

## **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 Thursday, 20 October 2011, at 7.00 pm

**PRESENT:** Councillor J White  
(in the Chair)

**ALDERMEN:** S Duncan (from 7.18 pm)  
M Henderson

**COUNCILLORS:** M Chambers (from 7.09 pm)  
M Copeland MLA  
D Drysdale  
M Gregg  
C Hall  
B Hanvey  
C Howard (from 7.30 pm)  
V McCoy (from 7.17 pm)  
T Morrow  
P J O'Reilly (until 8.49 pm)  
T Sandford

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive, Director of Administration & Community Services, Director of Leisure Services, General Manager Leisure & Marketing and Members' Services Officer

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies were recorded on behalf of Aldermen Rice and Robinson and Councillors Cochrane, Jeffers, Long and Spratt

### **2011/535 : OPENING OF MEETING (7.05 pm)**

The Mayor welcomed Members to the meeting.

Noted.

### **2011/536 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (7.06 pm)**

There were no declarations of interest declared at this point in the meeting.

Noted.

## **PRESENTATIONS**

**2011/537 : PRESENTATION BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM EZE FITNESS, COUNCIL HEALTH SUITE PARTNER, RE: SIX-MONTHLY UPDATE (7.08 pm)**

The Mayor welcomed Mr Sean Thornton and Mr Gary Brown to the meeting.

Mr Thornton began the presentation by reiterating that the Council and Eze Fitness had now been in partnership for seven years. He stated that Eze Fitness currently had 7,000 members, split between the Robinson Centre, the Lough Moss Centre and the Belvoir Centre and Eze Fitness was hoping to increase this by 14% in the next five months, following further expansion in the Robinson Centre.

Councillor Chambers arrived at the meeting at 7.09 pm.

Mr Thornton stated that, despite the recession, Eze Fitness had experienced an increase in turn-over from £640,000 in 2007 to £750,000 in 2011, even though there had only been a slight increase in membership fees.

Councillor Drysdale left the meeting at 7.10 pm.

Mr Thornton reminded Members that the Council received 30% of the turn-over, ie £195,000 in 2007 and £225,000 in 2010. Investment was currently approximately £35 per square foot occupied space. Rent, rates and utility expenses accounted for 12% of the turn-over.

Councillor Drysdale returned to the meeting at 7.12 pm.

Mr Thornton advised that Eze Fitness invested £140,000 per annum to cover expenses such as wages, repairs and renewals etc.

Mr Thornton then provided an overview of staff costs on an annual basis. He stated that Eze Fitness staff were delivering a world-class programme and were engaging with people from local communities. Marketing costs had risen from £25,000 in 2007 to £35,000 in 2011. Eze Fitness was endeavouring to project a positive image and the company was continuing to expand while others were cutting back or maintaining their position.

Councillor McCoy arrived at the meeting at 7.17 pm.

Mr Thornton stated that Eze Fitness was well staffed and well run.

Alderman Duncan arrived at the meeting at 7.18 pm.

Eze Fitness also carried out customer satisfaction surveys in order to be able to offer the highest levels of customer service and Mr Thornton stated that Eze Fitness regarded their staff as an asset in the company. He continued to say that Eze Fitness had more than 250,000 visits.

Mr Thornton then referred to the refurbishment in the Lough Moss in 2010. He advised that a substantial increase in usage had been noticed with 40 new members in the previous month.

Mr Thornton commented that Castlereagh had the best GP referral programme in the Province and 40% of the persons referred took up membership. Furthermore, Eze Fitness was working with various organisations and was in partnership with 22 local businesses.

Mr Thornton then advised that Eze Fitness would like to discuss the possibility of extending the partnership agreement with the Council beyond the current contract. He felt that the possibility of RPA in 2015 presented a window of opportunity. Furthermore, he felt that Eze Fitness could benefit from alignment to the Robinson Centre etc in order to gain a more prominent website presence. Mr Thornton also felt that the option of making a booking or join Eze Fitness through the website would be very beneficial, therefore he suggested to put in place a more interactive management system. In order to offer more variety, Mr Thornton stated that Eze Fitness would like to offer different price levels, ie £25, £40 and £100 per month, which would include a personal trainer etc and small group training classes with six to ten persons.

Councillor Howard arrived at the meeting at 7.30 pm.

The Mayor thanked Mr Thornton and Mr Brown for their presentation.

Councillor Drysdale enquired whether the possibility of RPA in 2015 had influenced the way Eze Fitness liaised with the Council. He further enquired whether Eze Fitness intended to include football as an option.

Mr Thornton replied that people were becoming more aware of the importance of health and wellbeing and whereas other companies were reducing staff or other provisions, Eze Fitness's strategy was to offer an active service, engaged staff and positive marketing, which resulted in the retention of customers.

Councillor Chambers commented that, if the contract with the Council were extended until 2015 and taking into account the proposed shadow council from 2014 onwards, Eze Fitness would be in a good position to negotiate with the newly formed Council.

Councillor McCoy left the meeting at 7.39 pm.

Alderman Henderson enquired whether Eze Fitness had developed an active marketing plan for the elderly, ie had GPs and the Health Trust been approached.

Mr Brown stated that Eze Fitness was liaising with GPs and there were plans to approach schools as well as the elderly. He also referred to the Young-at-Heart group run by Eze Fitness, where the average age was 72. Mr Thornton

added that approximately 200 persons had been introduced to Eze Fitness through the CSAW programme.

Councillor Hanvey enquired about the enhanced benefits included in the Platinum Plus Membership and Super Platinum Plus Membership at a cost of £45 and £100 per month respectively. He further asked whether staff required additional training in order to provide the enhanced services.

Mr Thornton replied that members preferred some variety, although not everyone required a high-level service. Eze Fitness intended to introduce smaller group training and high-level service in a variety of training programmes, which would also include educational material relating to weight loss etc. Mr Thornton went on to advise that staff had already received training during the past 18 months at a cost of £1,800 per person. He added that other services would remain unchanged.

Mr Thornton also advised that Eze Fitness had set up a Facebook page and had achieved 2,500 followers to date, with members commenting on their experiences. He felt that social media websites provided a positive marketing tool.

The Mayor thanked Mr Thornton and Mr Brown for their presentation and they then left the meeting.

The Director of Leisure Services advised Members of the current situation with regard to the draft contract and reminded Members that despite the fact that there was an ongoing partnership arrangement with Eze, there was no contract finalised. She advised that this was due to the need to obtain full and clear title for all of the land at the Robinson Centre site, then remove some remaining restrictive covenants and at that stage a contract could be finalised. The Director further advised that this work had been underway for some time now and had been unavoidably delayed due to specific NIHE constraints. She further confirmed that the land sale that facilitated the title matter was going to Council in October for final approval and thereafter the necessary work could be progressed.

Alderman Henderson, Councillors Copeland and Drysdale, the Director of Leisure Services and the General Manager Leisure & Marketing left the meeting at 7.58 pm.

Councillor McCoy returned to the meeting at 7.58 pm.

**2011/538 : PRESENTATION BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE NORTHERN IRELAND RURAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL RE: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS IN COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME (BRIC) (7.59 pm)**

The Mayor welcomed Ms Kerry McIvor and Mr Richard Doherty to the meeting.

Councillor McCoy left the meeting at 7.59 pm.

Councillor Copeland returned to the meeting at 7.59 pm.

Ms McIvor stated that she was the Programme Manager for the BRIC project, which had been established to introduce good relations into social housing.

Councillor McCoy returned to the meeting at 8.00 pm.

Ms McIvor advised that BRIC was a partnership arrangement with NIHE, RDC and TIDES.

Ms McIvor went on to state that housing was the most segregated part of communities, with more than 90% of social housing remaining segregated into single communities.

Councillor Howard left the meeting at 8.02 pm.

However, in the 'Life and Times' survey, eight out of ten people said they would like to live in more mixed neighbourhoods.

Alderman Henderson and Councillor Drysdale returned to the meeting at 8.03 pm.

Ms McIvor stated that the NIHE intended to cascade good relations in housing and work with constituted residents groups.

Councillor Howard returned to the meeting at 8.05 pm.

Mr Doherty advised that he had responsibility for the whole region. He explained that the estate selection criteria included the following:

- Successful completion of the NIHE Shared Neighbourhood Programme
- Constituted residents group
- Member of the housing community network

Councillor Hanvey left the meeting at 8.09 pm.

Mr Doherty stated that Ballybeen was one of those estates selected for the programme. He advised that BRIC offered training, mentoring etc and worked with community groups and in partnership with Council Good Relations Officers to identify needs. BRIC was also working closely with councils, drawing up a Good Relations Plan.

Councillor Hanvey returned to the meeting at 8.10 pm.

Mr Doherty advised that grants were also available to assist communities in building good relations.

Ms McIvor stated that Good Relations Officers were spread geographically throughout Northern Ireland, although BRIC was based in Belfast. Officers were involved in mentoring, training, mediation and assisting to improve the quality of life in estates. Ms McIvor stated that emphasis was placed on building relationships in communities without forcing secularism.

Alderman Henderson commented that he was aware of an area at Killynure, Carryduff, that might benefit from the expertise offered by BRIC. Ms Mclvor advised that the next selection process would take place in 2012. She went on to say that, if areas did not meet the criteria, BRIC could work with the Council through the referral system.

Councillor Drysdale referred to Ballybeen, which consisted of four areas. He enquired what would be the best strategy to bring all four areas together. Ms Mclvor replied that BRIC was currently working with the Ballybeen Improvement Group (BIG) to decide on the best way forward.

Councillor Drysdale then referred to issues relating to bonfires. Ms Mclvor stated that these points would be addressed during forthcoming meetings.

Councillors Copeland and Drysdale left the meeting at 8.25 pm.

Councillor Morrow commented that, since becoming a Councillor, he had been asked to assist with a community relations matter involving a Nigerian family in Ballybeen and he asked whether BRIC had been involved in mediation. Ms Mclvor advised that BRIC intended to form a stakeholder forum, ie the City Council, habitat and housing association. The scheme would be piloted in north Belfast and would give allocation on a 50:50 basis.

Ms Mclvor and Mr Doherty left the meeting at 8.27 pm

Alderman Henderson and Councillors Chambers and Gregg left the meeting at 8.28 pm.

**2011/539 : PRESENTATION BY REPRESENTATIVES FROM BLUE ZEBRA RE: COMMUNITY SUPPORT PLAN 2011-2014 (8.28 pm)**

Councillors McCoy, O'Reilly and Sandford left the meeting at 8.29 pm.  
Councillor Gregg returned to the meeting at 8.29 pm.

The Mayor welcomed Ms Therese Hogg and Ms Ann McGeeney to the meeting.

Councillor Hanvey left the meeting at 8.31 pm.

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that Ms Hogg had attended a meeting of Council in June 2011 as a consultant to present the initial findings in terms of the proposed Community Support Plan. At the meeting Members had agreed in principle to accept the findings and the approach in order that a more detailed plan and costings could be developed and brought back to Council for final approval.

Councillor O'Reilly returned to the meeting at 8.32 pm.

The Director of Administration & Community Services went on to state that there was a requirement for a community support plan to be submitted to the Voluntary Community Unit (VCU) in order to draw down funding. The Director of Administration & Community Services commented that the development of the plan also provided an opportunity to review the current community development objectives and staffing structure needed to deliver the new plan.

Alderman Henderson and Councillors Copeland and Hanvey returned to the meeting at 8.33 pm.

With the aid of overheads, Ms Hogg then took Members through her presentation. She began by outlining the aim of the DSD funding programme and provided an overview of the current Community Services structure and activities.

Councillor Sandford returned to the meeting at 8.34 pm.

Ms Hogg then supplied details of the engagement undertaken by them as part of the consultation process to determine the new strategy and objectives for the section.

Councillors Chambers, Drysdale and McCoy returned to the meeting at 8.35 pm.

As part of the presentation, Ms Hogg then outlined the overarching issues highlighted during the consultation process which formed the basis of the new Community Services vision for the lifespan of the plan, which was 2011-2014.

The role of Community Services within the Council was then discussed, with particular reference to how the service could be utilised to support, assist and develop the Council's new Corporate Strategy and the various Council departments, functions and services.

Councillor O'Reilly left the meeting at 8.49 pm.

Ms Hogg then explained that, in order to deliver the plan and the new strategic objectives, it would be necessary to review how the section was currently structured, with a view to implementing a number of specific changes in order to deliver the plan in its entirety. On this basis, she had reviewed the current budgetary provision against the financial projections for the new plan. This had indicated that a further £143,000 per annum would be needed to deliver its full content. Ms Hogg further stated that, given today's economic climate and the Council's desire to keep within a tight fiscal regime, both she and Officers appreciated that it would not be acceptable to simply increase budgets. Consequently, a further review of existing services and provision had been undertaken in order to identify whether any savings or changes could be made, which would realise the net amount required to deliver the new elements of the plan.

Ms Hogg then outlined a number of the specific options considered where it was felt that the budget could be reconfigured in order to provide the additional resources required. She commented that, if Members were to accept such measures, the total cost increase would be reduced to an additional £33,000 per annum, excluding normal inflationary / cost-of-living increases.

Councillor Howard left the meeting at 9.17 pm.

Councillor Hall declared an interest as a member of Engage with Age.  
Councillor Copeland declared an interest as a member of the Department for Social Development Committee.

Alderman Henderson enquired in respect of the cost to the Council. The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that, following streamlining measures, the cost to Council would be approximately £33,000, excluding normal annual cost-of-living increases. However, there was a possibility to obtain funding from the Department for Social Development or Peace III to meet this shortfall.

Councillor Howard returned to the meeting at 9.21 pm.

Councillor Chambers referred to meetings with community representatives. She stated that only 41 persons had been present and, therefore, Councillor Chambers enquired whether there had been sufficient representation to complete the Community Support Plan. Ms Hogg replied that, although there had only been two public meetings, Officers had been in discussions with communities regarding other projects, which verified the relevance of the Community Support Plan. These key individuals also represented their various groups, therefore the numbers involved would be greater.

Councillor Sandford left the meeting at 9.26 pm.

Councillor Howard raised concerns in respect of the schedule of the summer scheme and urged caution regarding the reduction of the scheme to two weeks. Consideration should also be given to staff training. Furthermore, she emphasised that people from deprived areas would not be excluded.

Councillor Drysdale left the meeting at 9.29 pm.

The Director of Administration & Community Services stated that it would be more beneficial to use Council staff instead of relief staff for summer scheme work. She continued to say that Officers had endeavoured to put in place options that would allow Leisure Services to focus on more viable summer schemes, with Community Services focusing on areas and programmes which targeted social need more directly.

Councillor Drysdale returned to the meeting at 9.31 pm.

Councillor Hanvey felt that more detailed consideration should be given to the Community Support Plan as well as a synopsis for the advantages of progressing the report.

Councillor Howard left the meeting at 9.32 pm.

Councillor Hanvey also raised concerns in respect of the provision of advice services if Carryduff was not to be included in the new plan. However, he welcomed the refiguration of Community Services to provide a more rounded service outside of the usual summer scheme. He endorsed the report.

Alderman Henderson proposed to forward the Community Support Plan to party leaders for their consideration and then bring back to the October full Council meeting for final approval.

Councillors Copeland and Drysdale left the meeting at 9.40 pm

Councillor Gregg commented that proposed savings would be achieved through Council staff rather than casual staff and he felt that more balance was required.

Councillor Copeland returned to the meeting at 9.42 pm.

The Director of Administration & Community Services said that she appreciated that Members required more time to consider the cost implications and proposed programme and changes, particularly pertaining to the summer scheme. She stressed, however, that there was a requirement to have the final plan submitted to VCU in order to draw down the annual grant.

Following some further discussion, Councillor Chambers seconded the proposal from Alderman Henderson and it was

RESOLVED (9.44 pm): That the Community Support Plan 2011-2014 be forwarded to party leaders for further consideration and brought back to the October full Council meeting for final approval.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.44 pm.

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**CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

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**MAYOR**