

**Ballymoney Borough Council
Council Meeting No 949 – 7th November 2011**

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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of Council Meeting No 949 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 7th November 2011 at 6.50 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Councillor I Stevenson, Mayor

PRESENT: **Aldermen**
F Campbell
H Connolly
C Cousley, MBE
B Kennedy

Councillors
J Atkinson
W Blair
A Cavlan
J Finlay
R Halliday
R McAfee
P McGuigan
T McKeown, Deputy Mayor
C McLaughlin
E Robinson
M Storey, MLA

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive
Head of Corporate and Development Services
Director of Borough Services
Director of Central & Leisure Services
Committee Clerk

Michael Graham – WYG (**Item 2**)
Members of the Press

949.1 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING NO 948 – 3rd OCTOBER 2011

It was proposed by Alderman Cousley, seconded by Councillor Atkinson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of meeting No 948 – 3rd October 2011, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

949.2 NORTHERN AREA PLAN

The Mayor welcomed Mr Michael Graham from WYG to the meeting to give a brief overview on the strategic issues dealt with in stage I of the Examination in Public on the draft Northern Area Plan commenting on:

- Housing position
- Tourism policies
- Clarification of Ballymoney as a main hub and Dunaghy as a village.
- Removal of MIN5

Mr Graham then presented proposed comments on site specific issues for Stage II and Council agreed its position with regard to:

- Transport issues
- Protection of railway lines
- Relief road
- Traffic improvements in and around town centre

The Mayor thanked Mr Graham for his presentation. Councillor Storey said that a considerable amount of work has been carried out on behalf of Council and he thanked Mr Graham for this stating that he is an excellent advocate for Council. Councillor Finlay placed on record, thanks for the work done by Councillor Storey relating to MIN5. Councillor Robinson concurred with his remarks.

* **Mr Graham left the meeting at 7.15pm.**

949.3 LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC TORCH RELAY ROUTE - DERVOCK

The Mayor advised that the village of Dervock is to welcome the London 2012 Olympic Torch to Ballymoney Borough Council area. The announcement was made by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. The torch will arrive in Dervock on 3rd June.

Dervock is one of over 1,000 villages, towns and cities announced by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) through which the Olympic Flame will be carried by Torchbearers during the London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay.

949.4 CONDOLENCES

Mother of two Rachel Bond died after a road traffic accident last month while out walking with her dog on the Lislagan Road. Mrs Bond was well known in the local community. Ballymoney Mayor Ian Stevenson said "This was a tragic loss of life. Our thoughts and prayers are with Mrs Bond's family and friends at this difficult time." Condolences were extended to Mrs Bond's husband, William and her children Kim and Robin.

949.5 THE POPPY APPEAL

Endorsing the annual Poppy Appeal which is the principal source of funds directly supporting the welfare and benevolent work of the Royal British Legion, the Mayor stated that with many in the ex-service community relying on the Royal British Legion for support, the Legion relies, in turn, on the generosity of local communities to fund its work by buying a little red poppy.

949.6 CLOUGHMILLS COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM

At the request of Councillor McLaughlin, the Mayor agreed to write to Cloughmills Community Action Team to congratulate them on winning Environmental Village of the Year for the second year in succession.

949.7 HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING NO 374 – 25TH OCTOBER 2011

The Mayor indicated he was bringing this business forward to facilitate Councillor Robinson who was leaving the meeting early. Councillor Robinson presented the report.

7.1 Planning Consultation Response – D/2010/0262/F (374.9)

At the request of Councillor Storey for clarification on the rationale for the decision to restrict the velocity of the bullets used by the range, the Director of Borough Services advised that a model has been undertaken and no satisfactory mitigation measures can be ascertained for bullets shot beyond 0.22 and that tyre tunnels are not satisfactory. Permission is unable to be granted to something where a potential exists in creating a noise nuisance. He explained that this is a planning matter and that Planning Service has acted on the evidence gathered in their consultation. The Director stated that the club has accepted the advice on the noise consultation and are content with the application being granted for the bullet size mentioned. They will continue to research into how they might increase velocity levels in the future.

It was proposed by Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor Cavlan and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Health & Environmental Services Meeting No 374 -25th October, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved.

949.8 MINUTES OF CONSULTATION COMMITTEE MEETING NO 66 – 17TH OCTOBER 2011

The report was presented by Councillor Cavlan.

The minutes of Consultation Committee Meeting No 66 – 17th October 2011, as circulated were received.

949.9 DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 228 – 10TH OCTOBER 2011

Councillor Finlay presented the report together with an addendum as set out at 9.1

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Atkinson and **AGREED:**

that council “ move into Committee” to discuss the report.

9.1 Village Renewal Programme

A number of rural community groups have made applications for funding towards village projects, developed as part of the recent village plan process. These are presented for consideration.

1. Ballybogey Recreation Area (Ballybogey Community Association)

This recreation facility comprises a multi-use recreational facility on Council land, total project cost £83,000. £62,500 is sought from the EU Rural Development Programme, the Association will provide £5,000 and is seeking a contribution of £15,000 from Council.

The association has indicated that it will take responsibility for the running costs associated with the project upon its completion. If Council agree, this agreement would be as the proposed management arrangements by Council in respect of Community Halls.

2. Stranocum Village Renewal Project (Stranocum and District Development Group)

This village project comprises:

- Festival week
- Community Newsletter
- Erection of notice boards at Community Centre *
- New village signage *
- Fitting out of community hub office *
- New flower beds
- Community project in the area known as “Wee Planting” close to the car park *

Some of the elements (*) are on Council property and the group is seeking Council’s agreement to be the lead applicant in these elements. These are identified as:

The total project costs are estimated at £40,000 and the group is seeking £30,000 from the Rural Development programme. They will be providing £5,000 from their own funds and request £5,000 from Council.

3. Rasharkin Wellbeing Project (Rasharkin Village Plan Implementation Group)

This project comprises a number of elements, some of which are on Council property and the group are seeking Council's agreement to be the lead applicant for these elements which are identified as:

- New seating and landscaping at Community Centre
- Art feature
- Additional car parking
- Safe path (with lighting around the side)
- Replacement and enhancement of kitchen facilities

The total project costs are estimated at £83,000. The group has been asked to confirm the funding being sought from Council and their own contribution.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised members that further information has now been received relating to Rasharkin Wellbeing Project. She outlined the changes to elements of the project for which funding was being sought from council. The total cost involved is £63,300 of which Rasharkin are requesting £15,000 (25%) from Council. The elements are:

- Improved car parking at Community Centre
- Path from Community Centre to river (with lighting) phase I (at some stage in the future it is planned to extend the path to Drumbolcan Wood and include seating).
- Minor kitchen improvements in Community Centre kitchen.

Two further elements of the rural development application had secured match funding.

- Develop all-weather surfaced recreational area adjacent to St Mary's Chapel and St Patrick's Primary School £8,333, led and match funded by St Mary's GAC and the Parish (£2,500).
- Employ an artist to work with young people to develop a piece of artwork for centre of village – led and match funded by Rasharkin Community Association (£2,500).

CONCLUSION

It is **RECOMMENDED** that Council considers:

- a) The applications for funding
- b) The requests to lead on projects

Should the Council agree to act as the lead applicant and implement the projects, it is **RECOMMENDED** that a Project Officer be appointed on a fixed term basis for 12 months for the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the village

projects. The officer would also support the delivery of the Council's 2012 projects and activities. The estimated cost is £31,000.

The request for match funding and additional resource was discussed.

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Alderman Kennedy and **AGREED:**

- a) that the applications for funding be approved.**
- b) that the request to Council to lead on projects and the appointment of a Project Officer on a fixed term basis for 12 months for the implementation, monitoring and reporting on the village projects be deferred to the next meeting of the Development Committee and the Committee be given Council powers to make a decision.**

The Head of Corporate & Development Services reported on proposals to extend the Village Renewal facilitation programme for a further 18 months at a cost of £761.62 (year 1) and £395.81 (year 2).

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Atkinson and **AGREED:**

that Council 'move out of Committee' to continue the business of the meeting.

- * **Alderman Cousley and Councillor Robinson left the meeting at 7.35 pm and 7.40 pm during the discussion**
- * **Councillor McAfee joined the meeting at 8.05 pm during the discussion.**
- * **Members of the press joined the meeting at 8.15 pm.**

Matters Arising:

9.2 Timing of Committee Meetings (228.12)

Chair of Committee and Head of Corporate & Development Services to finalise date of November meeting.

9.3 Ballybogey Community Hall

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that the Community Association had plans to apply for additional funding to supplement the proposed project.

At the request of Alderman Kennedy, the Director of Central & Leisure Services advised she had a draft agreement drawn up and will discuss with the Community group, Council and Council's solicitor prior to the completion in advance of the handover of the hall. This will be reported on at the next meeting of the Leisure Committee.

9.4 Adoption of Minutes

It was proposed by Councillor Finlay, seconded by Councillor Atkinson and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Development Committee Meeting No 228 – 10th October 2011, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved excluding the addendum as set out at 9.1 (b).

949.10 LEISURE & AMENITIES COMMITTEE MEETING NO 387 – 18TH OCTOBER 2011

Alderman Campbell presented a report together with an addendum as set out at 10.1.

10.1 Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre Swimming Pool Filtration Replacement Media And Uv Sterilisation

1. The following tenders were received in respect of the Electrical Engineering Services contract works at the above named project. Please note these values are exclusive of VAT.

- | | | |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| i. | Braid Electrical Services Ltd., Unit 2, Braid River Business Park,
Railway Street, Ballymena, BT42 2AF | £55,928.00 |
| ii | H.M. Electrics Ltd., 95 Glen Road, Maghera, BT46 5JG | £56,579.00 |
| iii | R.H.K. Davidson & Co Ltd 35 Bushmills Rd. Coleraine | £57,543.56 |

MFE Ltd 50 Drumduff Rd Beragh, Sixmilecross Co. Tyrone BT79 0SD were invited to submit a tender but failed to submit a tender.

2. The tenders were checked arithmetically and found to be correct.

3. The Electrical Engineering Services Tenders include the following provisional and contingency sums:

- | | | |
|----|---|--------------------|
| a. | Provisional sum for unforeseen updating monitoring
system and electrical alterations | £ 7,000.00 |
| b. | Contingency Sum | £ 10,000.00 |

4. The tender of Braid Electrical Services Ltd., Unit 2, Braid River Business Park, Railway Street, Ballymena, BT42 2AF, in the sum of **£55,928.00 (Fifty Five Thousand, Nine Hundred and Twenty Eight pounds only stg.) plus VAT** is recommended for acceptance to undertake the Engineering Services Contract works associated with this project, it being the lowest tender received.

5. The lowest tenderer has satisfactorily completed work under the supervision of these offices in the past. We are satisfied that the tenderer would be capable of completing the works involved in this project in a satisfactory manner.

Matters Arising:

10.2 Ballymoney Station, NI Fire & Rescue Service (387.10)

The Director of Central & Leisure Services, responding to a question from Councillor Storey relating to the impact of the training exercise on users of the centre, advised that the exercise will take place indoors at the centre and at a time when it is closed to the public.

10.3 Fields in Trust (387.11)

Councillor Storey welcomed the initiative to nominate Riada Playing Fields and Riverside Park to the project for 2012 and the placing on record of Megaw Park as one of five memorial fields in Northern Ireland. At his request, the Director of Borough Services clarified the terms and conditions to which nominated open space are subjected to.

10.4 November Committee Meeting (387.7)

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

that Council hold its meeting of the Leisure & Amenities Committee meeting to discuss Leisure business on Thursday 17th November at 7.00 pm.

The Director asked members to note that the meeting to discuss Amenities business on 15th November will be held in the Council offices at Riada House and not the Joey Dunlop Leisure Centre.

10.5 Adoption of Minutes

It was proposed by, seconded by and **AGREED:**

that the minutes of Leisure & Amenities Meeting No 387 -18th October, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved including the recommendation as set out at 10.1.

949.11 CORPORATE & CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING NO 398 – 24TH OCTOBER 2011

Councillor McKeown presented the report.

Matters Arising:

11.1 Budget 2012/13 (398.9)

Councillor Finlay expressed concern and disappointment at the transfer of an amount of £400,000 from Council's reserve account to its capital fund and requested clarification from the Chief Executive on this matter. The Chief Executive explained that it has been necessary for Council to transfer this money, £167,000 of which was a planned transfer, to the capital fund to satisfy the Auditor in relation to Council's landfill closure plan.

He stated that Council previously had a reasonable expectation that it would be able to obtain materials from the projected A26 dualling to close the landfill, costs for which were estimated at £600,000 and therefore Council's capital fund has been accumulated less that amount. The position has now changed because it ceases to be a reasonable expectation that the materials will be made available as the work anticipated on the A26 no longer has a start date and Roads Service indicates that it cannot proceed until funding is secured to carry out the work. Council's Auditor advised that it would be acceptable to deposit £400,000 as opposed to £600,000 into the fund and that this transfer had to be made in the 2010/11 accounts.

At the request of Councillor Kennedy, the Director of Central & Leisure Services advised that funds cannot be withdrawn from the capital fund but can be used to avoid high interest rate charges on drawing down of loans.

Referring to Councillor Storey's questions relating to thresholds and assumptions of the plan, the Chief Executive advised that it had been estimated that the costs will be £2.2M to the close landfill site. The Chief Executive clarified Council's commitments to the closure advising that the Department dictates this has to be closed to its landfill directive. Council will, in conjunction with two other councils, appoint consultants to draw up closure plans for three sites and that work is ongoing. He advised that it will take one year before the plans can be produced and one year before detailed drawings can be produced. Once this stage is reached, Council will have a better estimate of cost and timescales.

* **Councillor Atkinson left the meeting at 8.35 during discussion.**

11.2 Partnership Arrangements – Removal of Snow and Ice from town Centre Footways and Pedestrian Areas (398.6)

The Chief Executive advised Councillor McGuigan that he has spoken to the Section Engineer requesting advice on Roads Service attitude should Council adopt the recommendation. A response is awaited.

11.3 Adoption of Minutes

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

that the minutes of Corporate & Central Services Meeting No 398 – 24th October 2011, as circulated, be adopted and the recommendations therein approved.

- * **The Director of Borough Services and the Director of Central & Leisure Services left the meeting at 9.00 pm.**

949.12 SEAL DOCUMENTS

It was proposed by Councillor Cavlan seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

that the Seal of Council be affixed to:

1. **Grave registration certificate numbers 1264, 1265, 1266, 1267, 1268, 1269**
2. **Agreement – Blakiston Houston Estate Company and Ballymoney Borough Council**

949.13 APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES

A copy of party nominations to Audit Committee, Resources Task Group and Causeway Coast & Glens District Council Transition Committee was circulated:

Audit Committee

Alderman Campbell - DUP
 Alderman Cousley - DUP
 Councillor Robinson - DUP
 Alderman Connolly - SDLP
 Councillor Cavlan - SF
 Councillor Blair - TUV
 Alderman Kennedy - UUP
 (Mayor & Deputy Mayor ex-officio)

Resources Task Group

Alderman Campbell - DUP
 Councillor Finlay - DUP
 Councillor Robinson - DUP
 Alderman Connolly - SDLP
 Councillor Cavlan - SF
 Councillor McKeown - UUP
 (Chair & Vice Chair CRCS ex-officio)

Causeway Coast & Glens District Council Transition Committee

Alderman Campbell - DUP
 Councillor Finlay - DUP
 Councillor Stevenson - DUP
 Alderman Kennedy - UUP
 Councillor McGuigan - SF

It was reported that Councillor Robinson had resigned from the NEP111 Partnership and the party had nominated Alderman Cousley to fill the vacancy.

With regard to the nominations put forward by Council for consideration for appointment to the Rural Development Joint Committee and LAG, the following had been selected.

North East Rural Development Joint Committee	Alderman Connolly - SDLP Councillor Robinson - DUP Councillor Stevenson – DUP
North East Rural Development Partnership LAG	Councillor Blair - TUV Alderman Campbell - DUP Councillor Cavlan - SF

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

that Councillor R McAfee be appointed on all standing Committees and fills all vacancies on other bodies arising from the resignation of Councillor I McAfee.

949.14 LIBRARIES NI – REVIEW OF OPENING HOURS

In response to Council's request for information on the impact of the reduced opening hours on the local library service and mobile library service, Libraries NI has advised as follows:-

The implications of reducing the opening hours of Ballymoney Library from 57-40 hours per week.

The main reason for the review is the level of savings that Libraries NI is required to make as a result of the Comprehensive Spending Review i.e. cumulative savings of £10.285 million by 2015. Since it was established in April 2009 Libraries NI has already made efficiencies totalling £2.7 million, mainly through reductions in the number of posts at managerial and administrative level and by streamlining stock services. Work will carry on to ensure efficiencies continue to be made in back office functions, but, unfortunately, the scale of the savings that now have to be made means that consideration has had to be given to service reduction. A reduction in opening hours is one measure being put in place to achieve the necessary level of savings; other measures include a significant reduction in the stock budget and in the budget for maintenance of library buildings as well as a recruitment freeze.

The Board of Libraries NI believes that it is important to maintain a network of sustainable libraries across Northern Ireland, but in order to do so it has no option but to consider reducing opening hours. While it regrets very much having to consider this course of action, the Board is of the view that, in the current climate of tight financial constraints reducing opening hours is preferable to closing more libraries. The proposed changes to opening hours need to be implemented by April 2012 in order to achieve the level of savings required.

There are 2 states to the consultation process on the review of opening hours. Stage 1, currently underway, is concerned with the general principles and proposals and it is anticipated that the Board of Libraries NI will take decisions on this matter at its meeting in December. When the Board has agreed the available hours for each library, there will be consultation at individual library level with users to ensure that the pattern of opening hours best meets local needs. The

pattern of opening hours will include provision for morning, afternoon, evening and weekend opening.

Libraries NI is committed to ensuring the continuation of the library service in Ballymoney. It is inevitable, however, that Ballymoney Library, like all the other libraries impacted by a reduction in opening hours, will have to prioritise its programmes and activities within the resources that are available.

The review of opening hours, if implemented, will deliver the equivalent of 1200 staff hours of savings per week. We have given assurances to permanent staff that their contracted hours will be protected, but that it may be necessary for them to work some of their contracted hours in another library. Many staff are already accustomed to working some hours in other libraries, rather than their base library, in order to cover for sickness, annual leave etc. The impact on the staff timetables in Ballymoney Library will not be known until the end of the consultation period and following engagement locally with users on the best pattern of opening hours.

The impact on the mobile library service which serves the rural areas of the Borough

Mobile libraries are not included in the review of opening hours. Libraries NI recognises that mobile libraries provide a very important service to many rural dwellers and also to those who because of age or disability are unable to leave their homes. A separate review of mobile services will be undertaken in 2012 to ensure that they remain relevant.

949.15 ROADS SERVICE

15.1 Proposed Speed Limits – Druckendult & Clintyfinnan

Roads Service has received a number of requests to consider the introduction of speed limits at these locations.

Until recently it was not possible to justify speed limits at these types of settlements under the policy that applied for the introduction of speed limits. However, the new speed management policy entitled, 'Setting Local Speed Limits in Northern Ireland' now allows for these type of developments to be considered for speed limits.

Roads Service has discussed both of these sites with the PSNI who have indicated their support for the introduction of speed limits. Although both areas meet the requirements to be considered as villages, given the relatively low density of the development of each, it is considered that the proposed speed limits should be set at 40 mph.

Site plans for both areas are available for inspection at the Office of the Chief Executive.

Alderman Campbell welcomed these initiatives and thanked Councillor Storey for his input. Councillor Storey stated that the speed limits have been put in place to protect lives and he hopes that these will be enforced and any offenders dealt with appropriately. The meeting accepted the proposals.

15.2 The Private Streets (Northern Ireland) Order 1980 - Development at St Patrick's Primary School, Rasharkin. Stage 1 Developer Td Mckane & Son

The streets at above development have been adopted by the Roads Service.

949.16 RURAL COMMUNITY TRANSPORT – HEALTH AND WELLBEING FUNDING

Moyle District Council has made representations to Edwin Poots as Minister for Health, Social Services & Public Safety regarding the Rural Community Transport dial-a-lift scheme. Members feel that there is a serious anomaly in a scheme that will fund people visiting sick relatives or friends, yet will not fund those attending hospital appointments. A copy of the Council's letter to the Minister was circulated.

Moyle District Council is seeking the support of other Councils in the Cluster on this matter.

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

that Council support Moyle Council in its representations and extend an invitation to North Coast Community Transport to give a presentation to Council on the benefits of the work they carry out in the Borough.

* **Councillor McGuigan and Councillor Cavlan left the meeting at 9.12 pm.**

949.17 NATIONAL PARKS – WHITE PAPER ON ENABLING LEGISLATION

Initial draft comments from NILGA on 'White Paper on Enabling Legislation for National Parks' dated 19th August 2011 together with update dated 28th October 2011 is attached as Appendix 1 to this report.

This identifies key issues for local government.

- Potential additional functions
- Governance
- Resources
- Planning
- Timing

Department of the Environment anticipates that legislation will be enacted by Spring 2013.

Council is invited to consider endorsing the NILGA response. No comments were offered.

**949.18 NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE (NIFRS)
DRAFT INTEGRATED RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN 2012-15 A CONSULTATION DOCUMENT**

The NIFRS Draft Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP) 2012-15 has been issued for consultation. This 3 year draft Plan will build on past success to reflect revised ambitions developed to meet the new challenges we have identified from the changing environment.

NIFRS will be consulting on the 4 key proposals contained within the Draft IRMP from 26th October 2011 to 25th January 2012. They are keen to hear views from stakeholders so that they can be taken into account as they continue their efforts to make Northern Ireland a safer place.

The Draft IRMP focuses on 2 priorities for NIFRS -1) to reduce risk to the community and 2) to deliver affordable and sustainable services. In line with these 2 priorities they have developed 4 key IRMP proposals:

Proposal 1 – conduct a community risk assessment exercise to identify the risk profile for Northern Ireland.

Proposal 2 – achieve increased levels of community safety through the continued delivery of risk based fire safety and community safety initiatives.

Proposal 3 – enhance NIFRS emergency response capability to address current and emerging risks to community safety and to reflect public expectation.

Proposal 4 – ensure the effective and efficient use of operational resources by developing and implementing a service delivery model which reflects community risk by effective performance management.

A copy of the Draft IRMP is available to view and download from www.nifrs.org click on Consultation, or if you require a copy contact the Office of the Chief Executive.

Responses are invited by 25th January 2012, following which the NIFRS Board will consider the content prior to any decisions. Comments will be taken to Council's January meeting.

Referring to proposal (4), Councillor Storey advised that he has requested a meeting with representative of Fire Brigade Union and stated that it would be useful if Council could ascertain the view of local fire personnel as to what their views are on the Integrated Risk Management Plan.

949.19 OFMDFM – SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND – PUBLIC MEETINGS

OFMDFM has arranged public meetings to hear views on the Social Investment Fund which aims to reduce poverty, unemployment and physical deterioration through area based interventions of significant scale which will be delivered in partnership with communities. All meetings start at 7.00pm.

Schedule of Public Meetings

Date	Venue
Wednesday 26 th October	Holiday Inn, Ormeau Avenue, Belfast
Tuesday 1 st November	City Hotel, Derry/Londonerry
Tuesday 8 th November	Dunsilly Hotel, Antrim
Wednesday 16 th November	Killyhelvin Hotel, Enniskillen
Monday 21 st November	Civic Centre, Craigavon
Wednesday 30 th November	Town Hall, Newry

The consultation document is available at the following link:

<http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/equality/social-investment-fund.htm>

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

that any member wishing to attend any of the meetings may do so.

It was proposed by Alderman Kennedy, seconded by Councillor Finlay and **AGREED:**

that a meeting be requested in the Coleraine area to facilitate the Causeway cluster Councils.

949.20 DIGITAL SWITCHOVER

Digital UK advises that arrangements for switching to digital television are about to get underway here in Northern Ireland. Whilst the process itself is not scheduled to happen until later in 2012 a public information campaign is to be launched and the company want to work with council officers and public representatives and with other public bodies to ensure that the switchover goes as smoothly as possible. Switchover will mean that the existing analogue signal will be switched off and replaced with a digital TV signal which will enable virtually every household in Northern Ireland to access Freeview services (digital TV through an aerial). As a result, most households will be able to receive at least 15 channels; many will be able to receive up to 40.

Full details including issues to be addressed are set out in letter dated 10th October 2011 which was circulated.

949.21 SOUTHERN CROSS HEALTHCARE

Southern Cross Healthcare has provided a further update dated 15th October 2011 on wave 1.5 transfer.

No premises in the Ballymoney Borough are included in this wave

949.22 REPORTS

The Chief Executive referred to the schedule of reports received, copy circulated, which are available from the Office of the Chief Executive.

949.23 NILGA REPORTS & UPDATES

The Chief Executive referred to the schedule of reports received which was circulated for Members' information.

The meeting closed at 9.35 pm.

Appendices attached: Appendix 1 National Parks – White Paper on Enabling Legislation

APPENDIX 1**Initial Draft Comments on the
'White paper on Enabling Legislation for National Parks' 19th August 2011**

The following issues are highlighted further to a meeting facilitated by the NI Tourist Board, which also involved DOE, UFU, RSPB, NIEL FSB, and the NI Chambers of Commerce. The Chief Executive of Northumberland National Park gave a useful presentation, which will be circulated, once a copy has been obtained via NITB.

A second consultation document, expanding on that issued in March 2011, will be published by **30th August 2011**. This will be much more detailed and should address a number of current queries.

The closing date for the consultation has consequently been extended, and will now close on **31st October 2011**, giving an additional month to respond.

DOE anticipate that legislation will be enacted by **spring 2013**.

No specific area has yet been identified as a potential National Park. This consultation should therefore be considered by all councils, particularly those with Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty within their district.

Key Issues for Local Government

- **Potential additional functions**
- **Governance**
- **Resources**
- **Planning**
- **Timing**

Potential additional functions for councils

NILGA notes the options highlighted within the consultation, and that local councils or their elected members are likely to be heavily involved in the governance of any park created in Northern Ireland.

Local government representatives met the Minister on 21st July 2011 to voice the serious concern of the sector that an increasing number of functions are being 'off-loaded' onto councils without any kind of strategic approach or negotiation.

There is currently NO protocol in place for properly negotiating transfer of functions to, or creation of new roles for councils. This exposes councils to legal, resource planning and other risks, and does not allow for adequate and appropriate risk management and proper business development.

Without properly negotiated transfer, councils are required to deliver actions and are subject to raised public expectations, often without adequate human or financial resources required to do the jobs enshrined in legislation.

It is therefore vital, that proper negotiation takes place, prior to the drafting of any new legislation, to ensure that the eventual option proposed, is agreed by councils. NILGA looks forward to reading the expanded consultation document on 30th August 2011 to enable more detailed comments to be made, prior to further ongoing communication with both the Department and the Environment Committee.

Governance

Experience in Great Britain would support the primacy of local decision making, in the running of a National Park. For example, the management board of Northumberland National Park is comprised of a majority of local people (appointed by councils and parish councils, and achieving a geographic and political balance), with a minority of appointees made at national level by the Secretary of State under the Nolan Principles.

Clarity is required as to who has decision-making power in which circumstances, and at what level on issues where there is local-regional tension.

Resources

The initial consultation document identifies that costs of creating one or more national parks in Northern Ireland could be up to £3m per annum. In England, the cost is more like £5m per park.

English parks are funded by 100% grant from Defra. This grant was previously issued 75% by Defra, 25% by councils, with councils refunded by Defra. The system was streamlined in recent years. National parks frequently level in additional funding, e.g. through merchandising and car parking charges. Northumberland levers in an additional £2m per year, to supplement its £3m grant. The planning function is a significant additional cost to English parks that parks in Northern Ireland are unlikely to face.

DOE does not have any money allocated to fund a National Park in Northern Ireland. Officials are of the view that any money would need to be 'new money' allocated by the Executive. (It is therefore unlikely that a National Park would be funded in the current CSR period.)

Councils in Northern Ireland should not be required to assist in funding any national park created, and in fact could benefit, through savings due to discontinuation of commitments to fund current bodies that might be superseded.

Planning

In England National Parks are local authorities in their own right, with planning powers. There is currently no intention to replicate this system in Northern Ireland, and unless requested by elected members, planning powers will remain with DOE at present, and councils post reform.

In England, planning applications within National Parks have an approval rate of 82%, which is frequently higher than the rate in surrounding areas. There is, however, a lack of clarity as to the status of National Park Plans within the national planning system and process.

There is no intent to raise the benchmark for planning applications within any future NI national park, over that already in existence (including current requirements for Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and PPS21 – Sustainable Development in the Countryside).

It is likely that councils, potentially in different RPA clusters, will need to work closely together to frame park plans, integrated with any council area and community plans.

Timing

The DOE timetable would indicate that preparation for and creation of a national park in Northern Ireland might coincide with reform of local government and transfer of the planning function to councils. A substantial barrier to the successful simultaneous implementation of these policies is the ongoing lack of resources within government. The sheer scale of change, plus the need, amply demonstrated in Scotland, for a well planned and executed communications strategy prior to park designation, will cost money that government, and particularly DOE, may not presently have.

Other issues arising from the March 2011 Consultation Document and 19th August 2011 discussion

- National Parks are not ‘frozen in time’. They are ‘cultural landscapes’, not nature reserves, and should be able to continually evolve and change over time, whilst existing within set constraints.
- There is a high level of public and political support for National Parks in GB, but there needs to be a clear reason for designation – the area must have a readily identifiable intrinsic value, with form following function.
- The experience in GB is that national parks are a boost to local businesses*, including tourism, however the tourism industry may not benefit from designation, due to lack of infrastructure/marketing. **A Yorkshire/Humber study found that 69% of businesses reported a positive impact on their performance.*
- Evidence in GB shows that national parks are efficient public bodies, attracting significant additional resources and which add value locally to wider programmes. It is also noted that they can enhance local participation and assist in joining up service delivery at local level.
- A really good communications strategy is necessary, with strong engagement at community level. Fears need to be addressed, the frequently asked questions answered, and misinformation countered. It is vital not to impose a national park on a community, as it needs to be shaped by the people living within its boundary. A proper consultation with the community will require adequate resourcing.

- Cohesiveness is the key criterion, having an impact on community pride, the aims, objectives and identity of the park to be designated and the future branding of the park.
- More information will be made available on objective landscape evaluation in the forthcoming document (30 August 2011).
- More information is required on what a management body would actually *do*, who it would employ etc.
- The last paragraph of Annex A (P20) of the March 2011 consultation document consists of a robust vision statement for national parks, which should feature earlier in the document.
- The initial decision is: why is a park needed – then what should it do.

Karen Smyth
19th August 2011