

COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Proceedings of a DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING held in the Council Chamber on Tuesday 21st September 2010 at 7.00 pm

Present: Councillor Cassidy (Chairman)

Councillors: Baker, Glasgow, Greer, Lees, McAleer, McCartney, McFlynn, McGarvey, McNamee, Molloy, Quinn, McCrea and Wilson

Officers: Adrian McCreesh Director of Development
Emma Bell Administrative Officer

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were reported on behalf of Councillors Clarke, McIvor and Mr Michael McGuckin.

2. TOURISM

2.1. Countryside Access & Activities Network (CANN)

Members were advised that a letter was received from Kathryn Callaghan, Development Officer for Countryside Access & Activities Network (CANN), in partnership with Sperrins Tourism Limited (STL), dated 31st August 2010, seeking a financial contribution towards the manufacture of Sperrins Walking Packs to raise the profile of the area. Total estimated costs of production are approximately £4,500 for 1,500 packs and each pack will comprise of 12 A5 laminated walking cards (1 walk per card) in a plastic cover, containing an introductory booklet for the area. The pack will contain 2 walks from each of the 6 Council areas within the Sperrins and will be sold by CAAN to dedicated walkers. Each Council has been asked to contribute £600 towards production costs. The Director of Development advised that Cookstown District Council already provide a very generous financial contribution to Sperrins Tourism Limited (STL) given the current financial pressures which Council is under to make efficiencies.

Furthermore Cookstown Tourist Information Centre provides a very successful Sperrin Trek Walking Expedition which occurs throughout the year.

Councillor Quinn left the meeting at 7.02pm.

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

That Council defer making a decision with regard to providing a financial contribution of £600 towards Countryside Access & Activities Network (CANN) for the production of 1,500 Sperrins Walker Packs.

2.2. Drumcairne Forest

The Director of Development informed Members that the key actions following a Multi-agency Meeting held on 7th May 2010 regarding Drumcairne Forest, Stewartstown were included to provide Members with an update on the ongoing issues surrounding the forest. He reminded Members that a recent site visit to the forest was convened to assess the situation.

Councillor Quinn re-entered the meeting 7.05pm.

Members were advised that meetings were scheduled with Forest Service NI (FSNI) on an adhoc basis to address specific issues. The Director of Development highlighted that the Friends of Drumcairne and FSNI are very proactive and to date the majority of the 8 FSNI action points have been completed. Councillor McGarvey enquired why FSNI did not complete action number 1 first. The Director of Development advised that the 3 FSNI Representatives provided adequate rationale at the meeting for the decisions which they made. He further advised that Friends of Drumcairne are satisfied with progress to date.

Members NOTED the key actions following a Multi-agency Meeting held on 7th May 2010 regarding Drumcairne Forest, Stewartstown.

2.3. Tourism Sub Group

The Director of Development advised that an update on Capital Projects was conveyed to Members at the Tourism Sub Group meeting held on 10th September 2010. To date the Davagh Forest Project remains unchanged and SWARD has appointed ASM Horwarth to carry out an economic appraisal as part of the assessment process. It is anticipated that the economic appraisals will be completed by October/November 2010. He further advised that a meeting was held on Wednesday 8th October 2010 with the International Mountain Biking Association NI. They are currently negotiating with FSNI for mountain bikers to obtain access to Davagh Forest using a management model used in Scotland and England.

Councillor McCrea sought an update on the Lissan House Project. The Director of Development advised that Council's commitment to Friends of Lissan Trust (FoLT) at this stage is in principle and is subject to funding being secured from all other stakeholders, which is being monitored by the Economic Development Manager.

Councillor McCrea left the meeting at 7.12pm.

Councillor Quinn informed Members that he and Councillor Glasgow attended the NILGA AGM recently and Mr Howard Hastings, Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) Board Member informed delegates that the tourism sector employs over 100,000 people in Northern Ireland. He continued that given the current economic climate there is significant scope for the promotion of tourism especially with regard to the Lissan House Project, which would result in the creation of new employment opportunities.

The Director of Development advised that FoLT are required to address all outstanding issues prior to presenting their business case to Members for their consideration. Following this a Letter of Offer may be issued subject to Council conditions.

The Director of Development advised Members that a list of consultants were identified to receive the opportunity to prepare a business plan for the development of Lough Fea as the budget for the project is £3,000. Councillor Wilson sought clarification as to the number of Consultants selected. The Director of Development advised that 5 had been chosen to ensure that Council receives a broad spectrum of responses for evaluation purposes and to ensure value for money.

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

That Council issue the Terms of Reference for Lough Fea to the Consultants as identified below:

- ASM Horwath
- Helen Keys Business Support
- Ciaran Higgins, Cookstown Enterprise Centre
- Full Circle Management Solutions
- Mark Conway, Venture International

Members were advised that the Western Regional Tourism Partnership have prepared 2 pod casts as part of the “Uncover our stories with just one click!” and “Good Food Live Research Project” which has been circulated prior to the meeting for Members information. The total cost of both projects was £84,475 of which Cookstown District Council contributed £1,000. The Director of Development highlighted that the use of social media is the way forward for the promotion of tourism within N Ireland.

The Director of Development advised that the Tourism Sub Group has agreed to the hosting of a Santa’s Grotto in the exhibition area of the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre as part of Cookstown Tourist Information Centre’s Christmas campaign.

2.4. Western Regional Tourism Partnership

Members NOTED minutes of WRTP meetings held on 13th April 2010 and 6th July 2010.

2.5. Tourism Innovation Fund

Members NOTED minutes of Tourism Innovation Fund meetings held on 11th May 2010, 6th July 2010 and 23rd August 2010.

3. LOUGH NEAGH

3.1. Lough Neagh Partnership

The Director of Development withdrew the letter dated 5th August 2010, from Shane O'Neill, Lough Neagh Partnership which updated Members on the organisation's achievement to date and outlining the future work they have identified that is required for Lough Neagh, as it was previously circulated for Members information at the Statutory Meeting on 14th September 2010.

3.2. Lough Neagh Rescue

Members were advised that a letter was received from E.A. McKinley, Lough Neagh Rescue, dated 14th June 2010, requesting a continuation of Council financial contribution for 2010 and seeking a possible increase in the amount to recognise inflation. The Director of Development advised that a financial contribution of £1,600 has been previously agreed by Council for 2010; however this amount may be reviewed for next year's contribution.

Councillor McCrea re-entered the meeting 7.18pm

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

That Council will provide a financial contribution of £1,600 to Lough Neagh Rescue for the 2010 financial year.

4. LOCAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

4.1. Local Enterprise Agency Review

Members were informed that an Executive Summary Report was commissioned by Invest NI on the 'Future Role and Development of the Local Enterprise Agency Network in the Context of RPA.'

NOTED.

4.2. Engineering Innovation Programme

The Director of Development advised Members that the 6 companies recruited have now successfully completed phase 1 of Engineering Innovation Programme and have availed of a range of engineering consultancy support to research and develop new or existing products and processes to assist with improving their business. To date these companies have benefited immensely from the programme especially in these challenging times, as outlined below:

- Creation of 4 new jobs (3 full-time and 1 part-time) in local engineering businesses.
- Helped sustain 20 existing jobs in local engineering businesses.
- 5 businesses to date have developed new products/processes within their business.
- 5 Business Plans prepared to assist and guide the companies for the next 2 years, and in addition they can use these plans to assist them apply and bid for future funding.
- 3 of the Business Plans have been submitted to Invest NI with a view to securing further support to help their business expand. To date, Irony Products Ltd. has been successful in attaining further support from Invest NI and has now been approved as an Invest NI client company. Two of the other businesses are currently in discussions with Invest NI with a view to potentially receiving assistance.

In May 2010, phase 2 of the Engineering Innovation Programme was launched and 6 new businesses were recruited to participate. They will each receive an Innovation Audit, Business Plan and up to 8 days Innovation Consultancy Support. The programme is expected to be completed by October 2010 and a press release and photocall will be organised in due course. In addition feedback will be received from all participants and findings will be collated for Members information.

Members welcomed the Progress report on Council's Engineering Innovation Programme.

4.3. Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme

The Director of Development advised that Council has appointed Global Education (NI) Ltd to develop and deliver a Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme which will be delivered in 2 phases (May 2010 – July 2011 and August 2011- January 2013) to 80 businesses in total. To date 27 businesses have been recruited to participate in Phase 1 and following a successful press campaign in September 2010, it is anticipated that the remaining 13 places this year will be filled by local businesses. All applicants are eager for the programme to progress, however to facilitate the recruitment of 40 additional businesses next year Council will build on the current participants successes.

Members NOTED the Progress Report on Council's Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme.

4.4. Proposed Economic Development and Town Centre Projects for 2010/11

The Director of Development introduced the Proposed Economic Development and Town Centre Projects Report for 2010/11.

He affirmed that Council's current Local Economic Development (LED) and Town Centre (TC) commitments have not changed, as outlined below:

LED Projects:

- Engineering Innovation Programme
- Multi-Sectoral Tendering Programme
- On-Line Business Directory
- Lissan House Project (funds committed in principle)
- Traded Services
- Telecoms Development
- Management of Funding to External Bodies – eg, ICBAN, Sperrins Tourism, etc.

TC Projects:

- Cookstown Living Over the Shops (LOTS) Scheme
- Burn Road Environmental Improvement Scheme
- Cookstown Retail Development Programme
- Marketing & Promotional Campaign
 - 47 new street banners
 - Transmission of a Christmas radio advertisement on Six FM
 - Production of a Shop-Local Christmas Brochure to be distributed to households across Mid Ulster
 - Christmas printed media campaign
- Town Centre Pocket Map and Guide
- Town Centre Masterplan
- Village Regeneration Support Costs

The Director of Development proposed that Council transfer its remaining monies in this year's LED budget to undertake the two projects outlined below:

- Waste Minimisation Programme for SME's £25,000
- Preparation of a Business Plan for Traded Services Project £5,000

The Director of Development highlighted that the Waste Minimisation Programme for SME's will assist local businesses to reduce their waste, thereby reducing demands for landfill and associated business costs. The Director of Development advised that Council needs to deliver targeted programmes which are focused on improving and sustaining local businesses in the current economic downturn. Therefore it is proposed that the funds set aside to develop a new Management Information System for Council be transferred towards the delivery of the proposed Waste Minimisation Programme, to directly assist local businesses.

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

That Council transfer its remaining LED monies in this year's budget to progress the Waste Minimisation Programme for SME's (£25,000) and for the Preparation of a Business Plan for Traded Services Project (£5,000) and place the necessary advertisements in the press to recruit professional consultants to deliver both projects.

Members were reminded that Council had previously received funding from Interreg IVa to prepare a feasibility study with regard to the development of a Tradeable Services Centre in Cookstown/Mid Ulster and Cavan. Tenders had been sought for this initiative, however none of the tenders received fully met the specification and therefore no organisation was appointed to undertake the work. Approval has now been attained from SEUPB, managing agents from Interreg IVa, to re-advertise again in the appropriate newspapers (north and south) to recruit a suitability qualified organisation(s) to prepare a feasibility study to assist with developing the Tradeable Services Sector in Cookstown/Mid Ulster and Cavan.

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

That Council place an advertisement in the appropriate newspapers (north and south) to recruit a suitability qualified organisation(s) to prepare a feasibility study to assist with Developing the Tradeable Services Sector in Cookstown/Mid Ulster and Cavan.

The Director of Development informed Members that with regard to the Town Centre Projects the Burn Road Environmental Scheme is nearing completion, however Cookstown Masterplan is currently being progressed and the outcome is anticipated to be of significant benefit to all businesses located within the Cookstown District. Furthermore Council are keen to roll out a new Shop Improvement Scheme in Cookstown town centre to assist retailers to improve their business premises. Costings are outlined below:

- ***Cookstown Shop Improvement Scheme** £44,838 (TC)
Costs include provision of grant-aid to property owners to improve their premises and also employment of a professional architect to assess applications, inspect and approve completed works, etc). £35,000 (LED) £79,838 (Total)

Proposed funding ratio Council 50%: Private Sector 50%
Council's contribution will be capped at £10k.

*(*It is anticipated this scheme will take approx 18 months to deliver and therefore, not all funds will be spent in this financial year, due to statutory approvals and construction works being carried out before grant-aid is paid and therefore, this will require some of the allocated funds to be 'ringfenced' and transferred across to the new financial year 2011/12)*

Therefore approval is sought for the transfer of £35,000 from the existing Local Economic Development budget to the Town Centre budget to progress the new Cookstown Shop Improvement Scheme and to place the necessary advertisements in the press to recruit professional consultants to assist in the delivery of the Scheme.

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

That Council transfer £35,000 from the existing Local Economic Development budget to the Town Centre budget to progress the new Shop Improvement Scheme and also place the necessary advertisements in the press to recruit professional consultants to deliver the Scheme.

Councillor Wilson expressed concern about the number of town centre retailers who are closing down or relocating and highlighted that the Shop Improvement Scheme requires good publicity to promote the benefits of the Scheme. He proposed that Council issue a press release outlining the levels of assistance and investment that has been provided by Council towards the continuous reinvigoration of Cookstown town centre.

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

That Council issue a press release to the local media highlighting the full range of projects and financial investment which Council has directed towards local businesses and the town centre.

Councillor McGarvey expressed concern regarding the lack of progress on the wireless broadband provision and sought an update on the current status of the project. The Director of Development advised that he will seek clarification on the matter and circulate a briefing note to all Members for their information. He informed Members that the Economic Development Manager has worked extensively on the project examining methods of rolling out Wi-Fi broadband to businesses within the Cookstown district. Councillor McGarvey emphasised that North West Electronics was initially very keen and obtained planning permission to install masts throughout the district, however they have failed to follow up on the contact made with various individuals/businesses which were interested in receiving the wireless broadband service.

Councillor McCrea informed Members that the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment are assisting British Telecom to upgrade a number of green boxes throughout Northern Ireland, including Cookstown District and it would be advantageous for Members to be aware of the upgrade areas and the increase in download speeds. He highlighted that if he was able to locate the documentation it would be forwarded to Members for their information.

Councillor Cassidy enquired if it would be beneficial to invite representatives from North West Electronics (NWE) to a future Council meeting to update Members on their progress. Members declined this proposal at present and AGREED that a briefing paper would be circulated at a future meeting updating Members on the current status of the wireless broadband project.

5. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

5.1. Town Centre Forum

5.1.1 Town Centre Forum

Members NOTED minutes of Town Centre Forum meetings held on 10th June 2010 and 22nd June 2010.

Councillor Cassidy advised that the Town Centre Forum minutes from the meeting held on 31st August 2010 did not outline his comments with regard to parking legislation. He indicated that paragraphs 3 and 4 on page 9 of the minutes should have outlined that Article 107 and 111 of the Road Traffic Act does not state that drivers must reverse or drive into a parking bay. He further advised that the PSNI has a Statutory duty to deal with vehicles parked on the footpath, as it is an offence. The Director of Development advised Councillor Cassidy to raise this issue at the next Town Centre Forum meeting.

5.1.2 Town Centre Living Initiative

Members NOTED the minutes from the Town Centre Living Initiative Sub Committee meeting held on 31st August 2010.

5.1.3 Town Centre Masterplan

Members NOTED the minutes of Cookstown Town Centre Masterplan Steering Group meetings held on 7th June 2010 and 18th August 2010.

5.1.3.1 Members NOTED minutes of Cookstown Town Centre Masterplan Steering Group meetings held on 7th June 2010 and 18th August 2010.

5.1.3.2 Members NOTED the Public Consultation Event to assist the preparation and development of a new Masterplan for Cookstown town centre scheduled for Thursday 21 October 2010 at 7pm in the Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre, Cookstown.

5.2 Shop Mobility

Members NOTED minutes of Shop Mobility meetings held on 11th May 2010 and 10th August 2010.

6. BURNAVON

6.1. Civic Awards

6.1.1 Civic Awards Committee

Members NOTED minutes of Civic Awards Committee meeting held on 8th September 2010.

6.1.2 Annual Civic Awards Event

Members NOTED the Annual Civic Awards Event scheduled for Thursday 18th November 2010 at 7pm in the Burnavon Arts Centre, Cookstown.

7. RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

7.1. Members NOTED minutes of Rural Development Joint Council Committee meetings held on 15th March 2010, 19th April 2010, 17th May 2010, 21st June 2010 and 26th July 2010.

7.2. Members NOTED minutes of the South West Local Action Group meetings held on 5th May 2010, 2nd June 2010, 7th July 2010 and 4th August 2010.

8. 15th ANNUAL NORTHERN IRELAND ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

No Members expressed an interest in attending the 15th Annual Northern Ireland Economic Conference on Wednesday 29th September 2010 at the Culloden Hotel, Belfast.

9. SUBSCRIPTION

The Director of Development recommended that Council's annual subscription to the Ulster Business magazine for the period 4th June 2010 to 3rd June 2011 should be renewed as it is valuable source of information for the public sector.

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

That Council renew its annual subscription to the Ulster Business magazine for the period 4th June 2010 to 3rd June 2011 at a cost of £27.50 plus VAT per annum, to be released with immediate payment.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

10.1 Efficiencies

Councillor Greer highlighted that due to the current economic downturn many people are being made redundant and he personally expects local authorities to make efficiencies as far as possible.

TABLED FOR INFORMATION

1. Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Paper on Play and Leisure Policy and the Work of Councils in N Ireland, dated June 2010.

The meeting ended at 7.44pm

Chairman

Clerk/Chief Executive

Date