

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the special meeting of Castlereagh Borough Council held in the Council Chamber, Castlereagh Borough Council, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB, on Monday, 11 December 2006, at 7.45 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor J Spratt
(in the Chair)

ALDERMEN: M Copeland MLA

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A M Beattie
J Beattie
Ms J Bunting
Mrs J Cochrane (from 8.10 pm)
D Drysdale
Miss R Hughes MBE
T Jeffers
G Robinson
C Tosh

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive and Assistant Members' Services Officer

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received on behalf of Aldermen Mrs Robinson, Robinson, Norris and Rice, Councillors Mrs Chambers, Mrs Duncan, Hall, Hanvey, Henderson, Long, Miss Stevenson and White

2006/743 : PRESENTATION BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM NILGA RE: MODELLING NILGA'S FUTURE

Councillor Spratt welcomed Mr Peter Weir MLA, Vice President, and Ms Heather Moorehead, Chief Executive, to the meeting.

Mr Weir began the presentation by providing Members with an update on NILGA's role and progress in the forthcoming RPA.

Following the presentation, Councillor J Beattie stated that he supported NILGA's recommendations, as he saw this as the way forward. However, he raised concerns in respect of Councils being given responsibility for the Planning Service, and he felt that partnership arrangements between local and central government would be a good solution.

Mr Weir agreed that a partnership with central government would assist Councils, as funding for the new Planning Service arrangements had been under-budgeted. He urged caution, however, that, instead of relying solely on central government, Councils should be involved in all consultations.

Councillor Bunting stated that, in her view, the extent of responsibility and work involved in the RPA was enormous, which had not been fully realised by

many, and the financial implications would be felt for generations. For this reason, Councillor Bunting felt that it was important to have a strong local government association, and SOLACE and NILGA should be placed side by side in the consultations regarding RPA. Councillor Bunting further advised that there was a likelihood that central government wanted to negotiate with Councils on an individual basis, which would be a disadvantage for Councils.

Mr Weir shared many of the concerns held by Councillors, and he anticipated that the RPA would present a challenge and a tight timescale in which to accomplish the change in the way local government was administered.

Ms Moorehead outlined the importance of co-operation between NILGA and Councils. She added that NILGA was aiming to achieve a formal reserves policy and had run an exhibition at a recent conference in order to attract sponsorship and support for the development of objectives.

Mr Weir continued to say that NILGA sent regular monthly updates to Councils, and this gave Councillors an opportunity to raise issues that needed to be addressed. He then explained that a considerable amount of reserves would be spent on some aspects of the RPA, which could invite criticism from some Councillors.

Councillor Drysdale sought clarification how NILGA would be able to assist regarding eligibility of redundancy as well as enticing people from a younger age group and women to become a Councillor. Mr Weir replied that so far no decisions had been made in this respect, although he stressed the need for flexibility, as it would be unrealistic to expect every Councillor to carry out his duties on a part-time basis, and not every Councillor would be able to work full-time. NILGA had also urged that many capacity building projects needed urgent attention, and £6 million would need to be set aside for this purpose prior to 2009.

Councillor Bunting proposed to invite NILGA to Council meetings on a regular basis to inform Members of any progress and to receive feedback from Members. This proposal was seconded by Alderman Copeland, and it was

RESOLVED: That NILGA be placed on the Council agenda as a regular item to enable the Council to invite representatives to inform Members of any progress in respect of the RPA and to receive feedback from Members.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 8.55 p.m.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MAYOR