

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

Minutes of Development Meeting No 226, held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Monday 13th June 2011 at 7.00 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Alderman B Kennedy

PRESENT:

Aldermen
F Campbell
H Connolly
C Cousley, MBE

Councillors
J Atkinson
A Cavlan
R Halliday
T McKeown, Deputy Mayor
C McLaughlin
I Stevenson, Mayor

APOLOGIES:

Councillors
J Finlay
E Robinson

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Corporate & Development Services
Committee Clerk

226.1 MINUTES – MEETING NO 225 – 23RD MAY 2011

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

that the minutes of Meeting No 225 – 23rd May 2011, as circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.

226.2 PROJECT UPDATE

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that as the meeting of the Development Committee in May was delayed until the 23rd due to the election, there is no substantive business. However, meetings on a number of current projects are due to take place over the next couple of weeks and decisions on some projects are also expected.

1.1 Regional Tourism Review (225.4)

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that a meeting is scheduled to take place shortly with the Chief Executive of the Tourist Board to discuss regional tourism funding.

1.2 Inland Waterways Project (Interreg) (225.9)

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that this project has been approved in principle. Further information is awaited from the Steering Committee.

1.3 Townscape Heritage Initiative (225.5)

Arrangements with Ballymoney Regeneration Company to work up the second-round submission, including a procurement exercise for the appointment of a conservation consultant team and recruitment of a part-time THI Officer are being advanced in accordance with the requirements of the HLF award.

It was **AGREED:**

that, if necessary, in consultation with the Chair, a meeting be arranged before the end of June, to provide a further project update and seek advice and recommendations from committee for Council consideration.

226.3 DRAFT RURAL WHITE PAPER ACTION PLAN

Committee is invited to consider the NILGA response to the consultation document published by the Department of Agriculture in March 2011, circulated.

In response to a query by Alderman Campbell on item 3.3 (Budgetary Issues), the Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that it was accepted that delivery of the action plan will take place within existing budgets.

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

that Council endorse NILGA's response the Draft Rural White Action Plan, as included in Appendix A.

226.4 LONDON 2012 OLYMPIC TORCH

The Head of Corporate & Development services advised that a meeting of Council representatives and others, attended by the Mayor and herself, organized by the London 2012 Committee, had taken place in Belfast earlier in the day. A pack of confidential information on the initiative to the Chief Executive was being reviewed and a further update on the proposals

for the Olympic torch route in Northern Ireland, and any issues for Ballymoney, will be made to committee. An announcement had already been made about the route of the torch through Portrush, Londonderry, Newry and Belfast. Further information on the torch route will be released at various stages but initially, all 26 councils have been invited to submit representations to the Committee for the torch to visit their respective boroughs. The officer invited the committee to consider the invitation to submission to the London 2012 committee, noting the initial application made by Development Committee for a visit to Ballymoney made a strong case for the route through the borough to be via Dervock, based on its association with Kennedy Kane McArthur, the Olympian and former postman from that area.

Should Council decide to invite the 2012 Committee to visit its borough details of the host area responsibilities and an estimate of anticipated costs of hosting the visit to the borough would be brought to committee. At this stage a decision was required with regard to extending the invitation to visit the borough.

Alderman Campbell commended Dervock's committee for the work they have carried out in organizing events for the half marathon stating that Council should support their efforts. He expressed his support stating that Dervock has strong reasons for the torch to visit that area. Alderman Kennedy, Councillor Cavlan and Councillor Atkinson concurred with his remarks.

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

that Council submit a formal invitation to the London 2012 Committee for the Olympic torch route to visit the borough, via Dervock village, in recognition of the association with Kennedy Kane McArthur, the Olympian and former postman from the village, and in the light of the demonstrated commitment and support of the Dervock and District Community Association for such a visit.

226.5 COUNCIL LAND AT CASTLECROFT, BALLYMONEY

Councillor Stevenson asked Committee to consider reducing the cost to charitable organizations for the use of the site at Castlecroft. The Head of Corporate & Development services advised that Council policy with regard to charges for its various facilities, including in-house use, did not provide for subsidy for charitable bodies. She outlined the arrangements for rental of the site, including requirements for risk assessments, options for electricity, and use of income generated to meet costs. It was noted that organizations wishing to apply for assistance with event costs may apply for assistance through the appropriate Council grant schemes. A review of arrangements for this amenity space was underway and a report would be made to committee in due course.

The meeting closed at 7.35 p.m.

APPENDIX A



NILGA Response to draft Rural White Paper



Draft NILGA response to the Draft Rural White Paper Action Plan

The following is the NILGA response to the consultation document published by the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development in March 2011 and requiring response by 13th June 2011

Caveat: This response has been prepared during the 2011 Local Government Election and consequently has had only limited elected member oversight and has not received NILGA Executive/Corporate approval. However, it does reflect the elected member and council officer input into the stakeholder group established per 1.0 below.

A group of local government and NILGA officers with knowledge through experience of rural development was involved in the preparation of the policy work forming the basis of this draft Action Plan.

The draft Action Plan outlines the Northern Ireland Executive's commitments for rural areas and details the actions that the NI Executive proposes to take to help support and develop rural areas. It also sets out a vision for the future of rural areas and identifies the key policy priorities required to deliver the vision.

For further information or to discuss any of the issues highlighted, please contact Karen Smyth at the NILGA Offices: Email: k.smyth@nilga.org Tel: 028 9079 8972

**Derek McCallan
Chief Executive
25th May 2011**

1.0 Background

During the last mandate (2008), the Assembly Executive agreed to support a proposal from the Minister for Agriculture, Michelle Gildernew to develop a Rural White Paper for Northern Ireland for the first time.

The Executive wanted to recognise the valuable contribution that the rural community makes to NI society and the economy and was committed to developing a joined up rural policy framework that will be beneficial to all stakeholders but the rural community in particular. To ensure this is an inclusive process the Minister set up a stakeholder group (including NILGA and council officers) to assist in the development of the proposals.

The consultation and policy development involving the stakeholder group identified some of the key challenges facing rural dwellers, and following consideration, the Executive has produced a draft Action Plan, outlining the commitment of government to supporting and developing rural areas.

2.0 Introduction

NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association, is the representative body for district councils in Northern Ireland. The membership is comprised of the local authorities and the organisation is supported by all the main political parties.

NILGA believes that the development of a rural white paper is timely, particularly in the context of the ongoing work on local government reform. We are pleased (indeed it is essential) that local government has been included in this work from the earliest stages of policy development and are keen to assist DARD NI to plan for the future, to encourage joined-up thinking on rural issues and to plan to make best use of the tools such as the 'power of well-being' that will soon become available.

The local government sector looks forward to continuing our partnership relationships with DARD NI, to develop similar functionality with other relevant government departments in the context of rural development and to continue to develop work with local rural communities, furthering the overall Programme for Government and ensuring that subsidiarity and community benefit are aligned to the most effective yet local level of planning and delivery.

3.0 Key Issues

In 2009, NILGA produced a document on behalf of and in consultation with our member councils, to set out current local government thinking on issues that should be addressed in a rural white paper for Northern Ireland. It is therefore welcome to see that many of the issues highlighted in our 'Priorities' paper, have been listed as priorities in the draft Action Plan.

NILGA is keen to ensure that rural life in Northern Ireland is supported to ensure its continued sustainability. Our member councils, many of which are civic leaders and service providers in rural areas, are keen to play their part in developing the rural society, economy and environment in a sustainable way.

Local government in this context is more than a stakeholder. Councils are a constitutional and statutory form of government, with an important local role, supporting and enhancing the role of the national and devolved administrations. NILGA members are keen to develop this role through formal and informal integrated partnerships, with Councils as co-ordinators, providing accountable yet innovative Central <-> Council <->Local Partnerships for delivery of rural development initiatives of many types, enabled by DARD NI policies.

3.1 Rural Vision

NILGA welcomes the rural vision as set out in the draft Action Plan

3.2 Thematic Approach and Policy Priorities

NILGA broadly welcomes the thematic approach, and is in agreement with the five key themes of Urban/Rural Linkages, Access to Services, Sustainable Rural Communities, Sustainable Rural Economies and Sustainable Countryside. We would again encourage DARD NI to work closely with DOE NI and other budget holding Departments to examine how this vision and the associated themes and actions can be developed using the forthcoming council-led community planning approach for local rural planning, economic and social development. NILGA broadly welcomes the policy priorities outlined under the headline themes.

3.3 Budgetary Issues

The difficulties posed by the current economic situation are accepted, and it is noted that delivery will largely need to take place from within existing budgets. NILGA would welcome the intention to use limited resources more effectively and to promote joined up working between Departments. We also believe that there is also a strong case for Departments to work in

partnership with councils to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of delivery of local outcomes is maximised. NILGA would encourage the use of a forward planning, multi agency partnership mechanism required through the Local Government Reform Bill (DoE, November 2010) which brings together *in advance* key players such as Councils, rural support networks and departments in order to anticipate new initiatives and strategies and for all key agencies to be involved in the preparation of rural development programmes rather than competing and managing programmes as a delivery agency responsible to and audited by a Programme Management Agency as is the case with the NI Rural Development programme 2007-13.

3.4 Implementing the Action Plan

NILGA is pleased that the need for a cross-governmental approach has been identified, and would concur with the need to lead this work 'from the top'. Councils will be vitally important to the delivery of much of the plan and, as more than a stakeholder, perhaps an additional sentence should be added in this regard emphasising the primacy of influence of the local democratic elected member role.

NILGA and councils were pleased to be invited to assist in informing the development of policy on this issue and will value continued engagement through the Advisory Group, and particularly in the facility to meet regularly with the Interdepartmental Committee on Rural Policy.

4.0 Rural White Paper Action Plan

Councils are keen to ensure they play their part locally, as is highlighted in the conclusion to the document. To this end, it is proposed that an additional column be added to the plan, similar to that for the 'Supporting Departments'.

It might be useful for DARD NI to view the finalised Sustainable Development Implementation Plan, which had additional columns for local government and other stakeholders. If an additional column is added for local government, this will give a more complete picture of how actions will be implemented 'on the ground'. Not to do this would be a signal that local government is not integral to success in this White Paper, to do this would greatly assist its sustainability.

4.1 Urban/Rural Linkages

NILGA has recently responded to the Regional Development Strategy, as follows:

There is a strong view emerging from rural councils that the Strategy Review has not adequately considered rural areas or rural development policy and strategy. There is serious concern regarding the definition(s) of 'rural' applied by government and funding bodies, which negatively impact on the development of the small town.

For vibrant rural communities to exist, diverse and sustainable local centres are required, with commercial and industrial development and active growth facilitated. In some respects, the [Regional Development] plan fails to appreciate the issues of isolation reinforced by an analysis supportive of centralisation and placing access issues almost entirely on the individual and need for 'cultural change'.

NILGA is concerned that there is insufficient integration with the forthcoming rural white paper. The Department must recognise the different challenges that rural areas face, and that regional planning policy is often not a comfortable solution due to the Northern Ireland rural/urban split.

Tourism and on-farm diversification plays a key role in economic development and some thought around these issues would be helpful from a sub-regional/rural standpoint.

The references to social deprivation within the review focus on urban areas, which is a particular concern given the high figures for rural social deprivation in the West. Rural communities should not be disadvantaged because they exist outside the urban setting.

Rural areas are keen to ensure they are sufficiently supported through a government commitment to develop rural transport and telecommunications infrastructure, including broadband, and the Strategy goes some way towards meeting this need.

Local government has an important role to play regarding Actions 3, 4, 7 and 8, and this should be reflected in the plan.

4.2 Access to Services

NILGA is pleased to note that its concerns regarding rural transport and communications issues have been taken into account. Local government will have an increasingly important role to play in local transport planning and is in ongoing communication with DRD NI on transport strategy and policy, particularly in the context of community planning.

Local government has had an important role in the introduction of Project Kelvin, particularly in the North West, and is keen to see roll-out of a functional and fast broadband network.

Local government has an important role to play regarding Actions 20-27, 31 and 32, and this should be reflected in the plan.

4.3 Rural Communities

The measures introduced in the Plan to address the key challenges faced by rural communities are also vitally important for local councils to assist government in addressing, and NILGA looks forward to working with the Department to develop a system of key rural indicators to assist in future community planning work. Councils are already looking at the issue of rural proofing and have been working closely with the Department on this issue, including the development of training packages.

The increased role for councils with regard to development planning in their areas will impact heavily on this section, as councils will be responsible for future zoning of housing and other developments.

Local government is either impacted by or has an important role to play regarding Actions 35-50, and 57-60 and this should be reflected in the plan.

4.4 Rural Economies

The role of councils in developing the rural economy needs to be recognised within the plan, since councils work collaboratively with each other (through the LEADER programme), Departments and their agencies, including DETI and INVESTNI to improve local economic prospects. Councils, through the collaborative regional tourism mechanisms, have had a sizeable impact on the development of tourism in rural areas, and this need to be reflected. The opportunities presented by councils regarding green industry should also be reflected, given the new businesses that have flourished as a result of diversion of municipal waste from landfill.

Local government is either impacted by or has an important role to play regarding Actions 62-76 and 81, and this should be reflected in the plan.

4.5 The Countryside

Councils are heavily involved in the protection of the countryside and use of the countryside for leisure and recreational purposes. Many provide or support first class leisure facilities in rural areas. Councils are also a key player in the development of tourism in NI. They are best placed to work at local level with the local rural communities and with small businesses, including the management of waste and resources. Many are also developing innovative approaches to

climate change mitigation and adaptation, in addition of other environmental and biodiversity schemes.

Local government is either impacted by or has an important role to play regarding Actions 82-85, and this should be reflected in the plan.

5.0 Conclusion

NILGA will continue to develop, as a priority in its 2011-15 Corporate Plan, the role of the elected member in Rural Development. As such, the Association will develop with the local government sector, a Rural Development work plan which will create mechanisms for collaboration, improvement and efficiency, aligned to the wider reform process. This will be evidenced in co-operation between clusters of Councils on service delivery, rural economic and tourism development, spatial and community planning and other socio-economic drivers.