

**BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL
DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

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**Ballymoney Borough Council
Development Committee**

Minutes of Development Meeting No 243, held in the McKinley Room, Riada House, Ballymoney on Wednesday 16th January 2012 at 6.30 pm.

- IN THE CHAIR:** Councillor W Blair (item 243.1 – 243.3)
Alderman B Kennedy (item 243.3 et seq)
- PRESENT:**
- Aldermen**
F Campbell
C Cousley, MBE, Deputy Mayor
- Councillors**
J Atkinson
J Finlay
R Halliday
R McAfee
C McLaughlin
E Robinson, Mayor
I Stevenson
- APOLOGIES** Councillor M Storey, MLA.
- IN ATTENDANCE:** Chief Executive
Head of Corporate & Development Services
Committee Clerk
- DSD (Item 3)**
Mr W Hutchinson – Regional Development Officer

243.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

243.2 MINUTES - MEETING NO 242 – 19TH DECEMBER 2012

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

*that the minutes of Meeting No 242 – 19th December 2012, as
circulated, be confirmed as a correct record.*

243.3 BALLYMONEY MASTERPLAN

The Vice-Chair welcomed Mr Walter Hutchinson from the Department of Social Development to the meeting to update members on the Masterplan process and progress to date.

Mr Hutchinson clarified DSD's role and responsibility for urban regeneration across towns and cities in Northern Ireland with the Department dealing with 37 towns in total across the province. He expanded on the need for a Masterplan to provide a comprehensive long term strategy for the town. He advised that consultants appointed had commenced in October 2012 and their remit was to prepare a masterplan and action plan for the town centre which should be distinctive, inspirational, realistic, credible and deliverable. The plan, managed by a project team of key stakeholder organizations, would also define the timescale and resources required for the delivery of Ballymoney town centre transformation.

Giving an overview of the stages and timelines he advised that in addition to land use, urban form and public realm, traffic and pedestrian movements the consultants would also look at potential for growth in the various sectors – retail, office & business, residential, evening economy, hospitality and commercial leisure.

Updating members on progress he explained that to date there had been one very well attended stakeholder session with delegates from community, business and statutory organisations participating in a number of themed workshops. This, with information gathered and analysis of issues referred to earlier would feed into the process, leading to the creation of a vision and regeneration objectives and draft proposals. The draft proposals would be subject to a 12 week public consultation period prior to the finalisation of the masterplan document by the summer, moving towards implementation stage with publication of the final masterplan by September 2013.

- * **Alderman Kennedy, Councillor McLaughlin and Councillor Stevenson joined the meeting at this stage, 6.45 p.m. and Councillor Kennedy assumed the Chair.**

Referring to research commissioned prior to the masterplan Mr Hutchinson advised on the Retail Capacity Study, completed in July 2011 which found that Ballymoney was retaining 58% of its catchment area, of over 30,000. Convenience shopping of 37% was going to other towns. A Town Health Check, was finalized in September 2012. The purpose of the health check was to inform the preparation of a masterplan; Issues covered included demographics, diversity of offer, convenience and comparison spend/market share, footfall, vacancy levels, access safety and environment issues. Household and users surveys were also conducted.

- * **Councillor Finlay joined the meeting at this stage 6.55 p.m.**

Mr Hutchinson responded to questions from members relating to:

- Gap site development
- Revitalization programme which could accelerate improvements to town premises
- Leakage to other towns
- RPA and transfer of planning matters to Councils
- Online shopping trends and need for shops to diversify.
- Re-assessment of criteria to enable main hub status for Ballymoney
- High rents and rates affecting traders
- Need for hotel in the town
- Promotion of the evening economy

In response to Councillor Finlay's questions about dereliction at Linenhall Street, Mr Hutchinson advised that a proposal developed by Council in association with DSD and was being considered as a priority to improve the appearance of Linenhall Street as an interim measure. Councillor Finlay conveyed appreciation to the Department and the Council Officer for the work done in connection with research and development of a proposal to improve the town environment at this key access point.

The Chief Executive referred to the interface between the Masterplan and the Northern Area Plan which had already been through a public inquiry. Given that from a statutory point of view Planning must have regard to the Area Plan and the two documents would be out of sync in time, the Area plan having commenced in 2003 and completed in 2006, but stalled because of the review process. In addition the Area Plan was designed during a period of prosperity and growth. The Chief Executive expressed concern that the aspirations of the Masterplan could be hindered by the need by Planning Service to adhere to the commitments of the Area Plan. Mr Hutchinson confirmed that the Masterplan was a non-statutory document, but that Planning Service have and will continue to be part of the consultation process in the formulation of the Masterplan, with the Department be represented on the steering group to take the plans forward.

The Chairman, thanking Mr Hutchinson for his presentation, said he was pleased to Chair the very successful stakeholder session on 29th November when some 70 people had actively engaged in the workshop sessions, providing some very positive input and this was a great start to process. He welcomed the support provided to Council by DSD, through funding for the development of the Masterplan and for commissioning, the previous year, a Town Health Check and Retail Capacity Study which has enabled the Masterplan exercise to get up and running quickly. He also recorded Council's appreciation to the Department for funding Initiatives over the last 10 or so years, including improved direction signage, improvements to streetscape, development of visitor website, development of branding and promotional materials and marketing campaigns and events.

Commenting on the masterplan concept he expressed his desire to retain jobs and create new jobs, attract additional visitors and spend, strengthen the town's

evening economy and create new opportunities for investment, which would lead to an attractive and thriving town centre which serves residents and visitors alike.

He also welcomed the ongoing commitment of the regional DRD team to the development of the Town Centre in these very challenging economic times and the help and advice given as the team worked with Council to develop initiatives to improve the appearance of the key town opportunity site at Linenhall Street where development has stalled. He also recorded his appreciation to Cheers Youth Club, Toon Art Classes and Regional College students who produced artwork to brighten up the street over the past several years, but as the property continues to deteriorate and presents an unsightly appearance he expressed the hope that DSD will look favourably on the proposals developed to enhance the facades of this once vibrant street.

Alderman Kennedy thanked Mr Hutchinson for his presentation which concluded at 7.45 pm. Mr Hutchinson left the meeting at this time.

243.4 DRUMAHEGLIS MARINA DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The contractor went on site on 7th January and work is ongoing on the development of interpretation panels. An interim marketing plan, setting out the approach Council follows in marketing Drumaheglis Marina and Caravan park as a tourism product, has been produced while a joint marketing plan with adjoining authorities on the River Bann is being developed. The Borough Services Directorate would now oversee delivery of the project and report progress via Leisure & Amenities Committee, while the Development Committee would deal with liaison with funders and marketing aspects of the new product.

243.5 CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS

5.1 Landscape Partnership Scheme

A copy of the first issue of the Heart of the Glens Landscape Partnership Scheme Newsletter "Pulse" was circulated.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that Heritage Lottery had approved the Partnership's request for an extension to the submission deadline of the stage II application for the Heart of the Glens. The new deadline for submission of our round 2 application is 30th April 2013.

5.2 Funding towards the work of the Heritage Trust

The Trust has requested a letter of "intent to support" the Trust for the next two years to increase the longer term stability of the organization. NIEA has committed funding for the next two years £158,031 2013/14 and

£160,610 2014/15 and will continue to support the Heritage Trust beyond this with support from its existing partners. A funders' meeting will be held later this month to review the financial position.

The Trust continues to lead sustainable tourism initiatives such as the development of an online toolkit for tourism businesses, ongoing communication with local tourism businesses on sustainable tourism opportunities and the development of craft and tourism opportunities in the Causeway Coast and Glens.

It leads the development of the Economusee project with partners in Iceland, Norway, Faroe Islands, Sweden and the Republic of Ireland to develop craft and tourism opportunities in the Causeway Coast & Glens. Ballymoney has directly benefitted through the development of Scullion Hurls based in Loughgiel.

Over the next two years the Heritage Trust will continue to enhance the delivery of its activities for its Board, funding partners and the wider communities who live work and enjoy the Causeway Coast and Glens. Discussions are ongoing with regard to specific projects in the Ballymoney borough.

It was noted that funding towards the work and activities of the Trust in the Borough was included in the draft rate estimate 2013/14.

243.6 TOURISM TRAILS DEVELOPMENT

Following the adoption of the study, funded by RDP on borough trails, exploratory work is ongoing on the following key recommendations, including meetings with potential partners:

- Extending the Causeway Coastal Route and associated scenic loops to include the existing Slieveanora Scenic Route and proposed Altarichard Scenic Loop;
- Developing themed trails and extending existing initiatives within the Council's area;
- Exploring the development and promotion of a number of themed trails within the wider Causeway Coast & Glens in partnership with neighbouring councils and the regional tourism partnership.

Opportunities for developing the Ulster Scots product and identifying and developing stories for on-site interpretation, development of trails, guided tours and events are also being explored, in addition to funding opportunities for development Ulster Scots product identified by NITB, drawing on information from their visitor attitudes survey and Ulster Scots product audit.

Shean's Horse Farm, a riding and activity centre, based on a farm at Arroy, Ballymoney, has developed a heritage and historic centre at the facility, renaming the facility Sheans Horse Farm Heritage and Historical Centre. This new element tells the fascinating story of the Irish Clans and Chieftains and the great local Chieftain Sorley Boy McDonnell, prior to the flight of the Earls in 1607. The new product is to be launched in mid-February. During its development the facility owner has worked closely with the Clan Donald Trust, Isle of Skye in North West Scotland and, more recently, with Officers in Council and Moyle Council and Tourism Partnership in an effort to co-ordinate with other proposals, aimed at securing greater tourism benefit for the two local authorities and the wider tourism region.

It is **recommended** that Council, in association with Moyle District Council and the facility owner host a business meeting and familiarization visits during a two day visit by representatives from the Clan Donald Trust, Isle of Skye and tourism representatives from Scotland and that the Council meet a share of the cost, estimated not to exceed £1,000.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services gave a presentation to members on the proposed tourism trails, aimed at increasing the tourism product offering, highlighting unique features in the borough, enhancing the Causeway Coastal Route experience and increasing visitor numbers and spend. She highlighted the markets, and market segments identified.

Work was in hand in relation to the case for extending the Causeway Coastal Route to include Slieveanorra scenic drive and Altnarichard scenic loop. Outlining themed trails and village trails examined it was **recommended** that the following priority projects be advanced:

1. Orange 'n' Green Borough Trail, creating a unique rural tourism product with strong appeal in the NI, ROI and GB markets;
2. Biker Trail, complementing the successful NW 200 event, with strong appeal within NI, ROI and GB markets, to be developed in association with other councils;
3. Ghosts 'n' Ghouls (Shocker Trail), appealing to family groups and car touring market, to be developed as part of the wider Causeway Coast & Glens Tourism initiative (Myths & Legends).
4. Christian Heritage Trail – to be considered as part of the wider Christian Heritage Trail within Causeway Coast & Glens with links to Co. Down and Armagh sites, with market appeal in NI, ROI. GB, North America and Europe.

The Officer responded to questions relating to sources of funding and the benefits of re-establishing the ferry service between Ballycastle and Campbelltown to promote links with Scotland and the Ulster Scots connection.

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

to recommend that Council in association with Moyle District Council and the facility owner host a business event during a two day visit by representatives from the Isle of Skye and tourism representatives from Scotland and that the Council meet a share of the cost, estimated not to exceed £1,000.

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

to recommend that Council take forward the identified priority trails projects as follows:

- ***Orange 'n' Green Borough Trail;***
- ***Biker Trail;***
- ***Ghosts 'n; Ghouls (Shocker Trail);***
- ***Christian Heritage Trail.***

243.7 CLOUGHMILLS OLD MILL STUDY

Quotations were invited and evaluated and a consultant has been appointed to undertake this study and work has commenced.

243.8 EVENTS PROGRAMME

Committee developed a series of special events in 2012 to mark the London Olympics and Her Majesty the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. Council also hosted the Co Antrim Pipe Band Championships.

2013 offers opportunities to develop activities linked to the World Police & Fire Games; the 2013 Gathering and the anniversary of the Queen's Coronation. Outline proposals have been developed in association with partners. It is **recommended** that a special events programme for 2013 be approved.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services highlighted a number of potential event opportunities designed to attract additional visitors and spend in the town and borough.

Councillor Finlay welcomed a 2013 special events programme, in particularly celebrations. He suggested that the officer explore event partnerships to enhance the event offer, grants to attract events delivering visitor numbers and spend.

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

to recommend that a 2013 special events programme be developed and funding opportunities explored, with budget provision included in the draft Rate Estimate for 2013/14.

243.9 MAGILLIGAN PRISON FUTURE PROPOSALS

Background

In the Northern Ireland Prison Service's "Outline Estate Strategy 2012-2022" document put out for consultation earlier in 2012, it was recommended that the Magilligan Prison site be de-commissioned and that a new site be provided for prison facilities close to the current Maghaberry Prison. This was despite proposals announced by Paul Goggins in 2007 for a new building at the Magilligan site and despite the conclusion which emerged from the Prison Review Team's report of 2011 which recommend other options be looked at as well.

On foot of the recommendation to de-commission elected members and Chief Executives from three councils, Limavady, Coleraine and Ballymoney met jointly with the Minister for Justice David Forde and some officials to discuss the proposals and argue firmly against the recommended closure.

As a result of the meeting the Minister agreed to re-examine the issue giving an assurance that no final decision had been taken. It was agreed that officials would meet again to discuss possible new ways forward for the prison at the Magilligan site. On 23 November 2012 the Chief Executives of the three Councils met with senior Northern Ireland Prison Service officials including the Director General Sue McAllister. As a result it was identified that the future use of the Magilligan site could be secured with the use of the prison directed towards low-risk prisoners including those requiring work experience and placement opportunities locally as part of the process of their rehabilitation and re-integration into society. The type of activity cited as suitable included environmental work e.g. combating dereliction, additional litter picking etc. but also work placements in other areas of council life depending on the skills and attributions of the individuals. These opportunities would be at no cost to councils.

It was agreed that a further meeting would take place in early January to flush out how councils could contribute to making such opportunities available.

In November 2012 Minister Forde announced that subject to the outcome of the current discussions with councils he was minded to continue with the provision of a prison service at Magilligan going forward.

On 7 January Council officials including Derry City Council met with Prison officials to discuss "the way forward". The following issues emerged:

1. Northern Ireland Prison Service officials would develop a strategy to provide suitable work experience and placement opportunities matching

prisoners' needs involving local councils as well as other areas of Government and the private sector.

2. That there was a need to have the involvement and support of elected members of the four councils.
3. The support and involvement of the local business sector should also be harnessed through engagement with the local Chambers of Trade.

It is **recommended** therefore that an Elected Members Liaison Group be established from across the four councils in order to:

- Maintain the link with the Northern Ireland Prison service as the strategy is developed.
- To contribute to the planning of the service in Magilligan
- To receive progress reports from the Prison Service and provide a forum for discussion as appropriate.

It is envisaged that 2-3 members¹ be nominated from each of the councils to the liaison group.

It was further suggested by the Prison Service officials that the process be assisted by the holding of a study visit in early February to Magilligan Prison. The study visit would be open to a party of 2–3 from each Council area including one representative from the local Chamber of Trade.

It is proposed that the visit take place on February 4th or February 12th and would include a round table discussion with prison officials on the way forward.

Councils' views on this approach are sought.

The opportunities which the initiative presented were discussed.

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

to recommend that Councillor Finlay attend the study visit on 4th or 12th February with the Chief Executive and representative from the Chamber of Commerce.

¹ On Magilligan Prison the approach outlined in the note which is being circulated to you this morning by Denise arising from Monday's meeting was agreed with the one change that the Political Liaison Group consist of up to 4 members from each council.

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

to recommend that Alderman Cousley, Councillor Finlay, Councillor Robinson and Councillor Stevenson be nominated as Council's representatives on the Elected Members Liaison Group, with Councillor Atkinson as substitute.

243.10 ECAR PROJECT

The locations put forward for consideration are as follows:

- Seymour Street Park and Ride
- Townhead Car Park
- Castle Street
- Trolan's Supervalu
- Car Park at JDLC
- Logans complex on A26
- Market Street Car Park
- Drumaheglis Marina
- Ballybogey

243.11 SOCIAL INVESTMENT FUND PROJECTS

Queries raised by the consultant have been addressed and revised submissions forwarded by the deadline set.

243.12 INTERNATIONAL LINKS VISITS

12.1 Douglas

The Boxing team from Douglas has confirmed their visit to Ballymoney on 8th March and the Twinning Association are making the necessary arrangements. It is **recommended** that Council confirm invitation to a civic delegation to visit the Borough at this time.

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

to recommend that Council issue a formal invitation to civic delegates including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor to visit the Borough on 8th March 2013 on the occasion of the Boxing event, being organized by the Twinning Association.

12.2 Vanves

Vanves City Council has proposed to the Twinning Association that 22 students from St Exupéry High school visit the borough on 22 to 26 April (first choice), or 15 to 19 April. It is **recommended** that a formal invitation be extended to a civic delegation at this time or other appropriate time.

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

to recommend that a formal invitation be extended to a civic delegation of five to visit the borough on the occasion of the visit by St Exupéry High school, being organised by the Twinning Association.

243.13 TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACTION PLAN 2011-2015 (DETI)

In September 2011 DETI published its final consultation paper on the Action Plan for the period 2011-2015. The Action Plan sets out DETI's thoughts on the key priorities and themes to be taken forward over the next 4 years in order to ensure that Northern Ireland continues to have a telecommunications infrastructure that is fit for purpose and capable of supporting the growth of the local economy. A summary of the responses received and the Department's comments on these is copied herewith.

It was **AGREED:**

to recommend that the matter be deferred to the next meeting of Committee.

LogOn – NI

A new promotional flyer to encourage businesses to take advantage of free and impartial broadband and ICT programmes, established by DETI to stimulate the uptake of broadband and increase level of e-business activity undertaken by SMEs, details circulated, with members invited to do what they could to encourage local businesses to take up this offer.

243.14 STEPS TO WORK PROGRAMME

Letter, 7/1/2013, from DEL about their main adult return to work programme, Steps to Work (StW) offering a range of programmes for the unemployed, including work experience

The meeting concluded at 8.50 pm.