

COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Proceedings of a DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 19th May 2009 at 7.00 pm

Present:	Councillor Baker	(Chairperson)
Councillors:	Cassidy, Clarke, Glasgow, Lees, McAleer, McCartney, McCrea, McGarvey, McNamee, Molloy, Quinn and Wilson	
Officers:	M.J. McGuckin	Clerk/Chief Executive
	Fiona McKeown	Economic Dev Manager
	Maggie Bryson	Community Services Manager
	Denise Campbell	Tourism Officer
	Mary Crooks	Arts & Cultural Officer
	Tony McCance	Burnavon Manager
	Oliver McShane	Sports Services Manager
	Ursula Ni Fhearail	Irish Development Officer
	Emma Bell	Admin Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were reported on behalf of Councillors Greer, McGlone and Adrian McCreesh.

2. DEVELOPMENT OFFICER REPORTS

Officer End of Year Reports for April 2008 – March 2009 and Proposed Programme of Events for April 2008 – March 2009 were circulated to Members prior to the meeting.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Cassidy and ADOPTED

That all Officer Reports, as outlined below be taken as read:

- 2.1 Sports Development Programme
- 2.2 Tourism Programme
- 2.3 Burnavon Arts & Cultural Development Programme
- 2.4 Community Services Annual Report

Councillors Wilson and Clarke congratulated Officers on the preparation and content of their annual reports and the delivery of individual programmes throughout the year.

Councillor McGarvey enquired if the GAA Officer proposal has been progressed. The Sports Services Manager advised that there was no further update at this stage.

Councillor McNamee arrived 7.02pm.

Denise Campbell, Mary Crooks, Tony McCance, Oliver McShane and Ursula Ni Fhearail left the meeting at 7.03pm.

3. LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Pomeroy Business Park

The Chief Executive advised Members that the date of the impending site visit to Pomeroy Business Park has changed from Thursday 11th June 2009 to Thursday 18th June 2009. Members were advised that the community transport bus had been booked to facilitate travel arrangements and would be departing from the Council Offices front car park at 12.30pm on 18th June 2009. Any interested Members are to register their attendance with the Development Department on or before 29th May 2009.

NOTED.

3.2. Broadband Uptake & E-Business Services

The Economic Development Manager advised that a letter, dated 15th April 2009, has been received from Darren Lynch, Log On-NI, highlighting that their organisation has been appointed by DETI to provide the new Log On-NI service. The two key objectives of the programme are to stimulate the uptake of broadband and increase broadband activity undertaken by small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs'). The Log On-NI service will be formally launched on 10th June 2009 in Omagh at the new dedicated fixed demonstration centre. Additionally a new mobile demonstration centre will travel throughout the West and other parts of Northern Ireland to promote the uptake and use of broadband and e-business services. On 18th June 2009 the mobile demonstration facility will be based at Cookstown Enterprise Centre to promote broadband activity within the area. Additional support will be provided by broadband advisors who will be available to meet with business representatives to discuss the service provision. Councillor Clarke advised Members that he had met with Scott McClelland, North West Electronics (NWE's) on 12th May 2009 to discuss wireless broadband provision in the Broughderg area which had a very positive outcome. He further advised that the wireless broadband facility is progressing and NWE are confident that they can meet the needs of potential users within the area. The Economic Development Manager indicated that the Log On-NI service will complement the wireless broadband provision being rolled out by NWE.

Councillor McCrea outlined that this standard of service was very much needed and those users who have experienced poor broadband connectivity in the past should now be able to avail of better provision. Councillor McCrea further proposed that an extensive advertising campaign should be launched to inform potential users that such facilities are available. The Economic Development Manager highlighted that NWE would prefer to hold back on a full promotional campaign until all the infrastructure is in place, thus allowing all users to obtain maximum provision.

Some discussion ensued amongst Members, after which Councillor Wilson thanked the Economic Development Manager for successfully driving this project forward.

3.3. Engineering Innovation Programme & High Quality Office Accommodation for Small Businesses Programme

The Chief Executive, Councillors Wilson and Cassidy declared an interest in the High Quality Office Accommodation Project at Cookstown Enterprise Centre.

The Economic Development Manager advised that two letters of offer, dated 20th April 2009 has been received from the Department of Enterprise Trade & Investment (DETI), offering 50% grant aid for (1) the Engineering Innovation Programme and (2) High Quality Office Accommodation for Small Businesses. The Economic Development Manager explained that the letter of offer for the Engineering Innovation Programme had been signed and returned and an extension to the letter of offer has been agreed with DETI for the High Quality Office Accommodation until 20th June 2009.

3.4. Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme

The Economic Development Manager advised that Council permission is sought to deliver a 'Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme' to assist up to 80 local businesses to 'gearup' and take advantage of arrange of public and private sector tender opportunities. Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from the following sectors may apply, (1) construction, (2) engineering, (3) manufacturing and (4) business services. The Programme will be especially valuable to SME's in the current economic climate as it will help businesses improve their sustainability and competitiveness by helping to build their skills, capacity and knowledge and compete more effectively in new and existing markets. It is envisaged that 15 new jobs will be created and 150 sustained as a result of the project. Approval is sought for Council to allocate £58,846 towards the programme from its Local Economic Development budget and make an application to the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) to match fund the project with (£58,846). All participating companies will be required to contribute £100 each, generating a further £8,000. The anticipated total programme costs are £125,692. The Economic Development Manager advised that approval is sought to submit a stage 2 application to DETI under the Competitiveness Programme for the delivery of a Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme at a total cost of £125,692.

AGREED.

The Chief Executive advised Members that the programme would have a positive impact on the local economy, especially during the current downturn.

It was further AGREED that if the Programme is successful in attaining funding from the 'Competitiveness Programme,' then approval be granted to place an advertisement in the press to seek a suitably qualified organisation(s) to deliver the Programme.

4. COMMUNITY SERVICES

4.1. Citizens Advice Bureau

Councillor Molloy declared an interest in the matter.

The Community Services Manager advised that the Service Level Agreement for the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010 had been circulated prior to the meeting for Members approval. The CAB is required to provide an advice service to members of the public on a range of areas, and keep an accurate account of the type of advice they give for monitoring purposes, however it may be difficult to accurately determine exact figures as many people attend with more than one issue. Councillor McGarvey enquired why so many of the Outreach Clinics are located in Cookstown. The Community Services Manager advised that the CAB has agreed to provide an advice service in the Broughderg area and are willing to review other suggested areas. To date there are five Issue Based Group Sessions held in various locations around Cookstown, which facilitates the CAB providing an advice service to as many members of the public as possible. Councillor Clarke enquired why a telephone advice service is provided from Kildress Credit Union and not a one to one drop in service. The Community Services Manager advised that she would make enquiries and report back to Members. It was further advised that Members may approve the Service Level Agreement and if necessary outreach additions can be made at a later stage. The Community Services Manager highlighted that Members may put forward new potential locations for Outreach Clinics and she would advise the CAB Management Committee accordingly, as they are very willing to work with Council on this.

Councillor McCrea requested that representatives from the CAB Management Committee be invited to present to Council outlining progress to date.

Councillor Wilson highlighted that generally any complaints which he receives about the CAB relate to its location and the issue of accessibility. He further commented that town property is expensive and has not been budgeted for within this financial year. Councillor Wilson emphasised that the CAB is currently providing an excellent advice service.

Councillor Cassidy advised that this year he had only received minor complaints about the advice service offered by the CAB. He further advised that he was pleased that members of the public are receiving a good standard of service.

It was proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor McCrea and AGREED

That Council agree the terms and conditions of the Citizens Advice Bureau Service Level Agreement for the period 1st April 2009 to 31st March 2010, subject to the following matters being resolved:

- Community Services Manager to make enquires regarding the availability of a one-to-one drop-in advice service based a Kildress Credit Union which would be consistent with other outreach centres.
- Invite representatives from CAB Management Committee to present to Members at a future Council meeting to update on their progress to date.

4.2. Community Support Programme

The Community Services Manager advised that a letter of offer dated 10th April 2009 has been received from the Department for Social Development (DSD) offering grant aid towards Cookstown District Council's Community Support Programme for the financial years 2009/10 and 2010/11. The offer encompasses 3 separate elements, namely Community Support, Advice Grant and the Local Community Fund, which have been awarded as follows:

Community Support	£25,397
Advice Grant	£51,619
Local Community Fund	<u>£35,259</u>
Total award	£112,275

The Community Services Manager further advised that the Local Community Fund in respect of Dunnamore and Ardboe has been reduced by 50% which will impact significantly on those areas. There is also uncertainty whether such funding will be made available thereafter.

4.3. Community Festivals Fund

Approval sought for Council to proceed with the letter of offer, dated 19th February 2009, from the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure with regard to making grant aid available to Cookstown District Council not exceeding £8,600 for the Community Festivals Fund for the period April 2009 to March 2010. AGREED.

4.4. Good Relations

4.4.1. Good Relations Action Plan (2009/2010)

It was proposed by Councillor Cassidy
Seconded by Councillor McGarvey and AGREED

That Council proceed with the Good Relations Action Plan for 2009/2010.

4.4.2. Good Relations Sub Committee Assessment

Members NOTED minutes of Good Relations Sub Committee Assessment meeting held on 24th February 2009 and 23rd April 2009.

4.5. Voluntary Body Grant Aid

Members NOTED minutes of Voluntary Body Grant Aid Sub Committee held on 26th February 2009.

5. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

5.1 Burn Road Environmental Improvement Scheme

5.1.1 Burn Road EI Steering Group Committee

It was proposed by Councillor Cassidy
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and AGREED

That minutes of Burn Road EI Scheme meeting held on 21st April 2009 be ADOPTED.

5.1.2 Burn Road EI Scheme Update

It was proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor Cassidy and AGREED

That the update from the Town Strategy Manager dated 11th May 2009 be ADOPTED.

Councillor Wilson noted that the project had been delayed in commencing until August 2009 due to the contractor having to wait until essential materials are received. He recommended that in future, where procurement procedures permit, that products be sourced locally.

5.2 Town Centre Forum

It was proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and AGREED

That minutes of Town Centre Forum AGM and meeting held on 12th March 2009 to ADOPTED.

5.3 Town Centre Evening/Night-time Economy Forum

It was proposed by Councillor Cassidy
Seconded by Councillor McGarvey and AGREED

That minutes of Town Centre Evening/Night-time Economy Forum held on 12th March 2009 be ADOPTED.

5.4. Town Centre Pedestrian Links

The Chief Executive advised that a letter dated 12th May 2009 had been received from the Department for Social Development (DSD), advising that they are prepared to consider funding the environmental improvement of pedestrian links in Cookstown town centre. The maximum amount of funding available is up to £50,000 subject to the proposed linkages being adopted by Roads Service and the funding being drawn down on or before 31st March 2010. The Chief Executive advised that there are currently several town centre pedestrian linkages adjacent to The Central Inn; Ulster Bank and at Brewery Lane, however it may be difficult to identify the ownership of such and secure their agreement. At present The Central Inn linkage is closed to the public and a planning application has been submitted by the owner for the area to be developed. Access to the Brewery Lane linkage is regularly restricted by the owner and to date it has not been adopted by Roads Service.

The Chief Executive indicated that it may prove challenging to resolve ownership issues, agree, procure and implement the necessary works and have them adopted by Roads Service all within the timescales outlined, however, he suggested that perhaps the most immediate pedestrian linkage to explore is that adjacent to Ulster Bank.

The Chief Executive explained that Council is required to submit a pro-forma Economic Appraisal, including a scheme design and estimated costs for each linkage, this should demonstrate a need for the works if a proposal is to be developed.

DSD has indicated that it is Council's decision to determine how the scheme design and necessary contract works are procured, however they have indicated that one option may be to extend the existing contract with White Young Green who were appointed in June 2008 to prepare the necessary design and costings for the Burn Road EI Scheme and also extend the contract with Graham Construction who were subsequently appointed in February 2009 to implement the scheme. The Chief Executive advised Members that this course of action is unlikely to be acceptable from an audit perspective and therefore it will be necessary to procure such services through the normal channels, however he indicated that this process will delay the start of any such scheme.

It was proposed by Councillor McGarvey
Seconded by Councillor Glasgow and AGREED

That Council should accept the offer of funding from the Department for Social Development (DSD) in relation to Environmental Improvement works relating to pedestrian links in Cookstown town centre and furthermore proceed to procure the necessary services through Council's normal procurement channels.

6. DAVAGH FOREST

Members NOTED minutes of Davagh Forest meetings held on 11th March 2009.

Discussion ensued on the minutes of the Davagh Forest meeting held on 8th April 2009. Councillor McCrea raised concerns about Council submitting a commitment in principle to the Forest Service for maintenance/management, including acceptance of "whole-forest liability", of the Davagh Forest Project. He further enquired if Council would then be obliged to repair any damage which the Forest Service may create whilst harvesting logs in the future. The Chief Executive advised that Council would be compelled to maintain the trails put in place as part of this scheme. Forest Service want Council to make good damage incurred as a result of harvesting on the new trails. Therefore Council will only be obliged to maintain the paths which are included within the project. Members requested that the Director of Development deliver a presentation to Council to give an update on the Davagh Forest Project.

It was agreed to NOTE the minutes of the Davagh Forest meeting held on 8th April 2009, subject to the issue of "whole forest liability" being resolved.

It was proposed by Councillor McCrea
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and AGREED

That the Director of Development deliver a presentation to Council to give an update on the Davagh Forest Project.

7. BURNAVON

7.1 Arts & Culture

It was proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and AGREED

That minutes of Arts & Cultural Sub Committee meeting held on 22nd April 2009 are ADOPTED.

Councillor Cassidy enquired if Members were happy with the quotation outlined within the lease agreement and agreed by the Arts & Cultural Sub Committee meeting held on 22nd April 2009, as follows:-

“The Lessor will endeavor to engage the Lessee to provide food and beverages for all events organised by the Lessor provided always that the Lessor shall not be obliged to engage the Lessee if the Lessor is able to obtain a similar or better standard of catering from another party at a lower cost (such a decision to be at the Lessor’s reasonable discretion) and provided always that nothing in this paragraph will prohibit any person hiring any part of the Building from providing food and beverages to persons attending at the function for which they have hired the building at their own cost and from whatever source”

The Chief Executive highlighted that Council’s solicitors has advised that the clause remain within the contract.

It was proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor McGarvey and AGREED

That Council accept the recommendation made by Council’s solicitor to include the clause in the renewal of the restaurant lease agreement.

8. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

8.1 Rural Development Programme Joint Committee

Members NOTED minutes of Rural Development Programme Joint Committee meeting held on 16th March 2009.

8.2 South West Local Action Group

Members NOTED minutes of South West Local Action Group meeting held on 4th March 2009.

9. TOURISM

9.1. Western Regional Tourism Partnership

Members NOTED minutes of WRTP meeting held on 26th March 2009.

9.2. WRTP IFI Sub Group Meeting

Members NOTED minutes of the IFI Sub Group meetings held on 26th March 2009 and 31st March 2009.

10. SUBSCRIPTIONS

10.1. Action for Market Towns

It was proposed by Councillor McGarvey
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and AGREED

That Council renew its annual subscription with Action for Market Towns for 2009/2010 at a cost of £333 + VAT per annum.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Cookstown Town Centre Living Initiative (LOTS) Scheme

The Chief Executive advised Members that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) issued a press release on Friday 15th May 2009 regarding the allocation of funding within the financial year 2009/2010.

The correspondence outlined that NIHE's focus is to prioritise resources to those people and places in greatest need and hence its concentration on the New Social Housing Programme. As a result, applications for discretionary grants, which includes Living Over the Shops (LOTS) grants and HMO Grants may only be approved in exceptional circumstances.

The Chief Executive indicated that this was very disappointing and indicated it would have a significant local impact upon Cookstown. He further provided Members with an update, as outlined below on Council's existing LOTS Scheme which was due to run to January 2011.

- 53 enquiries to date:
 - 7 properties have been completed, creating over 17 units.
 - 3 schemes have recently received approval to commence work..
 - 1 Scheme approval pending.
 - 3 Schemes to submit sketches.
 - 14 files closed, but can be reopened upon receipt of additional information from property owners eg. Statutory approvals, etc.
 - 21 properties unlikely to proceed.

The Chief Executive advised that those applications which have not been approved are unlikely obtain funding at this time and noted that some owners may have invested a lot of money preparing their application for submission and as a result will now be out of pocket.

It was proposed by Councillor McCrea
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and AGREED

That Council write to the Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie, to outline Council's disappointment at the LOTS Scheme being 'closed' indefinitely and indicating that a number of applications are already in the pipeline in which property owners will have incurred expenditure unnecessarily, as a result of NIHE's decision.

The meeting ended at 7.43pm.

Chairman

Clerk/Chief Executive

Date

TABLED FOR INFORMATION

1. ICBAN INTERREG IVA Reference Group, 20th March 2009.