

## **BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Minutes of Meeting No 844 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> June 2006 at 5.30 pm

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Minutes of Meeting No 844 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House on Monday 19th June at 5.30pm.

**In the Chair:** Councillor Finlay, Mayor

**Present:** **Aldermen**  
H Connolly  
F Campbell  
J Simpson  
C Cousley, Deputy Mayor

**Councillors:** A Cavlan  
M McCamphill  
A Patterson  
I Stevenson  
R Wilson  
B Kennedy  
D McKay  
E Robinson  
M Storey, MLA

**Apologies:** P McGuigan, MLA  
T McKeown

**In Attendance:** Chief Executive  
Head of Corporate & Development Services  
Committee Clerk

### **Housing Executive**

Dr J McPeake  
Mr F O'Connor  
Ms M Myles-Davey  
Ms Y Montgomery

### **Press**

#### **844.1 DRAFT WASTE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

The Health & Environmental Services Committee met at a special meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2006 to discuss the Draft Waste Management Plan.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **agreed:**

***that the recommendations made at the meeting of the Health & Environmental Services Committee on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2006 be approved as follows:***

- a) ***that Council agrees that the final draft of the North West Regional Waste Management Plan be submitted to the Department of the Environment on behalf of Ballymoney Borough Council for determination as to compliance and therefore for adoption by this Council.***
- b) ***that Council agree in principle that Crosstagherty be offered as a potential site for waste management facilities in conjunction with the draft North West Regional Waste Management Plan.***
- c) ***that this matter be further considered by its Health & Environmental Services Committee on 27<sup>th</sup> June 2006.***

#### **884.2 REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT BODIES**

The Chief Executive advised that the Department of the Environment, in exercise of its powers conferred by section 59(1) of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, has appointed Richard Mackenzie as Local Government Boundaries Commissioner. The Commissioner is to make recommendations to the Department regarding the boundaries and names of the seven new districts and the number, boundaries and names of the wards into which each district is to be divided.

#### **884.3 TENDERS – COVERED AMENITY AREA AT CASTLECROFT, MAIN STREET, BALLYMONEY**

As reported at the Committee's meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> June tenders were invited for this work and have been examined by the Council's Consultants, R Robinson & Sons.

Tenders were invited from the following four electrical contractors:

1. Dowds Electrical 2/4 Milltown Road, Ballymoney BT53 7LE
2. H M Electrics Ltd, 95 Glen Road, Maghera BT46 5JG
3. Braid Electrical Services, Unit 2, Braidriver Business Park, Railway Street, Ballymena BT42 2AF
4. R.E.D. Electrics Ltd, 9 Sentry Lane, Newtownabbey BT36 4XX

Value of Tenders received in descending order are:

1. £6995.00
2. £6762.00
3. £6638.00
4. £6079.00

all prices are exclusive of VAT

The Consultants have concluded that the lowest tender, from Dowds Electrical, in the amount of £6079.00 plus VAT, represents a suitable basis from which to develop an Electrical Contract and this is recommended for acceptance.

It was proposed by Alderman Campbell, seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

***that Council accept the tender submitted from Dowds Electrical in the amount of £6,079.00 plus VAT for work to be carried out at the covered amenity area at Castlecroft, Main Street, Ballymoney.***

At the request of Alderman Simpson, the Head of Corporate & Development services outlined the detail of the work involved.

**\* Councillor Patterson arrived, the time being 5.40 pm**

**The meeting was adjourned at 5.40 and reconvened at 6.00 pm.**

**\* Councillor Storey, Councillor Kennedy and Councillor Cavlan arrived, the time being 6.00 pm.**

#### **884.4 NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE HOUSING PLAN 2006-07**

The Mayor welcomed representatives from the Housing Executive to the meeting to present the Northern Ireland Executive Housing Plan for Ballymoney Borough

for 2006-07 and to consult with Council on this year's District Housing Plan for the Borough.

In presenting the district housing plan for Ballymoney, 2006/07, the Director of Design and Property Services, Dr. John McPeake, set out the role of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive as the regional strategic housing authority and commented on the changing shape of society, changing housing needs and the changes planned in local government.

He explained that,

the structure of society is changing, there are more people living alone, people are living longer and many young people are leaving the family home earlier. These changes may be outside our control, but the Housing Executive is adapting by delivering services and housing that will meet changing needs. In Northern Ireland, just as in the rest of the UK the increasing numbers of single person, single parent and elderly households is reflected on the growing waiting list for social housing. Single people currently make up half of that list. This ongoing change must be reflected in the Executive's plans for the future.

He stated that the Housing Executive has moved away from being a predominantly landlord focused organisation to having a more strategic role in assessing housing need and influencing the direction of the housing market. It's role and relationships with other organisations will continue to change in forthcoming years. The Secretary of State's announcement on the Review of Public Administration on 21<sup>st</sup> March indicated that a number of functions would transfer to the new Councils in 2009. These functions are: Private Sector Grants; Group Repair; Houses in Multiple Occupation; Unfitness; Energy Conservation; Travellers' Sites; Supporting People and Urban Renewal.

The Housing Executive has received assurances from Government, that for the foreseeable future, it will continue to be the strategic housing authority for Northern Ireland. Whilst the Housing Executive Board is disappointed to see any functions transfer, its role now is to ensure that these changes are implemented smoothly and effectively. It will work to build strong and productive relationships with new larger councils using its network of local district offices and links to over 600 community groups.

Proposals to transfer the management of the social housing development programme back to the Housing Executive are currently proceeding and this will allow for a robust structure to be put in place to maximize the delivery of newbuild. This will build on existing relationships between the Department for Social Development, the Housing Associations and the Housing Executive.

The Director said housing plays its part in making an important contribution to creating a peaceful, inclusive, prosperous and fair society. To that end, over the past year, there has been widespread consultation aimed at giving a sharper

focus on what the people of Northern Ireland want the Executive to deliver for the future, which at the same time reflects government policy. This has resulted in 6 new key objectives.

- Delivering the Decent Homes Standard by reducing unfitnes in the private sector through grant aid, promoting good housing design, improving energy efficiency and improving and maintaining Housing Executive property.
- Promoting Independent Living through the supporting people programme and providing support for homeless people and other vulnerable groups, such as those with disabilities.
- Delivering Urban and Rural Regeneration through sectoral and neighbourhood renewal strategies, town centre living initiatives, the rural housing strategy and group repair schemes.
- Promoting Affordable Housing through the formulation of the Social Housing Development Programme, the house sales scheme, acquiring land for housing, planning policy statement 12 and the private rented sector.
- Building a Stronger Community by promoting community safety, good relations, working with the local community and linking housing and education.
- Providing Better Public Services through a Modernising Services Programme which will deliver services cost-effectively.

These key strategic objectives are translated into an action programme, which provide challenges and opportunities.

While significant progress has been made in implementing the Homelessness Strategy, homeless numbers have risen during the past year after figures had levelled out over the previous two years. The number of households found to be homeless after investigation by the Housing Executive rose from 8,470 in 2004/05 to 9,749 last year. This is an average increase across Northern Ireland of 15.1%.

Tackling homelessness and the causes of homelessness remain a priority for the Housing Executive. The Housing Executive is committed to meeting temporary and long term accommodation needs. Last year approximately three out of every five homeless households in Northern Ireland were permanently re-housed within six months and over the year 4,600 used temporary accommodation.

The Executive's approach is much more than simply putting a roof over someone's head, it is about addressing issues that lead to homelessness and it is about the provision of suitable accommodation and packages of support, tailored to meet individual needs. It is delivering this approach through its

Supporting People programme, in partnership with other agencies, providing help and support, which are directly provided to those who need help.

Last year, relationship breakdown accounted for 931 cases, almost 10% of the total. A further 2,010 cases were accepted as homeless due to the breakdown of sharing arrangements and family disputes. This was over 20% of the total figure. Family disputes, drug and alcohol abuse, mental health issues, domestic violence and leaving care all contribute to the current level of homelessness. They each need different types of support. However, it is clear that preventative measures can make an impact. Measures such as school education programmes on the consequences of leaving home and mediation for family disputes, can contribute to preventing homelessness, especially amongst young people.

The Housing Executive fully understands the misery that homelessness brings and recognizes that there are many dedicated staff out there in both the voluntary and public sectors who work day and night to provide support and assistance.

Mr McPeake continued by stating housing will continue to be an important local and regional issue. The most vulnerable people in our community rely on social housing. The Executive must also develop housing provision and standards that meet the needs of the increasingly changing and diverse population in Northern Ireland. It's focus is trying to ensure that everyone has access to a decent affordable home in a safe and healthy community. Our task is to work with local communities to deliver results.

Area Manager Frank O'Connor then briefed Councillors on the District Housing Plan for Ballymoney.

Prior to outlining the main issues in this year's District Housing Plan for Ballymoney, Frank O'Connor highlighted Housing Executive investment in the Borough. He said that "in the past two years the Housing Executive has invested over £4.8 million in the Ballymoney Borough and this year we intend to spend a further £2.09 million.

Good housing and sustainable communities come from effective investment, directing resources to where they are most needed. The District Housing Plan demonstrates how this is being achieved in the Ballymoney Borough. It also highlights the need for continued investment, to build on these achievements and to respond to the challenges and often complex issues that impact on the daily lives of local people.

Mr O'Connor explained how this year's investment again targeted the Housing Executive's own properties as well as the private sector through the Grants Scheme.

The investment package for Ballymoney for this year includes:

Improvement work for Housing Executive homes	£280,000
Planned maintenance for Housing Executive homes	£770,000
Response maintenance i.e. day to day repairs	£600,000
Home Improvement Grants for the private sector	£440,000

The Area Manager then outlined the 5 broad themes of the District Plan to Councillors:

- (1) Dynamics of the Housing Market
- (2) Social Development Programme
- (3) Improving Housing Conditions
- (4) Improving Private Sector Stock
- (5) Strategic Themes

### **Dynamics of the Housing Market:**

Commenting initially on the Dynamics of the Housing Market, Frank O'Connor said:

#### **(i) Private Sector Activity**

Information contained in the census shows that by 2001 almost three quarters of all homes in Ballymoney were privately owned. Within the past five years 1,802 new private homes have been built in the Borough. In the 12 months to September 2005, 319 starts were recorded, compared to 433 and 335 in the previous two years.

The Housing Executive's House Sales Scheme has enabled tenants to purchase their homes on a discount basis. This has facilitated tenure choice and affordable home ownership. Changes to the House Sales Policy have resulted in a reduction in the rate of house sales and last year a total of 37 homes were sold in the Ballymoney district.

The average discounted sale price in Ballymoney was £33,108 compared to the average market value of £55,415.

Co-ownership Housing Association continues to help those on low incomes to access the owner occupied housing sector. Since the scheme started in 1978 a total of 285 properties have been bought through the scheme in the Ballymoney Borough. Since April 2006 the value limits for properties to be purchased under the Co-ownership scheme have been raised and in Ballymoney the limit has increased from £102,500 to £115,000.

The Private Rented Sector continues to play a major role in the housing market. By examining the number of Housing Benefit claimants who are renting privately we can get a good indication of the growth in private renting. In Ballymoney in the past year the number of claimants increased from 682 to 724, an increase of 6.2%. This figure consists of 626 claims from the Private



Rented Sector and 98 claims from Housing Association tenants who are treated as private claimants within the current system.”

Commenting on the issue of affordability, Mr O'Connor said that average house prices in the Borough increased by 81.4% between 2001 and 2005. The average price in Ballymoney increased from £76,069 in 2001 to £137,982 in 2005, although the latter figure is based on a small sample size. The Northern Ireland average price for all properties in 2005 was £134,013.

This year's Plan includes an affordability model for Ballymoney Borough and this indicates increasing affordability pressure, with significantly fewer first time buyers able to purchase a home based on income levels, house prices and interest rates.

## **(ii) Public Sector Activity**

Frank O'Connor then referred to Public Sector activity in the Ballymoney Borough and said that at December 2005, there were 379 applicants on the Waiting List for the Borough. Of these, 146 were deemed to be in Housing Stress (30 or more points on the Waiting List). Single people dominate the Waiting List with 177 Singles registered at December 2005. Of these, 66 were in Housing Stress.

The main method of meeting the needs of applicants in Housing Stress is through the reallocation of existing properties, supplemented by building additional new homes, if necessary. During the 12 months to December 2005 a total of 128 allocations were made in the Borough.

Last year 273 households presented as homeless within the Borough, an increase of 59 from the previous year. Of these, 155 were awarded Full Duty Applicant status, compared to 111 the previous year. Single person households formed half of the total number of homeless presenters at the District Office.

## **Social Housing Development Programme:**

The Area Manager then reported on the Social Housing Development Programme and explained that the Housing Executive is responsible for establishing this Programme while the construction of new homes is the responsibility of housing associations.

The Housing Executive uses three elements to examine the need for new social housing – the number of applicants in Housing Stress on the Waiting List, the level of properties that become available for reletting and also the number of vacant properties.

Mr O'Connor reported that last year Triangle Housing Association had provided 5 units of supported housing, 4 at Castlehill Place and 1 at Ballywindeland Road, Macfin. He indicated that the Social Housing Development programme for the

next 5 years has been formulated on the basis of local Housing Need Assessments and details of these are included in the District Housing Plan.

This Programme contains 6 schemes, providing 33 units of general needs housing, together with 2 schemes for 7 units of supported housing.

The Housing Executive has completed a Housing Needs Assessment for the Northern Area Plan and this will enable the Housing Executive to influence housing supply and work to promote affordable housing where relevant.

### **Improving Housing Executive Stock:**

Mr O'Connor emphasised the Housing Executive's commitment to improving housing conditions for its tenants living in the Ballymoney Borough. He said that during the past year, the Housing Executive has delivered a substantial programme of work to tenants' homes in Ballymoney, with work commencing at almost 1 in 3 properties.

Major improvement work commenced at 19 homes in the Margaret Avenue and Square areas of Ballymoney.

Eighty-four homes at Dervock, Carnany and Rasharkin were the subject of two kitchen replacement schemes while four properties had new heating systems installed.

In addition, 352 properties across the Ballymoney District were included in the Planned Maintenance Programme, to protect and preserve the external elements of tenants' homes.

A total of 129 adaptations started for tenants or members of their household with disabilities, with work ranging from changes of heating to the installation of showers and other minor adaptations. During the year we invested £216,000 in adaptations in Ballymoney.

These Programmes will continue this year for the benefit of Ballymoney communities.

The Improvement and Planned Maintenance Programme includes a contract to install the first gas heating systems in the District, with 55 Glebeside homes included in the first phase of a programme scheduled to commence later this year. In addition, 72 homes in the estate will have new kitchens installed.

External maintenance is also planned for 150 properties in the District and Grounds maintenance work will continue in Ballymoney housing areas throughout the year.

**Improving private sector housing:**

Commenting on improving private sector housing, Mr O'Connor said that the Housing Executive's Grants Scheme has been a key tool in improving housing conditions in the private sector. Grant aid is directed, through means testing, at those people in greatest need and at those properties in the worst condition.

During the past year grants to the value of £479,075 were approved in the Ballymoney Borough, 44 grants were completed and grant aid of £434,385 paid out.

Grant aid was provided for renovations, disabled facilities, replacement, home repair assistance and repairs.

£150,756 was paid out in Disabled Facilities Grants, which help people to remain independently in their own homes and is an important element of Care in the Community.

**Strategic Themes:**

The Area Manager explained that the Plan demonstrates how Strategic Themes are being implemented through a number of initiatives and programmes in the Ballymoney Borough. These include:

**District Homelessness Action Plan**

The District Homelessness Action Plan acknowledges the value of interagency co-operation in responding to the needs of the homeless. Staff in Ballymoney have worked closely with Triangle Housing Association to provide temporary accommodation in the Borough, leasing 2 flats at Carnary for this purpose. Carnary Hometel opened earlier this year and Triangle have obtained funding from the Supporting People Programme for an additional support worker to manage this accommodation on a day to day basis. The support provided will also continue when residents move into permanent homes.

**Housing and Health – Supporting People**

In addition to the Carnary project, Loughguile Floating Support project is also funded by the Supporting People Programme. This scheme is providing invaluable support to 47 homes in the Loughguile area, enabling these residents, many of whom are elderly or younger people with medical problems, to remain within their local community, close to family and friends.

During the past year Supporting People funding in the Ballymoney Borough totalled £830,000.

During the year the District's Neighbourhood Warden and Scheme Liaison Officer, both of whom are involved in home visits, have participated in training on home accident prevention geared to help older residents and families with children.

### **Housing and Education**

District Office staff engage with schools in the area and have forged links with Causeway Institute of Further and Higher Education, providing work experience for students.

Earlier this year Ballymoney Housing Executive worked in partnership with Balnamore Primary School and the Council's Environmental Department on a planting project at Grove Park in the village, partially sponsored by Arena Network.

### **Rural Issues**

During the year the Housing Executive has continued to deliver its Rural Housing Policy, 'Places for People' in the Ballymoney District.

Latent Demand Testing, to determine if there is hidden housing demand in rural areas, was carried out in Bendooragh, Cloughmills and Dunloy. As a result of these Tests, schemes have been included in the Social Housing Development Programme for these areas.

A similar Test is planned for Corkey later this year.

The District's Rural Neighbourhood Warden continues to provide information and advice on housing services to tenants living in rural areas of the District.

### **Neighbourhood Renewal – Building a Stronger Community**

The Housing Executive is devoting significant resources in the Ballymoney Borough to programmes and initiatives that promote issues including neighbourhood renewal, community safety and community relations for the benefit of local people.

District staff participate on the Ballymoney Community Safety Partnership and in the past year the Housing Executive delivered the Lock Out Crime Scheme in the Borough, where over 200 homes have benefited from additional security measures."

The Area Manager paid tribute to the commitment of the Housing Community Network in the Ballymoney District and to the thirteen local residents' and community groups with whom local staff are working on a regular basis. He said that the Housing Community Network has an important role in providing a link between residents and the District Office and in helping us review our housing services locally. He acknowledged the contribution of all those involved in community groups across the District, working for the benefit of their local areas.

In conclusion, Frank O'Connor paid tribute to the work of the District's elected representatives on housing issues, and thanked councillors for their continued support and interest.

The Area Manager also thanked Councillor Wilson for his contribution in representing Ballymoney Council on the Northern Ireland Housing Council.

Mr McPeake and Mr O'Connor then responded to questions from Members. The issues, which engaged Members' attention, included:

- Purchase of private sector homes for private rental
- Proposed transfer of the housing function to local authorities
- Impact of PPS14 on the housing market and on replacement housing
- Success of programme to address unfit housing
- Landbank to facilitate housing association development
- Housing need in Rasharkin
- Housing sites for the travelling community
- Housing improvement programme
- Social Housing plans for Bendooragh