

LIMAVADY BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMHAIRLE BHUIRG LÉIM AN MHADAIDH

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
SEPTEMBER 14th, 2005

Minutes of a meeting of the above Committee held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, 7 Connell Street, Limavady at 7.30 pm on the above date.

PRESENT:

Aldermen G. Mullan, G. Robinson and J. Rankin. Councillors A. Brolly, P. Butcher, L. Cubitt, M. Carten, B. Chivers (in the Chair), M. Coyle, M. Donaghy, C. Ó hOisín, J. F. McElhinney, A. Robinson and E. Stevenson.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Clerical Officer, Director of Development and Acting Town Clerk & Chief Executive.

APOLOGIES:

Councillor B. Douglas and the Committee Clerk

CONDOLENCES:

The Chair requested a letter of condolence be sent to Mrs. Noelle Forrest following the tragic death of her brother and sister-in-law in a fatal car accident at the weekend.

MINUTES:

The minutes of Development Committee meeting held on August 10th, 2005 were approved and signed on the proposal of Councillor Brolly and seconded by Councillor Donaghy.

MATTERS ARISING:

Benone Beach – Ice Cream Franchise: The Director of Development Services updated members regarding the recent court case. Councillor Cubitt inferred that this issue could have been better dealt with without officers being put through the ordeal of attending the High Court. The Director of Development Services advised that Council had sought legal advice throughout and members had been fully informed at each stage. While the court case had been dismissed the Director of Development Services stated that the Resident Magistrate had pointed out that the court case had been correctly presented by Council officers.

Roe Valley Leisure Centre – Fitness Suite: The Director of Development Services advised members that following discussions with Competition Line it was agreed that a concessionary price of £15 per month would be extended to all staff, or £3.46 per individual visit.

North West Orienteering Club: The Director of Development Services informed members that he had spoken to representatives of the club who reassured him that they were not the offenders of parking on private property.

NORTHERN IRELAND PRISON SERVICE:

The chair welcomed Mr. R. Masefield, Director General of Northern Ireland Prison Service, Mr. A.P. Wilson, on behalf of the Governor of Magilligan Prison and Mr. B. McAvoy, Press Officer to the meeting. Mr. Masefield provided all present a copy of a Press Release which outlined the future of Magilligan Prison.

He advised that the Prison Service was currently undertaking a Strategic Review which would undoubtedly highlight the existing problems with the current site. He stressed that at present no decision had been made regarding the closure, relocation or renovation of the current prison. He commented that all aspects were being considered, and an issue had been raised regarding the location and the access of family and friends visiting the prison which was an integral part of the re-orientation process. He did, however, state that his purpose in attending the meeting was to glean comments from elected members to take back to the Prison Minister. He went on to say that all aspects would be taken into consideration including the socio-economic impact on Limavady. He welcomed comments from members.

Councillor Cubitt opened the discussion by suggesting that the decision had been made already and the purpose of the meeting was to seal the deal. Councillor Cubitt expressed his concern that the job losses if the Prison was relocated would have an adverse effect on the Borough. He also pointed out that if, as suggested, the prison was relocated in Ballymena, the cost of the land would not equate to the potential rebuild of the current location.

Alderman Robinson pointed out that as Mayor he had occasion to visit the prison and applauded the work done by the inmates both in helping the community and also Council. This sentiment was reiterated by fellow Councillors. He, however, felt that the potential closure of the prison was once again another political decision. He pointed out that the prison was a bonus to the Borough, and would be welcome by other Councils. He added that it was important to look out for the staff employed therein.

Councillor Ó hOisín noted that Greencastle had capitalised on the Magilligan ferry crossing, yet this side had a prison and a military camp, which could potentially be better utilised as a location for a hotel or the promotion of other tourism amenities.

Mr. Masefield reiterated categorically that no decision had been made. He went on to reassure members that if the prison was relocated staff would be transferred to the new location. Finally he answered further questions raised by Councillor Donaghy regarding the number of inmates which currently stands at 360 to 370 with maximum capacity of 400. He advised at present there were 505 staff employed at Magilligan which included prison officers, ancillary staff, teachers etc. Mr. Masefield also reassured members that loss of jobs would be minimal with natural attrition as had occurred in the recent closing of the former Maze Prison. The timeframe for decision regarding the relocation, renovation or rebuilding would be before Christmas and if it was the latter, this would take at least two years with the planning process and actual building of the detention centre.

With there being no further questions, the Chair thanked the delegation for attending and they left the meeting (8:20).

DEVELOPMENT SERVICE REPORT SEPTEMBER 2005:

The Director of Development presented the Development Services Report and enlarged thereon. The report was adopted on the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor Cubitt subject to the following:

Recreation:

Dungiven Sports Pavilion: The Director of Development Services updated members on the current position of this neutral facility. Councillor Cubitt noted that in the past the DPP had been refused access. Councillor Brolly clarified that the DPP had not been denied access, but advised to use a different facility.

Councillor Coyle joined the meeting (8:40).

The Acting Town Clerk made clear that Council owned the Sports Pavilion and one member of staff oversaw both parts of the facility for better synergy. Councillor Cubitt sought an EQIA to be undertaken, however, this was deemed unnecessary as the reason for bringing the issue to the meeting would be to decide whether to release the figures (Appendix 1). After further discussion it was agreed that figures could be released.

Tourist/Entertainment:

Northern Ireland Tourist Board – Address to Council: The Director of Development Services advised members that Mrs. Kathleen McBride, the North East Region Manager, would address Council at a future meeting. Councillor Coyle, although disappointed that someone more senior could not attend, welcomed her attendance in order for Council to receive tourism feedback.

Magilligan Point Ferry Terminal: The Director of Development Services advised members that to comply with Department of Transport guidelines it was proposed that a barrier and speed ramps be installed at an estimated cost of £3,000 before a tragic accident would occur at the pier. Approved.

Benone Tourist Complex: Members were advised that the numbers visiting the Tourist Complex had increased this year. The Director of Development Services also informed members that it was essential that the upgrading of the toilets, tennis courts, play area, beach, kiosks and DDA works would take place during the off-season in time for the start of 2006 tourist season. Members endorsed the Directors recommendation after hearing that an allowance had been made in this years estimate for the works proposed.

Northern Ireland Milk Cup 2005: The success of the recent football tournament was highlighted and endorsed by the Mayor. Concerns were raised that the competition would be relocated to Ballymena, or the North Coast. Councillor Rankin reassured members that the facilities in Ballymena were first class and had been requested by some of the visiting teams this year, however, Limavady would still remain a venue for the 2006 Milk Cup.

North West Orienteering Club: The Director of Development Services advised members that parking facilities have been designated for a forthcoming event to avoid disruption to residents. Councillor Butcher offered to pass on this information.

New Walking Guide for Northern Ireland: Following a request by Councillor Brolly, the Director of Development Services agreed to investigate the inclusion of Glenshane Forrest in the new walking guide for Northern Ireland.

Councillor Rankin left the meeting (9:20).

New Civic Centre: Councillor Cubitt requested a meeting be arranged on site at the new Civic Centre. He raised concerns about the size of the development, and felt that it was on par with the City Hall in Belfast. The Director of Development Services confirmed that a meeting had been arranged on September 27th, 2005 at 7:30. It was proposed by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Cubitt that members attend a pre-meeting on site at 7pm.

Councillor Stevenson enquired how far behind schedule the Centre was. The Acting Town Clerk confirmed that due to the asbestos find it was several months behind schedule, however, architects had continued to proceed with the preparation of documentation necessary to obtain planning approval. The Director of Development Services confirmed that it was hoped to make an application to the Planning Authority after Christmas.

Custom House Studios, Westport: It was agreed in principle that an art exhibition be held in Limavady to reciprocate Westport hosting an exhibition from Limavady in 2004. It was proposed by Councillor Chivers, seconded by Councillor Brolly that funding be made available to enable this exchange exhibition take place.

Christmas Lights Programme: The Director of Development Services updated members on the proposed Christmas lights and advised that they hoped to encourage community involvement in all the villages where Christmas trees were erected.

Alderman Robinson sought clarification on where the town lights would be situated this year in the absence of the Town Hall. The Director of Development Services advised that a meeting would take place with the Roe Valley Chamber of Trade and a venue had not yet been agreed. Members would be updated on progress in the October Development Services Meeting Report.

Request for Funding – Town Centre Management: The Director of Development Services sought additional funding of the aerial filming project which had recently been undertaken. He reported that it was an excellent production which covered all areas of the Borough from Benbradagh, over Benevenagh, and filming took place on the day of the 1 millionth passenger on the Greencastle to Magilligan Ferry which showed the area to be bustling. Councillor Ó hOisín suggested that the videos be produced in both DV and digi-beta format and Council should consider copyrighting the videos. Approval was granted for additional expenditure not exceeding £1,300.

Community / Good Relations: The Director of Development Services advised that Community Relations was now undergoing some changes in focus. Council efforts should now move towards “harder” activities and work in tandem with other funding bodies such as LSP and the Community Relations Council. Councillor Brolly suggested that the Community Relations representative should be pro-active, mobilising those members of the community who cannot mobilise themselves.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

2005 European Parakart Championships: The Director of Development Services advised members that the weekend of September 16th, 2005 would see the first ever European Parakart Championships to take place at Benone. Councillor Cubitt raised concerns regarding safety at this event but was reassured that beach wardens would be on duty during the races as safety was paramount. Furthermore, members were informed that the beach would have controlled access at all times during racing. This was in the interest of Health and Safety.

School Crossing Patrols: Councillor Cubitt voiced his concerns regarding the imminent cutbacks and potential loss of school crossing patrols and the impact it would have on children thereon. Councillor Brolly, however, highlighted that it was not a statutory responsibility of the Education Board. Discussion ensued and it was proposed by Alderman Robinson, seconded by Councillor Cubitt that the Chief Executive of the Western Education and Library Board be invited to attend a future Development Services meeting to discuss not only this issue but other aspects of Education relevant to the Borough.

NEXT MEETING:

October 12th, 2005.

**THIS CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
(The meeting ended at 10.20 pm)**