

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

SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE

15 JANUARY 2009

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

PRESENT:

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

IN ATTENDANCE:

Committee Clerk, Director of Development, Director of Environmental Services, Director of Support Services, Finance Manager, Finance Assistant and the Chief Executive.

APOLOGIES:

Councillors J F McElhinney and E Stevenson.

MINUTES:

The minutes of meeting dated 2 December 2008 were approved and signed on the proposal of Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Carten.

MATTERS ARISING:

Payment of Accounts: The Director Support Services outlined that essential car users would receive the full allowance for 3 months and half for the next 3 months when off sick. Females on maternity leave would receive the full allowance for the duration of leave.

Equality Commission – Article 55 Review: Members were informed that the Corporate Policy Officer and Director of Support Services would meet with Paul Logue from the Equality Commission on 28 January 2009 regarding Article 55 Review.

Notice of Motion regarding Bellarena Railway Station: Members were tabled with letter of response from Translink to concerns raised regarding the future of Bellarena railway station which were noted as follows:

- As yet, no DDA works had been carried out at Bellarena as work may be required to facilitate the revised track layout following the imminent Coleraine/L'Derry track re-lay and timetable improvements. This issue will be finalised shortly.
- At this time, Translink has no plans to cease operations at Bellarena Halt, however in the interests of efficient operations, Translink continuously monitors levels of usage of halts and routinely reviews the economic benefits

of halt retention. If closure of halts becomes a realistic consideration, formal consultation with users, local representatives and the Department of Regional Development will be initiated.

- Translink has been actively promoting and developing services on the Londonderry line, which has seen a doubling of passenger journeys during the last 5 years. Further service improvements and infrastructure upgrades will be implemented from 2009 to 2014.

PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS:

The payment of accounts for the month of November 2008 were noted.

RATES ESTIMATES 2009/2010:

It was agreed that the discussion would **NOT BE HELD IN COMMITTEE:**

The Director of Support Services explained from the outset that the closure of Seagate would increase the rates by 1.27%. He gave a detailed presentation on the main elements of the rates which were loan charges, other expenses, salaries & wages and income. He highlighted areas where there were variances from last year and/or from the previous two years actual figures. He then gave a supplementary explanation of the main areas that were causing an increase in the rates as follows:

Loan Charges of £994k – represents an increase of £141k or 16.47% due to £99k on provision of Multi Purpose Civic Centre, £18k on grounds maintenance equipment, £11k on vehicles and £13k on other loans.

Wages and Salaries of £5,035k - represents an increase of £337k or 7.16% and is due mainly to a cost of living increase of 2.45% costing £121k, an increase in employer's pension contributions rate from 15% to 16% costing £43k, implementation of single status for all employees costing £67k, staffing of Dungiven Sports Pavilion costing £38, Benone/RVLC costing £31k and other increments costing £13k. Active Lifestyle Co-ordinator costing £24, Neighbourhood Renewal Officer £12k and Community Wardens costing £24k were 100% grant aided. Savings of £17k were made from the post of Town Centre Manager and £31k from Technical Services management posts.

Other Expenses of £5,027k - represents an increase of £440k or 9.6%. The increase in other expenses being mainly due to derv/oil costing £33k, heating oil/gas costing £35k and landfill tax associated with increased tonnage of waste costing £104k.

Income of £2,112k - represents an increase of £376k or 21.66% mainly due to £298k from grant aided posts, income of £37k from Dungiven Sports Pavilion, £35k from the Astroturf pitch and £40k from waste disposal recycling resales. Building Control income down by £40k due to downturn in property market.

This results in net expenditure of £8,944k - an increase of £541k or 6.44%.

The Director of Support Services outlined the amount of the General Grant was not finalised but based on figures from previous years, this should be in the region

of £1,606k - an decrease of £44k. Therefore, the amount to be raised by the rates was £7,314k which is equivalent to a Domestic Rate of 0.3899 pence in the pound - an increase of 9.68% and a Non-Domestic Rate of 26.6971 pence in the pound - an increase of 9.69%.

The Director of Support Services answered a number of queries from members on items included in the draft estimates. A member requested that Foreglen play area be included in the estimates as problems regarding access to the play area had now been resolved. The Director of Environmental Services confirmed that within the money set aside for playareas, those ready to commence would be developed first.

The following points made were noted:

- The Assembly were looking at what could be done to help those Councils struggling due to the MOD rates adjustment.
- A member felt that the cost for provision of toilets in Ballykelly was excessive.
- It was queried if staffing levels within Council could be reduced.
- It was suggested that non essential capital projects be postponed.
- It was suggested that officers continue to explore the possibility of grants to offset the costs for the Civic Centre.

A member felt that money should not be ring fenced for the Danny Boy Festival and proposed that all festivals be treated equally by having a policy whereby sponsorship would be set at upper maximum of £10k, which should be 50% match funded. He also suggested that Council accept the recommendation given in the January 2009 Director of Development Report that small grants be set at a maximum of £300, also to be 50% match funded. It was agreed that this suggestion would be taken into consideration.

Members were advised that officers were looking at what could be done to reduce the rates further and to make the rates as viable as possible to the ratepayer. It was agreed that the rates would be further discussed at a special meeting arranged for Wednesday 28 January 2009 when the General Grant would be known.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Emergency Notice of Motion: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Butcher, seconded by Councillor Chivers that Standing Orders would be suspended to allow for an emergency joint notice of motion submitted by the SDLP and SF to be discussed.

Council took a 5 minute recess at 8.50 pm and the meeting resumed at 8.55 pm.

Councillor Coyle and Councillor Butcher proposed that:

'Limavady Borough Council notes the appalling loss of life, particularly children, now taking place in Gaza.

We call for an immediate cease-fire and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and from all the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 in defiance of the United Nations.

We believe that peace will only be brought to the Middle East on the basis of a full inclusive dialogue between the representatives of the people of Palestine and Israel.

We call on the people in Limavady to show solidarity with the victims of this aggression by joining the international boycott of Israeli goods so that pressure can be mounted on the Israeli government to respect international law.

Limavady Borough resolves to write to the British and Irish Governments and the EU President to express rejection of Israeli aggression and to call on both governments and the EU to bring diplomatic and economic pressure to bear on Israel until they abandon their current belligerent strategy and withdraw from Gaza and all illegally occupied territory.

We also urge all parties and groups in the region to accept inclusive dialogue and political negotiations as the way forward and for all acts of violence to end immediately.'

The motion was seconded by Councillor Ó hOisín and Alderman Mullan.

Speaking in support of the motion, both Councillor Coyle and Councillor Butcher indicated that the motion was relevant to the Borough as a number of people from the area lived and worked in Gaza. It was pointed out that over 1,100 individuals, a third of which were children had lost their life in Gaza in contrast to 13 killed in Israel. It was suggested that Israel was over indulgent in their use of aircraft, tanks and bulldozers in Gaza and that governments should intervene to resolve problems in the area.

A member queried why the motion had not mentioned Hamas and the role they played in the continued unrest in the region.

Alderman Robinson submitted the following amendment, which was seconded by Alderman Rankin:

'That this Council expresses its concern about the loss of life and suffering among the civilian populations in Israel and Gaza, condemns Hamas for its call that Israel should be destroyed, that all Jews living there should be killed and that Jewish communities everywhere in the world to be attacked, which would therefore include the Jewish community in Northern Ireland and calls upon Israel to use every effort possible to minimise the civilian suffering in the context of its military campaign in Gaza to bring an end to Hamas attacks on Israel and those of legitimate Palestinian parties negotiating with Israel to reach a permanent and peaceful resolution to the Arab Israeli conflict.'

In the discussion that followed the view was expressed that the initial motion was unbalanced and outside the jurisdiction of the Council area. It was also queried why a copy of the motion had not been circulated to members.

At this point Councillor Cubitt indicated that as Standing Orders was suspended, he would talk all night on the motion. He ignored direction from the chair proceeding to interrupt other members who tried to contribute to the debate.

The amendment was put to the meeting and declared lost, 0 for, 8 against. The substantive motion was put to the meeting and declared carried, 8 for, 0 against.

NEXT MEETING: - 28 January 2009.

THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
(The meeting ended at 9.20 pm)

Chair: _____