

MAGHERAFELT DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Proceedings of a Meeting of the Recreation and Tourist Committee of Magherafelt District Council held in the Council Chamber, 50 Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt on Monday, 1st October, 2001. The meeting commenced at 7.00 p.m.

Present: J.A. McBride
Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea, MLA
S. O'Brien
J.P. O'Neill
G. C. Shiels

Apology: P. McLean
H.E. Mullan

Observers: T.J. Catherwood (joined the meeting at 7.55p.m.)
J. Junkin (joined the meeting at 7.35 p.m.)
Miss K.A. Lagan (joined the meeting at 7.57p.m.)
P.E. Groogan (joined the meeting at 7.57p.m.)

Officials Present: J. A. McLaughlin (Chief Executive)
J. J. Tohill (Director of Finance and Administration)
T. J. Johnston (Director of Operations)
M. G. Browne (Development Officer)
J. Murtagh (N.I. 2000 Project Officer)

The Chief Executive read the Notice convening the meeting.

1. Election of Chairman

It was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor S. O'Brien

That Councillor J.A. McBride be elected Chairman.

Councillor McBride thanked the Members for the nomination but felt that, as he had served in the position on several occasions, it would be better for the Committee if he declined the nomination.

It was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor J.P. O'Neill, and

RESOLVED: that Councillor P. McLean be elected Chairman in his absence.

2. Election of Vice-Chairman

It was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor S. O'Brien, and:

RESOLVED: that Councillor J.A. McBride be elected Vice-Chairman.

In the absence of Councillor McLean Councillor McBride then took the Chair.

3. Request from Lower Castledawson Community Association for the provision of a play area at Riverside/Parkview, Castledawson:

Submitted copy of letter received from Lower Castledawson Community Association (Appendix 1).

The Director of Operations, Mr. Johnston, stated that, subsequent to the agenda having been prepared, he had received three further letters each requesting the provision of an additional play area in a different part of the District. He reminded the Members of the Council's policy to allocate funding to the provision of play areas at the annual striking of the rate in February of each year with the money being expended in one of the Council's three Wards on a strict rotational basis. He recommended that the Council should abide by its original policy.

Councillor Shiels concurred with Mr Johnston's statement of policy and reminded the Members that the next tranche of funds to be expended were already scheduled for Magherafelt Town.

The Chief Executive advised the Members that the local journalist, Mr S. Campbell, had already indicated that he would be writing an article on this subject for a forthcoming edition of his newspaper.

Councillor Rev. McCrea stated that although Mr Campbell had the right to report on such matters he could not dictate to the Council that it should deviate from the agreed rotational policy of providing play areas throughout the District. The policy would be discussed at the appropriate time, i.e. when the rates were next being struck.

Councillor Shiels suggested that the Council should reply to each of the four letters explaining that the matter would be discussed when the rates were being struck in February 2002.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride commented that Lower Castledawson was a very troubled area. The newly formed committee was struggling but he hoped that it would be able to survive. He felt that the Council needed to be sensitive to the needs of that area.

Councillor Shields indicated that he had also received representations seeking a play area in Culnady.

Councillor Rev. McCrea replied that he had been asked by Councillor Catherwood to raise the situation at Culnady at tonight's meeting. The local residents were dismayed that to date nothing had been done there. He was sympathetic to the needs of Castledawson as there were community tensions and the management of Housing Executive tenancies seemed to have caused some problems. He also would like to see the community group survive.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride commented that in the region of fourteen properties were boarded up as tenants could not be found for them due to tensions in the area.

Mr Johnston stated that Castledawson was in the Moyola Ward and that funds were again scheduled to be expended on play areas in that Ward in 2003 following the expenditure in Magherafelt Town. However, he felt that the Council would have to consider the matter carefully as there had been significant problems with vandalism in Castledawson.

Councillor Rev. McCrea commented that Culnady was also in the Moyola Ward and that the residents there would argue that they had even less opportunity to avail of play facilities because they were on the periphery of the District and so remote from Magherafelt Town unlike the residents of Castledawson.

Mr Johnston referred to the problems of massive vandalism at Boyne Row play area and the difficulties in getting a caretaker to open and close the property.

Councillor S. O'Brien said that he had received representations seeking a play area in Sandy Braes and undertook to forward the relevant information to Mr Johnston.

Councillor Shields enquired if Culnady had been previously considered.

The Chief Executive replied that the budget had effectively been prioritised on a Ward basis.

It was agreed that Mr Johnston would reply to those individuals from whom requests had been received explaining that the Council would consider the matter again when they were striking the rate in February 2002.

4. Update on developments at Traad Park

Mr Johnston gave a report on developments at Traad Park. He explained that an issue had arisen whereby a number of fishermen were claiming rights over a portion of the lands that the Council purchased from the University of Ulster (UU) on 1st February 2001. He said that the actual title was complex, involving both registered and unregistered land and also various leasehold titles acquired from the Shaftesbury Estate of Lough Neagh.

Upon investigation by both officers and the Council's legal adviser it became apparent that the Council required to undertake a considerable amount of work to perfect its title. This work included:

- Negotiation of a new lease between the Council and the Shaftesbury Estate;
- Clarification of shooting rights affecting the property;
- Negotiation with the DoE and the Water Service; and
- Clarification of the position of Northern Ireland Electricity (NIE).

Mr Johnston alluded to the problems surrounding the purchase of lands from Scotts (Toomebridge) Ltd, of which the Members would be aware, and the current dispute over boundaries in that purchase. He explained that extensive enquiries had been carried out to establish the boundaries at Traad Park and any adverse rights affecting the property itself.

Legal opinion advised that the Council should, following the purchase from the UU, assert ownership in an effort to avoid claims for adverse possession and to identify any previously unidentified adverse claims against the property. This advice led to the erection of gates at the entrance to Traad Park, which in turn resulted in complaints from the fishermen. The fishermen requested a site meeting on 31st May 2001 which local Councillors attended, a result of which the following further questions were put to the Council's legal adviser:

Question 1. Was the Council acting properly in asserting title?

Answer: Yes. The Council's absolute ownership must be acknowledged by all Park users.

Question 2. Did the UU or any other organisation identify any locals with rights over Traad park other than the Gun Club, the Water Service and the NIE?

Answer: The UU was only able to identify Mr Bernard Coleman as previously having a lease over the pier on the said lands. This lease was dated 5th July 1984 and ran for a period of five years. In the lease Mr Coleman had been granted a right of way across (not down) the main entrance, and was allowed to stretch nets over a small area of land adjacent to the pier. The lease permitted Mr Coleman to use the pier solely for fishing by him and members of his family as holders of a licence from Toome Eel Fishery Company Limited. When the lease expired in 1989 Mr Coleman's solicitors, Messrs John J. McNally & Co requested a new lease for a further five year term from 5th July 1989 from the UU's solicitors. The UU was prepared to grant the extension but only until 4th July 1994, i.e. the end of the five year period. Mr. Coleman never signed this new lease. Mr Coleman would also have had to have obtained a new lease from the Shaftesbury Estate but it is unclear whether he ever did. In any event the Council's legal adviser wrote to Mr Coleman's solicitor (still Messrs John J. McNally & Co) on 20th March 2001. The Council's solicitor received a reply dated 21st March 2001 from Messrs John J. McNally

& Co indicating that the solicitor dealing with this matter was on holiday. The Council's solicitor sent a further reminder on 4th June 2001 and still awaits a reply.

Question 3. Is Mr Gerald Coleman's assertion (at the site meeting on 31st May 2001) that the Coleman family owned the pier correct?

Answer: No. The pier is owned by Magherafelt District Council. Given that Mr B Coleman's lease expired in July 1989, legal opinion was that the Council must take affirmative action to assert title to prevent Mr Coleman claiming under adverse possession (a claim could be made after twelve years, i.e. in July 2001). This had been done. Mr Johnston further indicated that Mr B Coleman had, at the meeting on 31st May, stated that he was unaware of ever having or needing a lease with the UU. This was clearly incorrect.

Question 4. What action should the Council now take?

Answer: Although the Council would not want to interfere with the fishermen's means of making a living, legal opinion states that it is clear that the unregulated practices of the past pose problems for any responsible landowner, particularly the local Council, which intends to invest heavily in the area to promote it as a tourist attraction. At the meeting on 31st May 2001, Mr B Coleman did acknowledge the Council's title to the property and now that the Coleman family have made some representations in this matter the officers believe that it would be prudent to enter into a temporary arrangement with this family to allow them to continue to avail of the facilities for a short period until they could permanently relocate elsewhere. This should be done by renewing the terms of the UU lease with Mr B Coleman for a maximum period of five years to allow the Coleman family time to relocate their activities.

Question 5. Can the Council be compromised?

Answer: Legal opinion states that the Council must be allowed to secure its own property by the erection of gates and fencing where appropriate. The Council almost certainly faces the prospect of having to resort to litigation over the boundaries of the adjacent property purchased from Scott (Toomebridge) Ltd and it is important that it is consistent in its approach to all boundary disputes, right of ways, etc, to prevent anger, claims of discrimination and preference, not to mention difficulties for individual Councillors when they are asked to explain the Council's policy. It should be remembered that the Council has a duty to all its ratepayers, not just the few affected by the purchase of the land from the UU. The Council's legal adviser had finally stated that the Council had acted properly in its steps to assert title. These steps had in turn prompted discussions with a number of the locals and the Council now has the opportunity to deal with the situation in a positive fashion having properly brought the issue to the fore.

Mr Johnston then asked the Chairman to seek the views of the Members on the matter.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride agreed that it was as thorny issue and sought the views of the Members.

Councillor Rev. McCrea sought clarification that there was not a conflict in the two arguments that the Council should:

- Secure its boundaries securely; yet
- Facilitate agreement to use the property

Mr Johnston replied that the agreement of a temporary arrangement was not incompatible with securing the boundaries. He stated that a temporary arrangement could be facilitated providing the Colemans acknowledged the Council's ownership.

Councillor Rev. McCrea asked who would determine what would be the duration of the "temporary" arrangement.

Mr Johnston replied that the Council's legal adviser recommended a period of between three and five years but not exceeding five years.

Councillor Rev. McCrea stated that the Council had to be reasonable subject to complying with the law. He therefore asked Mr Johnston if there was any reason why the Council should not agree to the Council's legal adviser's recommendation.

Mr Johnston replied that there was not. The offer of a final five year term would also be consistent with that previously on offer from the UU in its lease.

Councillor Rev. McCrea suggested that the agreement should emphasise the finality of the five years, if such a term was offered.

The Chief Executive also commented that the offer would only be made if the Colemans acknowledged the Council's ownership rights. He pointed out that the Council could accommodate a five year term because it would take up to five years to develop Traad Park in any event.

On consideration, it was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor G.C. Shiels, and unanimously agreed to

RECOMMEND: that the Council, subject to the Colemans acknowledging the Council's ownership rights, should take the advice of its legal adviser and offer the Colemans an opportunity to have a temporary access to the property (for a maximum final period of five years to allow the Coleman family time to relocate their activities) by renewing the terms of the previous UU lease with Mr B Coleman.

5. Consideration of a proposed riverside walk at Portglenone

Mr Johnston explained that he and Mr Kissick had met with Councillor Junkin at the site. They had concluded at the meeting that the proposed walk was not viable.

He explained that four or five houses (from the bridge on the Portglenone Road to the new housing development, The Orchards) have taken possession of the areas from the rear of their houses down to the river. The house owners have constructed piers and have boats moored at them. Mr Johnston said that the officers believed that there would be little doubt that the house owners could acquire the land under adverse possession legislation. This would mean that the proposed walk would have to start from within the new housing development itself. Such a situation would be unlikely to be acceptable to the residents of the estate who have bought their properties as it would impinge on car parking arrangements etc. In addition, during the site meeting small children from the new development were observed climbing over a fence and playing on the banks of the river. The officers were of the opinion that such activity would pose a very serious health and safety issue for the Council if they were to proceed with the proposal to develop the walk. Mr Johnston therefore recommended that the Council do not proceed with the development of the walk.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride, said that the recommendation represented the best way forward. The best location for a riverside walk was actually on the other side of the river.

The Chief Executive said that it would be unreasonable to have people parking in the new housing development in order to access the proposed walk.

Councillor Rev. McCrea enquired what would happen next if the Council did not develop the walk.

Mr Johnston suggested that the relevant householders would assume ownership of the land fronting their property down to the river.

Councillor Rev. McCrea asked if this consequence had been accepted at the site meeting.

Mr Johnston replied that Councillor Junkin did appreciate that this would happen as the older properties had already acquired the land thereby restricting the walk.

Councillor J.P. O'Neill suggested that the residents of The Orchards would resist the development of the walk and that it would be futile to try to proceed with the development.

Mr Johnston informed the Members that the Planning Service would be happy to see the matter resolved with the house owners acquiring possession of the land.

Councillor Rev. McCrea commented that, had the walk been feasible and acceptable to everyone, it would have been an acceptable proposal but obviously it was not viable. He did point out, however, that when the new housing development was being built the purchasers of the houses had been advised that their properties would not extend down to the river.

Mr Johnston stated that, if the Council did decide to develop the walk, it would have to accept the insurance and maintenance consequences of the walk.

The Chief Executive said that this could create a precedent of the Council having to look after property developers' remnants on undeveloped sites.

Councillor Rev. McCrea suggested that new legislation could be enacted to require developers to pay Councils for such upkeep.

On consideration, it was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor J.P. O'Neill, and agreed to

RECOMMEND: that the Council should accept the officers' recommendation and not develop the proposed walk.

6. Proposal for networking the Tourist Information Centre at the Bridewell into the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's network scheme

Mr M. Browne, Development Officer, explained that the NITB ran a scheme called Networked Tourist Information Centre's. The scheme had been established to try to standardise the process of providing information to visitors coming into an area. Of all the councils in Northern Ireland, only Magherafelt and Castlereagh do not participate in the scheme. Mr Browne explained that networked Tourist Information Centres (TIC) will:

1. Provide accessibility to all visitors
2. Enjoy standard signposting to the TIC's
3. Enjoy better publicity informing visitors of the services TIC's can provide
4. Enjoy standardisation of the quality of the exterior and interior layout and design and include NITB's logos and branding
5. Operate set opening hours and seasonal times – normally between April and September, Monday – Friday 10 am – 6.00 pm and Saturday 10 am – 1 pm

6. Provide an after hours service usually via a touch screen facility and a 24 hour answering service via an answer phone
7. Comply with standardised operational procedures which will:
 - (a) Provide an impartial and comprehensive set of standards complying with NITB standards
 - (b) Be clearly displayed in the public area
 - (c) Indicate the services available at the TIC
 - (d) Make provision for the availability of the following documentation:
 - A laminated up-to-date map of the immediate vicinity
 - A laminated Ordnance Survey map of Northern Ireland, Scale 1:250 000
 - Literature and guides relating to activities/events in other areas of Northern Ireland
 - Main public transport timetables and other travel information
 - (e) Enable the TIC to participate in the national Book-A-Bed-Ahead service using the Gulliver Computer System
 - (f) Provide a bureau de change service.
 - (g) Ensure that staff are available to run the TIC during the designated times
 - (h) Participate in a two day NITB training programme
 - (i) Comply with standardised administration procedures regarding, e.g., the compilation of statistics etc.

Mr Browne recommended that the Council agree in principle to network the Tourist Information Centre at the Bridewell into the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's network scheme, and authorise the officers to conduct further research into the proposal including its cost.

Councillor Shiels said that if the Council was serious about promoting tourism it would have no option but to follow the officer's recommendation.

On consideration, it was

PROPOSED by Councillor G.C. Shiels,
 Seconded by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea, and:

RESOLVED: that Committee should recommend to the Council that it should accept the officer's recommendation and agree in principle to network the Tourist Information Centre at the Bridewell into the Northern Ireland Tourist Board's network scheme, and authorise the officers to conduct further research into the proposal including its cost.

7. Control of dogs at Polepatrick Park/Cemetery

Mr Johnston advised the Members that the letters (Appendix 2) were less than complimentary regarding the Council's decision to only allow dogs in the Park/Cemetery on the condition that they were retained on a lead.

Referring to the letter from Mr E Regan, Mr Johnston felt that the comments made about Mr Kissick were completely inappropriate and he took great exception to them. He stated that both Mr Kissick and Mr O'Boyle, Dog Warden, had applied the Council's rules and regulations in a fair and courteous manner at all times. In fact it was they who had been subjected to abuse on occasion. Mr Johnston, referring to Mr Regan's recommendation that the Council should adopt the Dublin Corporation Bye Laws in respect of free exercise times for dogs, pointed out that these bye laws only applied to parks and not to a park/cemetery. Pointing out that it was the cemetery aspect of Polepatrick Park that had led the Council to take this stance against unrestrained dogs, he advised the Members that the Dublin Corporation bye laws relevant to cemeteries did not allow free exercise for dogs.

Mr Johnston referred to the second letter from Mr WR Johnston MBE and said that the letter pointed out the health and safety issues surrounding dog fouling. He said that there was nothing in this letter that could override the necessity for the Council to prevent dogs running loose in the cemetery.

Mr Johnston recommended that the Council continue with its existing policy regarding dogs in Polepatrick Park.

Councillor Rev. McCrea sought and received clarification on the equivalent policy at Meadowbank.

Councillor Shiels pointed out that unrestrained dogs could interrupt a funeral service and that such a possibility should be guarded against.

Mr Johnston said that the officers felt that the situation was coming under control in the cemetery and that to acquiesce to these requests now would be a backward step.

Councillors Rev. McCrea and Shiels enquired about the potential of releasing dogs on other Council facilities.

Mr Johnston replied that most of the facilities were frequented by children and that dog fouling had the potential of causing blindness in children if they came in contact with it.

Councillor Rev. McCrea said that he was sympathetic to the needs of dog owners but he also understood the officers' reservations.

On consideration, it was agreed that the Committee would recommend to Council that it continue with its existing policy.

8. Biodiversity Action Plan for Polepatrick Park/Cemetery

Mr J Murtagh, Project Officer, NI 2000, referring to his report (Appendix 3) stated that Polepatrick Park/Cemetery is an excellent facility which has serviced the needs of walkers and local schools well without detracting from its primary function as a cemetery.

He explained that a little conservation work together with active habitat management would greatly increase the biodiversity and environmental of quality of the area without detracting from it's function as a cemetery, but greatly increasing its interest to walkers and schools.

Mr Murtagh stated that NI 2000 have already done some work and have a management plan for the area recommending a series of small measures that could be introduced in stages to prevent major environmental or aesthetic upheaval but which would improve the quality of the habitats and increase biodiversity. Mr Murtagh went on to outline some these measures for areas D, F and K by reference to the map in the report previously circulated to Members.

Councillor J. Junkin joined the meeting as an observer at 7.35pm

Referring to area D, Mr Murtagh stated that this was an area of woodland with lank trees and poor understorey/shrub layer. He suggested felling the weak trees to introduce light, planting holly and hazel to thicken shrub and erecting bird/bat boxes. He also stated that there was a possibility of developing the mown grass area into woodland glade. Turning his attention to area F, Mr Murtagh stated that this area was similar to area D and would benefit from the same recommendations for the woodland but the mown area was much wetter and would be suited to development as a wet wildflower meadow. Mr Murtagh then commented on area K which surrounded and included the ponds. He noted that Canadian pond weed had been introduced and should be removed. The pond side vegetation also needed to be trimmed back, trees coppiced and bird and bat boxes erected. Noting the existence of a viewing point on the old railway bridge along the path, Mr Murtagh said there was a possibility of felling/coppicing trees between the viewing point and the ponds to create a view of the ponds. He also said that the area of wet rank grass needed to be cut and the grass removed.

Mr Murtagh stated that it was important that the work was done in small pieces and that the public and schools were made aware of what was being done and why. The involvement of the public and schools would generate an ownership of the facility. Schools could participate in the planting of hazel and holly and in the erection of bird boxes.

Mr Murtagh had, in his report, presented some indicative costs for the work. The costs did not provide for interpretation initiatives which would be important in informing users

of what was happening and why but had included the option of the Council's Grounds Maintenance staff doing the work or contracting it out to external contractors such as Conservation Volunteers NI. The latter option could be funded through the Council's Landfill Tax Credit Scheme but if the funds were saved by using the Council's own staff they could be applied for interpretative purposes and/or purchasing trees.

Mr Murtagh said that he had yet to apply for Entrust approval but he considered this to be a formality.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride, congratulated Mr Murtagh on his enthusiasm and said that the proposal promoted laudable objectives.

Councillor Rev. McCrea said that the report was excellent and noted that one option would be of nil cost to the Council.

Mr Johnston replied that the nil cost option applied if the Council applied its Landfill Tax Credits in this fashion.

On consideration, it was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr. R. T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor S. O'Brien, and agreed to

RECOMMEND: that the Council should accept Mr Murtagh's recommendation to adopt the NI 2000 Management Plan for Polepatrick Park insofar as it related to the biodiversity action as presented by Mr Murtagh.

9. Report on developments regarding the sale of plots of land at Glenburn, Magherafelt

Mr Johnston explained that the situation had now been concluded. A delay had arisen due to the death of one of the people wishing to purchase one of the six plots. This had introduced the possibility of one of the plots not being sold and therefore becoming landlocked and inaccessible to the Council for maintenance purposes. The matter had been resolved when one of the other purchasers had agreed to purchase it on the basis of the valuation produced by the Valuation and Lands Agency. The bills of sale have now been processed and are currently with the Council's solicitor.

Councillor Rev. McCrea thanked the officers for expediting the matter.

Noted.

10. Request from Castledawson Development Association regarding the maintenance of areas at Loughinsholin Park and Bells Hill Road, Castledawson

Mr Johnston, referring to a letter received from Castledawson Development Association (Appendix 4), informed the Members that the request related to land not owned by the

Council. The land at Loughinsholin Park was land not developed by the relevant property developer. The CDA had sought and received permission from the landowner to construct a shrub bed on the site. They had now constructed the shrub bed and were now asking the Council to maintain it. Mr Johnston stated that this was a clear case of a community group acting on impulse and not considering the future consequences of their actions. Mr Johnston went on to say that the second area of grass probably belonged to the DoE and he warned of the dangers of setting a precedent in either case. He said that the Council just did not have the resources to assume responsibility for these areas and warned of the potential health and safety and insurance issues.

Councillor Rev. McCrea asked if the Council could recoup its costs from anyone.

The Chief Executive replied that it could not. This would be a case of the Council cleaning up after a developer.

Some discussion followed on whether the Council had ever maintained the property at Loughinsholin Park.

On consideration, it was

PROPOSED by Councillor G. C. Shiels,
Seconded by Councillor S. O'Brien, and agreed to

RECOMMEND: that the Council should accept the officers' recommendation and not assume responsibility for the maintenance of the areas at Loughinsholin park and Bells Hill Road, Castledawson.

11. Proposal for a World War II museum in the old cinema building, Magherafelt

Councillor T.J. Catherwood joined the meeting as an observer at 7.55p.m.

Councillors Miss K.A. Lagan and P.E. Groogan joined the meeting as observers at 7.57 p.m.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride asked if the report was not actually about the potential for a museum in respect of the two World Wars.

Mr M. Browne said that the report was intended to refer to a museum for the two World Wars and not just the second one as referred to in the agenda.

Mr Browne referred to a letter from Mr M O'Reilly (Appendix 5) and explained that the Council had been approached by a group from Cookstown who wished to establish a World War I & II museum in the Magherafelt area.

The group is made up of four gentlemen:

➤ Mr Mel O'Reilly

- Dr Harold Wray
- Mr John Greer
- Mr Gary Campbell

Between the four of them, these individuals have managed to gather a collection of WW1 & WW2 memorabilia with an estimated value of ½ million pounds. This collection includes a great variety of pieces and has items from nearly every country that took part in either campaign.

The collection included items such as uniforms, artillery items (which have been made safe), radios and communication equipment, flags, bags and newspapers from the period.

In the past the group had put on very successful exhibitions in Derry and Cookstown and Mr Browne circulated a selection of photographs taken at these exhibitions.

The largest percentage of items came from Germany and were in very good condition. Some of these items were very collectable such as a SS officer's uniform.

The group are now looking for a permanent base for the collection and have made contact with the Magherafelt Trustees. The Trustees have told the group that they would be prepared to give it a long-term lease agreement for the old cinema on Queen Street, Magherafelt and would even invest in some refurbishment of the building.

The group has requested that the Magherafelt District Council consider becoming a partner in this venture as it was felt that this would give the project greater sustainability and potential. Mr Browne stated that the level of partnership had not yet been fully discussed.

If the Council did become a partner in the venture there would be a greater opportunity for funding. Mr Browne informed the Members that he had made tentative enquires of the Heritage Lottery Fund to find out if this project would be eligible for funding. He had been advised that the project could apply specifically to the Museums & Galleries Access Fund under the HLF. Interestingly unlike any other theme, in this case there is no upper limit of funding.

Mr Browne explained that under the heritage lottery fund, four criteria were used for scoring projects:

- Heritage conservation
- National heritage
- Local heritage
- Heritage education and access

The proposed museum project would fall into every category except Local Heritage and would be a unique product in Northern Ireland.

Mr Browne added that the project would also be a tremendous educational attraction in addition to being a very good general tourist attraction.

Mr Browne showed the Members a 5-minute video, which was made by UTV, reporting the exhibition in Cookstown during August 1995.

Mr Browne sought the Members views on the proposal.

Councillor Rev. McCrea suggested that the facility could be a major boost to tourism in the District.

Mr Johnston commented that the development could result in the Council having a significant financial commitment.

Councillor Shiels stated that he had seen the exhibition in Cookstown and that he had personally spoken with some of the Town Trustees about it. The Trustees were prepared to invest in it and he was wholeheartedly behind it.

On consideration, it was

PROPOSED by Councillor Rev. Dr R.T. Wm. McCrea,
Seconded by Councillor G. C. Shiels, and agreed to

RECOMMEND: that the Council authorise the officers to express an interest in the Council becoming a partner in a venture to locate a World Wars I & II museum in the old cinema building, Magherafelt. The officers should also be asked to research the matter further and bring back a more detailed report, including potential cost implications.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride, stated that he had visited the Imperial War Museum and had found it to be very interesting. He therefore was enthusiastic in supporting the proposal in principle.

Councillor Rev. McCrea asked Mr Johnston to investigate the necessity for repair of a fence at Curran picnic site and to arrange for the facility to be generally tidied up.

Mr Johnston replied that he would investigate the matter.

The Chairman, Councillor McBride, advised the Members that he had made some initial contacts with Cookstown Council regarding the operation of their Sports Forum. He hoped that a local forum would serve to broaden interest in all sporting activities and help to identify sources of funding.

The Chief Executive stated that Mr W.L.P. Hastings, Leisure Services Manager, had already spoken with Cookstown District Council on the matter and would bring a report to the Committee.

The meeting concluded at 8.10 p.m.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE.

The foregoing Minutes are hereby Confirmed.

_____ (Chairman)

_____ (Date)