

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

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

07 MARCH 2006

Minutes of meeting held in the Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady which commenced at 7.00 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Committee Clerk and the Director of Support Services.

APOLOGIES:

Alderman Rankin.

CONDOLANCES:

It was agreed that a letter of condolence expressing Councils' sympathy would be forwarded to Alderman Rankin on the death of his sister Jean and to Jimmy McArthur, Works Supervisor on the death of his father in law.

MINUTES:

The minutes of meeting dated 7 February 2006 were approved and signed on the proposal of Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor Chivers.

MATTERS ARISING:

Audit Committee: The Director of Support Services outlined that the first Audit Committee meeting had been held on 23 February 2006 and that:

1. Mrs Denise McDonnell, Helm Corporation was in attendance to outline proposals for an Internal Audit Service and risk workshop. The terms of reference for the Audit Committee were agreed.
2. The Local Government Auditor, Mr Stephen Knox was also in attendance and presented the Audit Management Letter 2003/2004 and Audit Management Letter 2004/2005.

Members noted that the committee will meet again on 15 June 2006.

Wireless Networking in Council Chamber: The Director of Support Services advised that the first Wireless meeting would take place when all laptops had been upgraded with Wireless Access cards.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS:

The payment of accounts for the month of January 2006 was tabled and noted.

HUMAN RESOURCES:

IN COMMITTEE: The Director of Support Services presented the Human Resources Report and enlarged thereon. The report was adopted on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor Butcher subject to the following:

Single Status – Job Evaluation: The Director of Support Services explained that over the coming weeks Council would begin conducting a job evaluation exercise as part of the single status negotiations and it was proposed to formally adopt the Greater London Provincial Council scheme through negotiations with T&G and NIPSA. Noted. **OUT OF COMMITTEE.**

NOTICE OF MOTIONS:

Councillor Chivers (Postmistress) declared an interest and took no part in the discussion.

(a) Councillor Butcher proposed that:

‘Limavady Borough Council strongly opposes the planned withdrawal by the British department of Works and Pensions of Post Office Card Accounts, used by those in receipt of Benefit to draw down their money in their own neighbourhood. Pensioners in rural areas where there is no bank or cash machine and very limited public transport will be particularly concerned and disadvantaged. At their local Post Office they can conveniently and safely withdraw money as they need it, dealing with people with whom they are familiar and comfortable. If they have to travel to a bank, they are more likely to withdraw all their pension at once, creating for themselves a security risk at a time when robberies at the homes of the elderly are rampant. On behalf of our senior citizens we call on all Councils to campaign vigorously in support of the retention of Post Office Card Accounts and the maintenance of our invaluable community Post Offices.’

In proposing the motion Councillor Butcher said he had received correspondence from the Federation of Postmasters who were concerned that this decision had been made but kept low key and requested that Councillors and MLA’s raise awareness of this. He said the withdrawal of Post Office Card Accounts (POCA’s) were a nail in the coffin for rural areas and that Council should oppose this. The motion was seconded by Councillor Donaghy who said this would affect the elderly or those who had no transport to towns nearby.

Alderman Robinson voiced support for the motion and suggested that the motion be inclusive to all Post Offices.

The motion was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

b) **Councillor Ó hOisín proposed that:**

- ‘This Council welcomes the fact that Irish Unity is now the stated objective of all nationalist parties on the island of Ireland including the present Irish Government Administration.
- This Council therefore believes that An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD has a unique responsibility in giving practical expression to his administrations and nationalist Irelands stated objective on the issue by immediately commissioning a Green Paper on Irish Unity; a paper focusing on the compelling logic of this out come in Political, Social, and Economic terms as well as spelling out what Pro-active Strategy his government is going to undertake in pursuance of the stated objective of nationalist Ireland.
- The Council further calls on An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD to initiate a holistic consultation process amongst all sectors of society north and south to assist in the formulation of a Green Paper.
- The Council further calls on An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD to give immediate effect to the constitutions recognition of the entitlement of legislating for: six county representation in Dail Eireann, the right of people in the six counties to vote in National Referenda on articles of the Constitution and the right to vote in Presidential Elections.
- This Council communicates the above requests in writing to An Taoiseach Bertie Ahern TD.’

In calling for support to the motion, Councillor Ó hOisín said the motion which had been adopted by several other Council’s, alluded to the aspirations of the majority of people in the Borough and the rest of the island. This was seconded by Councillor McElhinney.

Councillor Stevenson proposed that the motion should not be debated as it had no relevance to Council and was a Constitutional matter. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Douglas and on being put to the meeting was declared lost, with 5 voting for, 6 against and 3 abstentions.

Councillor Stevenson pointed out that the motion did not mention unionism, the Constitutional position of Northern Ireland as part of Great Britain or of majority consent. He said the motion was a blatant attempt by Sinn Féin to placate extreme elements within their supporters who aspired to an all Ireland Republic and queried why unionists would contemplate Irish unity given the recent disturbance in Dublin by republican thugs. He added that a referendum would have to be called for if changes were to be made to the Constitutional position of Northern Ireland and that the Ulster Unionist Party had consistently opposed six county representation in Dail Eireann. He urged members who believed in the democratic principle of consent to reject the motion.

Councillors Cubitt and Douglas put forward their opposition to the motion and Alderman Robinson stated that the motion had been rejected by all other parties in the Dail who had recognised that it was for the people of Northern Ireland to decide their future through consent and not be bringing forward a Green Paper on unity. He said this motion was a failure by Sinn Féin who were under pressure to bring about a United Ireland by 2016.

Councillor Coyle queried if Council Chamber was the best platform to further the motion given the lack of goodwill or calming effect this would have and said that whilst he was opposed to the motion, this did not mean that the SDLP had given up the objective of a United Ireland, which he believed could be achieved by means other than a Green Paper. He proposed an amendment that Council seek to reconvene the Peace & Reconciliation Forum and that this body should be able to come to agreement for all the people of Ireland through all the political parties. This was seconded by Alderman Mullan.

On being put to the meeting the amendment was declared lost, with 3 voting for, 6 against and 5 abstentions. The substantive motion was put to the meeting and also declared lost, with 6 voting for and 8 against.

DOE CIRCULAR NO LG/04/06 DISTRICT RATES 2006/2007 AND COMPARISON OF DOMESTIC & NON DOMESTIC RATES:

The Director of Support Services reported that all 26 councils had struck their rates for 2006/07 and that this showed increases of between 1.94% and 9.99% when compared with the 2005/06 figures. He provided comparative figures for domestic and non domestic rates for the year and members noted that with an 8.24% increase in domestic rates, Limavady Borough Council had been ranked 13 out of the 26 councils, which was down 3 positions from the previous year.

ABSENTEEISM IN NORTHERN IRELAND COUNCILS:

The Director of Support Services presented a report on Absenteeism in Northern Ireland Local Authorities from the Local Government Audit Office. He explained that the average days lost per full time equivalent employee for the 26 Councils during 2004/05 was 14.61 days, with Limavady having up to 21.19 days which was well above average for the year.

Members noted that within the quartile ranges that Limavady had dropped from 'B' rating for long term absences to a 'D' and from an 'A' to a 'C' for short term absences.

90TH ANNIVERSARY SOMME PILGRIMAGE 2006:

It was agreed, on the proposal of Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Councillor Cubitt that 2 members of Council would be preliminary booked to attend the '90th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme' pilgrimage to be held 28 June – 2 July 2006 at a cost £470 per person.

COMPLAINT REGARDING NAMING OF MONEYPANNEL ROAD:

The Director of Support Services tabled letter dated 20 February 2006 in which the Ombudsman Commissioner detailed results of the investigation into complaint against Limavady Borough Council made by Mr Colum Lewis Canning regarding the naming of Moneyrannel Road. He also tabled draft response compiled by the Chief Executive to the results for members' consideration and members noted that this clarified that the 5 residents of Moneyrannel Road would now be consulted regarding the current road name and that Council had accepted that the responsibility for the actions that followed the initial complaint lay with Council.

Members voiced their opposition to apologising in general terms to Mr Lewis Canning for the sense of frustration or injustice felt but the request to forward the Chief Executive's draft letter to the Ombudsman's office was put to the meeting and declared carried, with 6 voting for, 4 against and 2 abstentions.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Presentation to Council – Firmess Energy: It was agreed on the proposal of Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Brolly that Firmus Energy would given a presentation to Council on the supply of gas to Limavady at the Planning & Services committee on 6 April 2006.

New Laptops: It was agreed that Councillor Brolly would receive a new laptop.

NEXT MEETING:

4 April 2006.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
(The meeting ended at 8.20 pm)

Signed: _____
Chair of Meeting