

**Ballymoney Borough Council
Development Committee Meeting No 254 – 20th November 2013**

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BALLYMONEY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of Development Committee Meeting No 254 held in the Council Chamber, Riada House, Ballymoney on Wednesday 20th November at 6.30 pm.

IN THE CHAIR: Alderman B Kennedy

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

Councillors
W Blair
R Halliday
R McAfee
C McLaughlin
E Robinson, MBE

APOLOGIES: **Councillor**
P McGuigan

IN ATTENDANCE: Head of Corporate & Development Services
Chief Executive (Items 1-5)
Business Support Officer

254.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

254.2 DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 253 – 16TH OCTOBER 2013

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

that the minutes of Development Committee Meeting No 253 – 16th October 2013, as circulated, be agreed as a correct record.

254.3 BALLYMONEY MASTERPLAN

At the previous presentation Council was advised on existing conditions and key issues in relation to the main themes – Retail and commercial, Tourism, Transport, residential, evening economy.

Following the Consultation exercise, which closed in mid-September, the Masterplan stakeholder group has given consideration to the responses and the draft vision. The draft masterplan is to be refined by the stakeholder group this week, with revisions, as necessary, to reflect the opinions expressed during the consultation.

It had been anticipated that Mr William Cameron, DSD would present the final draft masterplan, including key components in relation to transport proposals, public realm interventions, development sites and tourism proposals, together with associated implementation plan and action plans. Arrangements were also in hand for the DSD Minister to launch the masterplan before the end of the year.

Committee has Council powers to make a decision on this matter. However the stakeholder group had not completed its review of the draft plan and it is **recommended** that the matter be deferred to Council's meeting in December.

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

that the draft masterplan be deferred to the Council's monthly meeting in December.

* **Alderman Cousley joined the meeting at 6.35 pm**

The Chief Executive referred to the Linenhall Street Quarter opportunity site, on a key town centre entrance route, and the site history, offering some preliminary advice in response to Council's request as to options which might be open to Council in taking forward an initiative to secure the development of the site and legislative powers available to Council. It was noted that the Masterplan process should give the stimulus needed to generate interest in the site and committee agreed to return to the matter in the context of the Masterplan following its adoption.

* **Councillor Robinson joined the meeting at 6.40 pm.**

254.4 MINERAL DEVELOPMENT

The Chief Executive advised the committee of correspondence received from Department of Enterprise, Trade & Investment advising of four applications received from Lonmin (Northern Ireland) Limited for mineral prospecting rights

under section 11 of the Mineral Development Act (NI) 1969 in respect of lands in County Antrim. Maps showing the areas which would be affected across wards in the local government districts of Ballymoney, Moyle, Coleraine, Ballymena, Magherafelt and Larne and related public notices, advertised in the local press, are on display at the Council Offices, Riada House until 16th December. The Council has one month from the date of receipt of the correspondence from DETI to make any representations regarding the issue. Any persons may also make representations to the Department in writing about the proposed licences within one month from 18th November 2013.

In respect of each of the applications consideration is at present being given to the issue of a licence over the area for an initial period of two years with provision for an extension in respect of all such minerals as are vested in the Department. This time round more of Ballymoney borough area was included than previously.

Members considered representations it had made in 2008 in response to previous licence applications and it was proposed by Alderman Campbell seconded by Alderman Connolly and **AGREED:**

to recommend that Committee respond, on behalf of Council, to the consultation from DETI into the applications for the granting of mineral prospecting licences in respect of lands within Ballymoney Borough Council area by Lonmin PLC, as follows:

- 1. Council is extremely concerned about the application for prospecting licences, given the effect of the granting of an earlier prospecting licence, which led to the zoning of a large area of the borough as a Lignite Resource Area in the North East Area Plan. This area was significantly extended in the draft Northern Area Plan and the effect has been to blight an area of the borough from any new construction. The current applications would extend the area liable to be included in the Lignite Resource Area and council would strongly request that lignite be specifically excluded from the licence to prevent any possibility of that occurrence.***
- 2. While the current application is for prospecting and not for mining, Council wants to put on record that it is opposed to any proposals to extract minerals by opencast mining. The community in Ballymoney and the wider area has visibly demonstrated its opposition to this form of mining also, in respect of lignite, and anyone applying for a prospecting licence should be in no doubt of this; opencast mining will be rigorously opposed!***

3. ***Given the level of local feeling generated by the lignite issue, it is important that anyone granted a prospecting licence is aware of the need to communicate with the community in the affected area, to give them as much information as possible of the details of any work they propose to undertake.***

* **The Chief Executive left the meeting at 7.05 pm.**

254.5 BALLYMONEY REVITALISATION SCHEME

A regeneration initiative entitled 'Ballymoney Revitalisation Programme' which would upgrade the frontages of properties within a designated area of the town centre has been developed. After taking account of the conservation area, THI proposals and potential for regeneration works, Main Street, a key commercial street in the town centre, including Castlecroft complex, has been determined as an appropriate area for action with the potential for a scheme to start early next year. The initiative, estimated at £200,000, driven forward by steering group with representatives of Council and local trading community, would be prepared for submission as soon as the Masterplan is formally launched. The funding is dependent on a satisfactory economic appraisal being completed by the DSD, match funding from Council and contributions from businesses. In the intervening period it is necessary also undertake business surveys to determine the level of interest and likely uptake for such a project. If funding becomes available formal applications will be sought from eligible businesses.

Project timetable, expressions of interest forms and guidance notes, user and business surveys have been developed and agreed with DSD.

It is **recommended** that Council confirm the revitalization programme area and match funding, of 10% of costs, £20,000, and agree establishment of project steering group, comprising Council and business representatives from the designated area, appointment being facilitated by the Chamber of Commerce. *Committee has been granted Council powers to make a decision on this matter.*

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised members that it would be necessary to undertake street surveys to obtain visitor and consumer responses. Previously, these have been conducted in-house but due to current workload and resource difficulties it will be necessary to buy in the necessary support to meet the commitment to carry out the surveys within the timescale required.

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

that Council confirm the revitalization programme area, match funding of 10% of costs, £20,000, agree establishment of project

steering group and buy in staffing resources necessary to undertake the street surveys, as recommended.

254.6 VIRTUAL SHOP IMPROVEMENT SCHEME – LINENHALL ST/CHARLES ST.

A pre project analysis report on the scheme from DSD Analytical Services Unit has been received.

The Ballymoney Virtual Shop Front Improvement Scheme was carried out on the frontage of the buildings along Linenhall Street (even numbers 8 to 22) and part of Charles Street (even numbers 2 to 10). The aims of the initiative were to: improve the appearance of the vacant properties along Linenhall and Charles Street; increase footfall in Ballymoney town centre; increase the level of enquiries about vacant units in the town centre; reduce the incidents of anti-social behavior in Linenhall and Charles Street.

The report is a review and analysis of surveys completed by users in the area (April 2013) prior to any works being carried out and will provide a baseline for evaluation of the project. DSD Analytical Services Unit (ASU) has prepared the report for use by staff in the Regional Development Office (RDO) in evaluating the Scheme.

- 86% of respondents said their perception of the Ballymoney Virtual Shop Front Scheme Area as it currently stands is very poor or poor.
- Amount of dereliction was viewed as the worst aspect of the area, followed closely by first impressions for those visiting the town. These two aspects were rated as the highest priorities to be addressed by the scheme.
- Respondents strongly agree with the statements “the physical appearance of this area could be improved”, “I feel the area has a negative image” and “the design of the area could be improved”.
- Users providing further comments on the Ballymoney Virtual Shop Front Scheme welcomed the scheme and said that any work to improve the appearance of the area would be positive. There was however also recognition that in order to attract users to the area more shops and attractions were needed.

Post project evaluation surveys have now to be conducted and this work is planned later this month, in respect of which some costs may be involved and these would be met from existing budgets.

254.7 DERELICTION FUNDING

The DoE dereliction intervention scheme targeting vacant/derelict properties and gap sites in the town centre is underway and due for completion by the end of the year.

DoE has advised that the NI Executive did not provide any allocation for dereliction funding as part of the October monitoring round. However the DFP Finance Minister Hamilton has said: *"I support dereliction funding in principle. I have not been able to allocate additional money to it in this monitoring round. However, as far as I am concerned, it is not a policy that is completely finished. We will require the Minister of the Environment to continue to come forward with bids for that."*

The Department appreciates the work that went into the preparation council bids, and would emphasise that bids submitted still stand for the purposes of any future phases of the programme. The funding for that, if any, may not become available until around January and will still need to be spent before 31 March 2014. There will be an opportunity nearer that time to refresh or revise your bid, should you wish so to do. Council does not have any proposed intervention scheme bids pending at the present time.

254.8 THI PROJECT

The approved THI Action Plan requires that individual capital projects within the THI are phased across the full five years of the THI, therefore approximately five projects will be developed each year and the works completed over the subsequent year. Most THI capital projects take two years to complete. Progress is on-going with regard to 6 projects being advanced in 2013/14.

Conservation Area Grant (CAG) is awarded to THI groups on the basis of an annual bidding process in competition against other THI groups. A bid for CAG was submitted in March 2013, prior to the launch of the Ballymoney THI in June 2013. The bid was unsuccessful because the total bid of all THI groups exceeded the grant available and because no schemes within the Ballymoney THI had planning permission in place at the time of assessment in June 2013. A new bid will be prepared in February 2014. The 2013-2014 budget allocation for Conservation Area Grant was significantly reduced from that allocated for the previous year by the Department

NIHE/DSD Town Centre Living Initiative (TCLI) /Living Over The Shop (LOTS)

The THI Project Manager, representing the THI Forum, has met with the DSD Minister to discuss the reintroduction of TCLI/LOTS, which was withdrawn three years ago due to budget constraints. The Department has confirmed that it is drawing up proposals for a similar grant programme and has sought advice from the THI Forum on how the grant could be structured and focused. It is anticipated that the new grant programme will be launched 2014-2015.

Education and Training Programme

The process delivery of the education and training programme is being progressed with a view to commencement before the end of 2013.

254.9 BAG LEVY – NGO CHALLENGE FUND 2014

In 2014, the NGO Challenge Fund has over £1 million to award in funding to environmental projects, thanks to a contribution made by the DoE from the receipts of the carrier bag levy, introduced in April 2013. Applications are being received by the NI Environmental Link.

254.10 GIRO D'ITALIA

The route of the Grande Partenza, or 'Big Start', of the Giro D'Italia 2014 for Northern Ireland was formally announced in Milan on 7th October and will visit Belfast, the Causeway Coast and Armagh while passing through other parts of Northern Ireland.

This is one of professional cycling's three Grand Tour events. The Big Start of the 2014 event will take place here over three days from 9 -11 May 2014 consisting of both time trial and road race events, as well as a full festival programme.

The Giro during the course of the three days will visit Ballymoney Council area (on day 2 of the Belfast leg). NITB has met with Council nominated officers to provide an update on the Giro D'Italia and details of the route which will be taken. We have also considered how we can work together to showcase Northern Ireland through dressing of the Giro route and engaging local communities in a full event and festival programme. At this stage any potential issues or risks to a successful Giro Big Start in Northern Ireland will be addressed. A further meeting of lead officers will be held in early December to further discuss preparations for dressing key sites on the route and community engagement.

Members expressed their support for the event and activity in the Borough to celebrate the event, the potential marketing opportunity and economic benefits the event presented to Northern Ireland as a whole and the Causeway Coast & Glens destination in particular.

A further report will be brought to committee following the meeting in December.

254.11 E-CAR POINTS

DRD's existing grant funder OLEV (DfT) have a current funding stream in place to provide a grant of up to 75% funding to install electric vehicle charge points throughout the Government Estate in 2014/15. The fund has been set up to facilitate the increase in workplace charging points on the public sector estate to meet current or future demand from plug-in vehicles. It is expected that the infrastructure will be placed in car parks which can be accessed by fleet, employee

or visitor vehicles where appropriate. The scheme is not intended to provide general provision of charge points for the public, however, allowing the public access to the charge points is welcome.

DRD has received Ecar Board Approval to apply for funding to provide this grant to Government and the wider public sector estate. Unfortunately the bid closed on 31st October. This can include Council buildings, leisure centres, and depots. 25% match funding is required. Estimated cost of PAYG charge point is £5,000 - £10,000. No further proposals are put forward on behalf of Council at this time.

Committee agreed Council should make no further application at this time but review the matter following information on usage figures of the points in Ballymoney.

254.12 INTERNATIONAL LINKS

Earlier this year Council representatives in association with Dervock Community Association met Anna Lo, MLA, Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Chinese community to explore building links between the two communities in view of the historic link between Dervock and China through Lord George McCartney, who was first envoy of GB to china. A monument to Lord McCartney, who was born in Loughgiel, stands in Dervock village, placed there by a grateful community after he granted lands in the area to the people. Following further discussions with the community association it is **recommended** that Council host an exchange visit, to include business meeting to discuss the potential for the development of this historic link and other areas of mutual interest.

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

that Council host an exchange visit, to include business meeting to discuss the potential for the development of this historic link and other areas of mutual interest.

The Head of Corporate & Development Services advised that a report will be submitted to Committee on the business meeting which took place with representatives from Douglas in October on the theme of town centre regeneration and development. Alderman Campbell congratulated the Officer on the presentation given to the IOM representatives which they had found most beneficial. He advised of an approach from the members of the Council's Regeneration Committee for the Officer to visit their town to engage with them in further consideration of regeneration initiatives.

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

that the officer be released to attend meeting with Douglas Borough Council.

254.13 MAGILLIGAN PRISON PROJECT

Following on outline plans referred to at the last meeting NIPS have indicated that they are interested in progressing our proposal which is now being further developed and costed. Progress reports will be provided for the elected member group. An outline business case for funding work to progress development proposal for the new prison is in progress and Architects have been appointed to develop and design of the prison structures beyond the concept drawings, estimated completion 2020.

* **Alderman Connolly left the meeting at 7.45 pm**

254.14 SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

A nationwide Small Business Saturday initiative on 7th December, with potential to link into national press coverage, utilizing brand material is being explored.

254.15 BUSINESS AWARDS

A proposal developed by Ballycastle and Ballymoney Chamber of Commerce, assisted by Causeway Chamber, for a joint Business Awards in 2014 has been developed and Council is invited to consider being a key sponsor, providing a contribution of £3,000. The awards would recognise business talent and success across all sectors in the two districts, bringing attendant positive publicity to the two areas and their business community.

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

that Council sponsors the joint 2014 Business Award and provides a contribution of £3,000.

254.16 EXPLORING ENTERPRISE PROGRAMME

Letter from Acorn The Business Centre recording appreciation to Council on the 2012/13 Exploring Enterprise Programme. Twenty students have received their certificates and the final report has been received. Council has agreed to support the programme in 2013/14.

254.17 STEPS TO WORK

Letter from the DoE Minister seeking renewed support for the Steps to Work programme, asking Council to consider its current involvement in the programme and if possible to increase the number of work experience opportunities.

254.18 AREAS OF DEPRIVATION AUDIT

Terms of Reference for a situation analysis and audit of need for the cluster area (CCG), led by Coleraine Neighborhood Renewal Partnership, has been developed. The aim of the work is to bring forward realistic proposals that will achieve a vision for the physical, economic, environmental and community renewal of each area for the convergence of the Council areas through RPA to March 2015. The total budgeted cost is £11,000. On the basis of level of need Ballymoney's contribution has been determined at £750. We are identifying output areas to be included in the research.

254.19 AIR PASSENGER DUTY

An article by the Consumer Council has been circulated to members – OCE memo ref 417-2013, 21/10/2013.

The Republic of Ireland Air Travel Tax (ATT) has been charged at only €3 per passenger since March 2011 and the Government in the Republic has just announced that it will remove the tax altogether in April 2014

Meanwhile in Northern Ireland we are still paying £13 per passenger, per flight for short-haul journeys, and incredibly we pay more in taxes to fly to Glasgow than New York!

In response to sustained pressure from many stakeholders, including the Consumer Council, the UK Government reduced Air Passenger Duty (APD) for direct, long-haul flights from NI, from £60 to the short-haul rate (then £12) on 1 November 2011. Then, on 1 January 2013, with the devolution of responsibility for APD on direct long-haul flights the NI Executive took the decision to remove the charge here altogether.

This was a welcome development but flights to long-haul destinations represent just a fraction of all journeys made by NI passengers; 98.5 per cent of journeys are short-haul and still subject to the £13 per passenger, per flight charge.

Only four other EU countries charge APD, all at lower rates than we do, and they are all in mainland Europe which means passengers have the choice of other means of transport. Given Northern Ireland's geographic location, we are heavily dependent on air travel, particularly to get to Great Britain and for access to hub airports. We are in a similar position to those living in the Scottish Highlands and Islands and yet flights departing from airports there are exempt from APD.

In November 2012 MPs supported a motion for HM Treasury to commission a comprehensive study into the full economic impact of APD in the UK. The Consumer Council wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer encouraging him to commission the study and stressing the importance of ensuring it has a specific focus on Northern Ireland consumers and our economy. We need to know, as a matter of urgency, whether the proposed cost to the NI Executive of removing APD

– estimated at £60-90million – would be outweighed by the benefit to consumers, business and the wider NI economy.

If we do nothing about APD the risk is that decreased demand for air services from Northern Ireland's airports could lead to a decline in the number of services and routes operated, reducing choice, convenience and competition for consumers living here. Therefore the Consumer Council is now restating our call on the Chancellor of the Exchequer to confirm the economic impact of APD for Northern Ireland and ensure Northern Ireland passengers are no longer unfairly affected by this charge.

254.20 NILGA CAPACITY BUILDING AND AWARENESS WORKSHOP

NILGA's output report on the workshop in Craigavon has been circulated. Copies are available from OCE.

254.21 TIMING OF MEETINGS

Members requested at the Consultation Committee meeting on 21st October that consideration be given to holding meetings of committees during the day in December 2013.

It was **AGREED:**

that the meeting of Committee in December would take place at 4.30 pm.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.