

COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Proceedings of a DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 18th May 2010 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor McGarvey (Chairman)

Councillors: Baker, Cassidy, Clarke, Glasgow, Lees, McAleer, McCartney, McFlynn, McNamee, Molloy, Quinn, McCrea and Wilson

Officers: Adrian McCreesh Director of Development
Oliver McShane Sports Services Manager
Emma Bell Administrative Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were reported on behalf of Councillor Greer.

It was agreed that Standing Orders are suspended to facilitate a discussion regarding the serious situation which has arisen concerning the Acute Services provision at the Mid Ulster Hospital.

It was proposed by Councillor McCrea
Seconded by Councillor McGarvey and AGREED.

Councillor McCrea raised serious concerns regarding the development on Monday 17th May 2010 whereby Acute Services are to be unexpectedly moved from the Mid Ulster Hospital to Antrim Area Hospital from Monday 24th May 2010 due to patient safety. This decision was made by the Northern Trust. Councillor McCrea stated that he is unaware of any provision which the Northern Trust has made to assist Antrim Area Hospital to cope with the additional influx of patients. It is alleged that there were 40 trolley waits at the hospital on the night of Monday 17th May 2010, and that some of these patients were subsequently transferred to other hospitals. He further advised that the risks at the Mid Ulster Hospital, as alluded to by the Northern Trust, need to be made known to the public.

Councillor McCrea proposed that urgent answers are sought from either the Chief Executive of the Northern Trust or Michael McGimpsey, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety to ensure that the people of Mid Ulster have safe access to medical services. He further highlighted that the decision to suspend the Mid Ulster Hospitals acute services came without warning and that staff and political representatives found out via a leaked press release, which is unacceptable.

Councillor Clarke arrived 7.03pm.

Councillor Molloy reminded Members that Mr Colm Donaghy had previously presented to Council regarding the future of medical services at the Mid Ulster Hospital and no indication was given that acute services would be withdrawn from the Mid Ulster Hospital in such a fashion.

Councillor Quinn advised Members that the ambulance service in Mid Ulster was not at an acceptable standard and is continuously being downgraded annually by the Northern Trust, which is further impeded by the poor condition of our roads.

Councillor Wilson arrived 7.06pm.

Councillor Quinn highlighted that the SDLP has requested a meeting with the Patient and Client Council regarding patient complaints and welfare.

Councillor Baker highlighted the difficulty of the situation for both patients and staff alike and advised that the Minor Injuries Unit would only be open Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm and closed on weekends and bank holidays.

Councillor Clarke raised concerns regarding the inadequacies of the current ambulance service, in addition to the recent decision to move the acute services to Antrim Area Hospital and the knock on effect which this will have.

Councillor Wilson recommended that Council write to the Chairman of the Northern Trust seeking clarification on the decision to move the acute services so hastily from Mid Ulster Hospital to Antrim Area Hospital. He further recommended that Council write to Michael McGimpsey, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety outlining the information presented to Council by Mr Colm Donaghy and Dr Sloan-Harper.

Members unanimously AGREED that Council should:

- Write to the Chairman of the Northern Trust seeking clarification on the decision to move the acute services so hastily from the Mid Ulster Hospital to Antrim Area Hospital.
- Write to Michael McGimpsey, Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety outlining the information presented to Council by Mr Colm Donaghy and Dr Sloan-Harper.

2. PRESENTATION

The Director of Development welcomed Messrs Gordon Best, Quarry Products Association N Ireland (QPANI) and Seamus McKeague, Creagh Concrete, to the meeting to update Members on the quarry products industry. Copies of 'Quarry 09' and 'Concrete Continuing to Build a Sustainable Future' were circulated for Members information prior to the meeting.

Mr Best thanked Members for their time and advised that this current initiative was launched in February 2010, whereby QPANI Members and key decision makers within each Council were invited to attend one of eight forums. The main purpose of the forums are to improve communication, as a range of functions including planning and procurement will be transferred to local Councils when the Review of Public Administration (RPA) occurs.

Mr Best highlighted that QPANI represents 97% of quarrying in Northern Ireland, consisting of 81 quarry products companies and 29 affiliated members. In addition QPANI represents 3 associate members of which Cookstown District Council is one. He further highlighted that QPANI is affiliated with Minerals Products Association and the European Aggregates Association (EUPG). The richness and diversity of the geology in Northern Ireland was illustrated to Members via a map and they were advised that County Tyrone is mainly comprised of sand and gravel. Northern Ireland produces 14% of UK aggregate of which 40% is exported to other countries. The extraction of aggregates is contentious, however strict guidelines are imposed by government and the planning service. Northern Ireland aggregates are an important source of high quality skid resistant product for roads in the UK and Europe, in addition to be being used in everyday essentials such as toothpaste.

The Quarry Products sector has an annual turnover of approximately £730m, resulting in 3% of Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Employment directly associated with the Quarry Products sector at the end of 2008 dropped 25% to 3,750. The NI construction industry is the "engine room" of the NI economy and relies entirely on the supply of quarry products. Mr Best advised that in his opinion without the quarry products industry the Investment Strategy for NI valued at £18 billion will not be delivered. He further advised that he had established a positive link with Cookstown District Council's Economic Development Manager which will facilitate the communication of vital information to QPANI Members, whilst assisting Council to fulfil the objectives outlined within the LED Strategy and Action Plan, for the period 2007-2010.

Mr Best advised that the general level of unemployment within Northern Ireland is 8% higher than in the UK, which is concerning for the quarry products industry. He further advised that according to DETI figures 92% of inactive people in Northern Ireland do not want work and the remaining 8% want employment but do not meet the ILO job search criteria. In February 2010 Cookstown District had 1,166 people unemployed of which 385 were construction claimants.

The total aggregate value for Mid Ulster is £13,456,642 and the estimated value of manufactured products, such as concrete equates to £100 million. Presently 1,146 are directly employed by QPANI Member Companies within Mid Ulster, therefore it is essential that jobs are protected, investment in infrastructure secured and young peoples' skills are developed. Mr Best emphasised the need for improved communication links with Ministers regarding a more efficient planning system and to highlight the economic benefits of reducing cuts in the construction industry, as for each £1 spent on construction, £3 is released back into the economy. QPANI aim to encourage political representatives and their members to establish a good working relationship, whereby solutions are found and inward investment secured. Currently QPANI are addressing the possibility of setting up a working group which meets 2-3 times per year to identify key priorities, actions, opportunities and threats.

Mr McKeague agreed with Mr Best and re-emphasised the benefits of establishing a working group. He advised that GDP is currently low and resulting in a slow recovery for businesses, therefore the opportunity for companies to network would be advantageous to finding new solutions.

Messrs Best and McKeague answered a number of questions from Members, after which the Chairman thanked them for their informative presentation.

Messrs Best and McKeague left the meeting at 7.44pm.

3. COMMUNITY SERVICES

3.1. Community Services Annual Report

Members NOTED the Community Services Annual Report for the period April 2009 – March 2010.

Councillors Wilson and McGarvey congratulated the Community Services Manager and her team on the effort and commitment which they have made in the delivery of their projects.

3.2. Community Festival

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in the Community Festival Grant Aid due to his involvement with the Cookstown & Cultural Development Association.

The Director of Development informed Members that the Community Festival Grant Aid was publicly advertised and applications were subsequently assessed by the Community Relations Sub Committee.

Proposed by Councillor Cassidy
Seconded by Councillor Baker and AGREED

To accept the recommendations outlined in the Community Festival Grant Aid 2010 Report, as indicated below:

Group	Indicative Score	Rank	Requested	Suggested Funding Amount
Ballinderry Parish Church Vintage Rally	77	1	1,500	£1,500
Cookstown & Culural Dev Ass	76	2	2,000	£1,500
Tullylagan Vintage Owners Ass	74	3	1,700	£1,500
Lissan Parish GFS	73	4	1,500	£1,500
Ardboe O'Donovan Rossa	72	5	1,000	£1,000
Moortown, St Malachys GAC	70	6=	2,000	£1,500
Cookstown Youth Football Club	70	6=	1,500	£1,500
TABBDA (Flagship application)	67	8	8,000	£4,425
Muintirevlin Historical Society	66	9	575	£575
Lough Neagh Rescue	65	10	1,283	£1,000
Coolstock	62	11	1,500	£1,000
Moneymore Gaelic Football Club	57	12	1,500	£500
Mid Ulster Culture & Heritage Ass	55	13	1,500	£500

The Director of Development advised Members that the successful applicants must be ratified at Council before grant aid is paid out.

Councillor Wilson proposed that the 3 unsuccessful applicants are informed via letter.

AGREED.

4. LOUGH NEAGH AND LOWER BANN ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Members were advised that a letter was received from Minister Poots, Minister for the Environment, dated 26th April 2010, which misinterpreted Council's decision with regard to providing conditional support to the Lough Neagh and Lower Bann Advisory Committees. Council's subsequent response dated 6th May 2010 and an earlier letter dated 20th April 2010 was enclosed for Members information.

NOTED.

5. POMEROY BUSINESS PARK

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in Pomeroy Business Park due to Cookstown Enterprise Centre acting as managing agents for the facility.

Members NOTED receipt of Interim Evaluation Report for Pomeroy Business Park, dated April 2010, covering the period January 2009 to March 2010.

The Director of Development advised that he understood a planning application had been submitted for the change of use for a number of units at the business park and to date he was not aware of the outcome. He further advised that Members would receive an update at a future Council meeting.

6. DRAFT REGENERATION AND HOUSING BILL (Northern IRELAND)

Members NOTED letter dated 23rd April 2010 detailing Council's response to the Consultation on the Draft Regeneration and Housing Bill.

7. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

7.1. Town Centre Forum

7.1.1 Review of Christmas 2009 Marketing Campaign

The Director of Development advised Members that a review of the Christmas 2009 Marketing Campaign was requested at a previous Development Committee Meeting. The report circulated to Members outlined this initiative provided excellent television coverage resulting in good value for money.

NOTED.

7.1.2 Town Centre Masterplan Update

The Director of Development advised Members that the Department for Social Development (DSD) has agreed to fund a Masterplan for Cookstown Town Centre. An approximate budget of £95,000 has been allocated by DSD to fund this commission in conjunction with a similar plan for Magherafelt. He further advised that the Town Strategy Manager would be liaising with DSD with regard to establishing a Steering Group to direct this project in Cookstown. Members will be updated accordingly at a future meeting.

NOTED.

7.2 Shop Mobility

Members were advised that the Launch of the Shop Mobility Scheme will take place on Thursday 20th May 2010 at 12 noon in the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre and Members are encouraged to attend.

NOTED.

Members NOTED the minutes of the Shop Mobility meeting held on 30th March 2010.

8. TOURISM

8.1. Tourism Sub Group

Members were advised that the Terms of Reference has been completed with regard to examining the potential for developing Lough Fea as an angling destination. The Terms of Reference is currently being reviewed by the Water Service NI, following which it will be presented to members of the Mid-Ulster Angling Club for their consideration.

The Director of Development advised Members that a formal meeting had taken place with the Minister Michelle Gildernew MLA and Council representatives with reference to Tullaghoge Fort and the way forward. To date progress has been slow, however the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is currently liaising with Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) representatives with a view to developing suitable proposals for the future development of Tullaghoge Fort.

These proposals are focused on the fort itself and the surrounding land marks. It is expected that Council will be informed of progress in the very near future and Members will be updated accordingly.

Members NOTED minutes of the Tourism Sub Group meeting held on 10th May 2010.

9. BURNAVON

9.1. Arts & Cultural Committee Special Meeting

Members were advised that a special Arts and Cultural Committee meeting was held on 28th April 2010. Members of the Arts and Cultural Committee assigned a number of tasks for completion by the Manager of the Burnavon Arts and Cultural Centre, the outcome of which will be presented to the Arts and Cultural Committee for their consideration.

Members NOTED minutes of Arts and Cultural Committee Special Meeting held on 28th April 2010.

10. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

10.1 Members were advised that the Rural Development Programme is progressing successfully and has an approximate programme spent of £2.5 million for the financial period 2010-2011.

Members NOTED the minutes of the Rural Development Programme Joint Council Committee meetings held on 15th February and 15th March 2010.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1. Roads Service

Councillor Wilson enquired if any other Council Member received an invitation to the Official Opening of the new Roads Service office in Cookstown which was held recently. Councillor McCrea confirmed that he had received an invitation to the event in his capacity as MLA, however the invitations were sent by McAleer and Rushe and not Roads Service. The Director of Development advised that he would seek clarification on the matter and update Members accordingly.

11.2. The Development Committee Chairman, Councillor McGarvey thanked all Members for their support over the period of the last year as this was his last meeting as Chair.

TABLED FOR INFORMATION

1. The Draft Regeneration and Housing Bill Consultation Document, dated March 2010.

The meeting ended at 8.00pm

Chairman

Clerk/Chief Executive

Date