councillors P Butcher, A Brolly, B Chivers, L Cubitt, M Donaghy, B Douglas, G Mullan, C Ó hOisín, A Robinson and E Stevenson.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Committee Clerk, Director of Support Services, Director of Development and the Chief Executive.

APOLOGIES: - Alderman Robinson and Councillor McElhinney.

MINUTES:

The minutes of meeting held 11 January 2011 were approved and signed on the proposal of Alderman Coyle, seconded by Councillor Chivers.

MATTERS ARISING:

NIE Letter – Proposed new Underground Electric Cables from Substation at Drumcatt Square: The Chief Executive informed members that NIE would try and use bore holes to connect to the substation at Drumcatt Square but if this failed to work, they would exercise their right to dig up the square.

COUNCIL ESTIMATES:

The Director of Support Services tabled revised estimates update that incorporated changes agreed at the previous meeting of 13 January 2011, which were that £42k be set aside towards the car ferry service and that an additional £10k be set aside for the Community Services grants. These additional costs were partially offset by a savings in loan charges of £32k resulting from a postponement in the draw down of loans relating to the 3G pitch development.

With these charges incorporated the overall decrease in the rates for 2011/12 would be 0.72% for domestic and 0.71% for non domestic.

Following discussion, the following points/comments were made:

- The decrease in the rates was welcomed.
- Council should be looking at reducing staffing levels.
- Several members disapproved of the decision to help finance the ferry service.

- It was disappointing that the budget did not include funding towards the Community Wardens.
- Whilst some members were not happy with the estimates, Council had a statutory obligation to strike the rates.

Following the meeting of Council's Support Services Committee of 13 January 2011, Alderman Coyle Chairperson of that committee proposed:

- The adoption of the projected estimated net expenditure of £8,874,287 for 2011/2012;
- The authorisation of the expenditure as set out in the Estimates; and
- The adoption of a Domestic Rate of 0.4005 pence and a Non-Domestic Rate of 27.4233 pence for the year 2011/2012.

This represents a decrease of 0.72% from the year 2010/2011.

Alderman Coyle stated that Council would develop and implement a new corporate plan for the period 2011-2015, with the overall mission of serving the community of Limavady Borough in a way that meets its needs for service provision, economic prosperity, sustainable development and quality of life. He said that Council was most conscious of the need to maintain tight and effective budgetary control, strike a reasonable rate for the incoming year and endeavour to maintain reasonable reserves in line with Local Government Auditor Guidance.

Alderman Coyle outlined that Council's reserves were currently £558k. This equates to 7% of Council's net expenditure which is in line with the level recommended by the Department of Environment of 5% to 7.5%

In order to improve services and facilities, Council will be involved in the following activities:

- Development of a 3G pitch and upgrade of current pitches and changing pavilion at Scroggy Road.
- Provision of 2 new play areas.
- Undertaking various works to improve access for the disabled to our services and our facilities.
- Implementation of the Tourism Strategy for the Borough.
- Provision of joint funding to ensure the continuation of the Lough Foyle Car Ferry service.
- Implementation of a Good Relations Strategy.
- Provision of a civic amenity site for Dungiven area.
- Development of a recycling education and awareness programme.
- Upgrading various playing fields and sports facilities.
- Carrying out improvements to Benone Tourist Complex and Roe Valley Leisure Centre.
- Completion of toilet facilities in Ballykelly.

Many of these activities attract other sources of funding to support the ratepayers contribution thus helping to provide better value for money.

The Rates Estimates for 2011/2012 consist of:

Loan Charges of £1,129k – this represents an increase of £74k or 7.00%. This increase is due to the provision of a new multi-purpose Civic Centre costing £37k, the development of 3G pitch and upgrade existing pitches and pavilion costing £23k and various improvements to other Council facilities costing £14k.

Wages and Salaries of £4,978k - this represents a decrease of £132k or 2.57% and is due mainly to an increase in employer's pension contribution rate from 17% to 18% costing £42k and the employment of a full-time Health and Safety Officer costing £34k, these costs are off-set by savings in overtime of £85k, restructuring £61k, reduction in administration staff hours £40k and non-provision of Community Wardens Service £19k.

Other Expenses of £4,623k - this represents a decrease of £337k or 6.80%. The decrease in these expenses is due to:

- Reduced gate fees for Council's grey bin disposal saving £64k.
- A reduction in deficit funding for the Lough Foyle Car Ferry Service of £49k.
- Grounds Maintenance works previously contracted out which will be done in-house saving £31k.
- Reduction in Neighbourhood Renewal spend of £120k. This however was 100% grant aided.
- Reduction in spend on Arts Programme/Exhibitions/Events and Festivals of £50k.
- Reduction in spend on tourism promotion saving £20k.
- Savings on vehicle hire of £16k.

Other various items of savings totalling £106k are offset by the following unavoidable additional costs;

- Landfill Tax associated with the disposal of 9000 tonnes costing £79k.
- One-off cost of Local Government Election costing £40k.

Income of £1,856k - this represents a decrease of £230k or 11.03%.

The decrease is due to:

- Reduction in Neighbourhood Renewal funding referred to earlier saving £120k.
- Reduced income in relation to trade waste collection £25k.
- Reduced grants in relation to Community Wardens £26k.
- Reduction in grant in relation to local community fund £25k.
- Reduction in income and grant for Community and Sports Development of £25k associated with reduced expenditure by Council.

This results in net expenditure of £8,874k - a decrease of £165k or 1.83%.

The General Grant generates £1,482k - a decrease of £2k.

A balance applied of £75k means the net amount to be raised by the rates is £7,468k which is equivalent to a District Domestic Rate of 0.4005 pence in the pound - a decrease of 0.72% and a District Non-Domestic Rate of 27.4233 pence in the pound - a decrease of 0.71%.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Mullan. A recorded vote was requested and on being put to the meeting the proposal was declared carried, 8 for, namely Alderman Coyle, Councillor Mullan, Councillor Chivers, Councillor Butcher, Councillor Donaghy Councillor Brolly, Councillor Ó hOisín and Councillor Carten. Councillor Douglas, Alderman Rankin, Councillor Stevenson, Councillor Cubitt and Councillor Robinson, 5 voted against.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S REPORT – FEBRUARY 2011:

The Chief Executive presented his report for February 2011. The items for information were noted and the report was adopted on the proposal of Alderman Robinson, seconded by Alderman Coyle subject to the following:

ICE Programme: It was agreed that Stephen McMaw, Transition Manager, Causeway Cluster would update Council on the ICE programme at the March 2011 Monthly meeting.

NILGA Briefing Sessions: It was agreed that Councillor Mullan, Councillor Cubitt, Alderman Rankin, Alderman Coyle, Councillor Ó hOisín, Councillor Brolly and Councillor Carten would attend the NILGA Briefing Sessions on Local Government Reform (10 am to 12.30 pm) and the ICE Programme (1.30 pm – 3.30 pm) being held in Roe Valley Arts & Cultural Centre - Ionad Ealaíon agus Cultúir Ghleann na Ró on 22 February 2011.

Elected Member Development: The Chief Executive informed members that NILGA were seeking Councils and Clusters to apply as pilots or pathfinders for the development of an Elected Member Development Charter. He said if selected, the financial cost to Council or Cluster would be £750, with NILGA bearing the build of cost, estimated at £2,500. He recommended that consideration be given to bidding for this through the Causeway Coast & Glens Cluster Group. Agreed.

Driver Licence Checking: The Chief Executive reported that following changes to Council's Health & Safety Policy, it was recommended that Council implement a process of driver licence checking in order to ensure that those employees who drive on behalf of Council were legitimate to do so.

Members debated the recommendation and it was queried if the unions had been consulted on this and if Council was statutory obliged to complete this exercise. The Chief Executive indicated that he was not aware of the exercise being a council wide policy, however the recommendation had been made following a risk identified from a Health & Safety Audit.

After further debate Councillor Brolly proposed, seconded by Councillor Chivers that Council utilise the services of a third party company called Licence Bureau Ltd to obtain driver licence information from DVA through a process of mandates signed by Council employees. The proposal was put to the meeting and declared carried, 8 for, 2 against and 2 abstentions.

Public Consultation on 10 Year Review of the Regional Development Strategy: The Chief Executive indicated that Council's views were sought on the review of the Regional Development Strategy which was running from 6 January to 31 March 2011. Members voiced their disappointment that most of the public consultation meetings were had already been held. The Chief Executive

requested that members forward their comments to the consultation for submission by the 31 March deadline.

NILGA Local Government Awards: Members were informed that a submission from Roe Valley Leisure Centre had been shortlisted for the Best Local Authority Service Team category at the forthcoming Local Government Awards being held as part of the NILGA Conference. It was agreed that 4 members of staff from the Leisure Centre would attend the NILGA awards in which NILGA had allocated two complimentary places, therefore the cost to Council for the additional two places were £45 per person.

EXTERNAL MINUTES NOTED:

- Western Health & Social Care Board – 4 November 2010

CONSULTATIONS:

Members reviewed the consultation list for February 2011 and the following responses were noted.

- Department of Social Development – Review of Sunday Trading Law: *Council agreed that Option 1 – Do Nothing, keep the opening hours for large shops to a maximum of five hours between 1 pm and 6 pm on a Sunday.*
- Department of Social Development – Business Improvement Districts and Licensing of Pavement Cafes: *It was agreed that the views of Roe Valley Chamber of Trade would be sought on this consultation.*
- Department of Justice – New Community Safety Strategy for NI: *It was agreed that a workshop should be held to discuss the consultation in detail.*
- Department for Regional Development – DRD Draft Budget 2011/15 Spending and Saving Proposals: *It was agreed that Council would respond to the consultation by citing Dungiven by-pass and to query potential start date for the project. It was suggested that this provided an opportunity to reduce the level of traffic to Belfast.*

COURSES/CONFERENCES: - None.

SEAL LEGAL DOCUMENTS:

Mortgage Deed: It was agreed that the Mortgage Deed between Council and the Sports Council for grant which was made available for the 3G pitch at Scroggy Road would be signed and sealed.

FORMAL CORRESPONDENCE:

- Rural Community Network, Beyond Belfast, contested spaces in urban, rural and cross border settings
- Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service – Annual Report & Statement of Accounts 2009/10
- Advice NI – Annual Report 2010
- Now News, Issue 8, North West Regional College
- Energy Saving Trust 2009-10 Annual Review
- Grant Programme Rural Focused Research Briefing
- CARDI Grants Programme, Research Brief, Transport & Rural Ageing

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Legal High Training: It was agreed that Councillor Brolly would attend the DPP training event on 'Legal Highs' on 3 March 2011 in the Everglades Hotel.

Select Affairs Committee: It was agreed that the Development Manager would attend and present to the Select Affairs Committee on 'Northern Ireland as an Enterprise' on 16 February 2011 in London.

Council Meeting in the Run up to the Elections: The Chief Executive indicated that he would bring back a recommendation on schedule of meetings to be held in the run up to the elections in his March 2011 report.

NEXT MEETING: - 1 March 2011.

THE BUSINESS CONCLUDED AT 9.30 PM

Signed: _____
Chair of Meeting