

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the special meeting of Castlereagh Borough Council, held in the Council Chamber, Castlereagh Borough Council, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB, on Thursday 11 January 2007, at 5.15 p.m.

- PRESENT:-** Councillor J. Spratt (in the chair)
- ALDERMEN:** Alderman G Rice
Alderman J Norris MBE
Alderman I Robinson MP
Alderman P D Robinson MP MLA
- COUNCILLORS:** Councillor A Beattie
Councillor J Beattie
Councillor J. Bunting
Councillor M Chambers
Councillor J Cochrane
Councillor D Drysdale
Councillor M Henderson (until 6.10 pm)
Councillor Miss R Hughes MBE
Councillor T Jeffers
Councillor M Long
Councillor G Robinson
Councillor J Spratt
Councillor C Tosh
Councillor J White
- IN ATTENDANCE:-** Chief Executive, Client Manager, Planning Officer
and Members' Services Officer
- APOLOGIES:-** Apologies were recorded on behalf of Alderman Copeland and Councillors Duncan, Stevenson, Hall and Hanvey

2007/01 : OPENING OF MEETING

Alderman Norris opened the meeting with a prayer.

Noted.

2007/02 : SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

The Mayor advised Members that, as well as the two scheduled presentations by Turkington Holdings and Elim Church, a third party, Mr. Gary Hutchinson,

had requested permission to address the Council regarding the sale of land at Carryduff.

RESOLVED: that Standing Orders be suspended to allow Mr Gary Hutchinson to make a brief presentation to the Council.

2007/03 : LAND SALES AT CARRYDUFF - INTRODUCTION

The Chief Executive advised Members that there were requests to purchase lands at Carryduff, as follows:

- A request to purchase a narrow strip of land near the Comber Road which was not used for any purpose other than as a grassed area. He indicated that anyone purchasing the land would have to arrange to move the fence and the security lighting as well as the services. Alderman Robinson advised that this land was required by the owner of the neighbouring industrial estate to provide additional car parking.
- A request by the Elim Church to purchase some land adjacent to the Church to provide additional car parking spaces. The Chief Executive advised that the public accessed the park through this land and the Council had 12 car parking spaces on it. If the Council agreed to sell, the Church would continue to provide access to the park and allow the public to use 12 of their car parking spaces.
- Another area of land was a large triangular area in the middle of the park. The Chief Executive advised that the sale of this land would create difficulties as it would cut the park in two and it was also the location for the proposed relocated kickabout pitch.
- The Chief Executive reported that Turkington Holdings had asked to purchase the land currently being used as the scout field as well as lands to the rear of this and their existing site. He stated that they were proposing to provide an alternative small pitch and additional landscaping and facilities within the park.

Alderman Rice indicated that she was sure that there was a restrictive covenant on some of the land being proposed for sale that prevented it being sold for anything other than community use. The Chief Executive reported that the Council's solicitors had checked the land deeds and had advised that there were no restrictive covenants in place.

Noted.

2007/04 : CARRYDUFF LAND SALE - PRESENTATION BY TURKINGTON HOLDINGS

The Mayor welcomed Mr Jim McKeag of Turkington Holdings and his architect, Mr. Warwick McCullough.

In a powerpoint presentation, Mr. McCullough indicated that the proposal was for the purchase of land adjacent to land already owned by the developers. The scheme involved the replacement of the existing football pitch which was not of a good playing standard. The new pitch would be relocated to the rear of the park. He advised that on the perimeter of the pitch they would plant trees and install high mesh fencing. The scheme also included park seating, continuation of the walkways from the pitch to the Comber Road and a new bridge over the existing stream. He also indicated that it included a wall built of artificial stone material on the boundaries of the Council depot and the industrial estate.

In response to Members' queries, Mr McKeag advised that the developers currently had planning permission on the site they owned for mixed use, residential and retail development. Mr McCullough indicated that, if the Council agreed to sell the land, a revised application would be submitted to the Planning Service for approval. Mr. McCullough also confirmed that access to the new pitch would be via the car park at the Elim Church. He stated that the pitch would be a grass pitch measuring 43 m x 23 m which was a junior pitch and similar in size to the current pitch.

In response to a query by Councilor Drysdale, it was confirmed that the pitch would be maintained by the Council's Technical & Environmental Services Department. Alderman Robinson suggested that, since the existing pitch was a kickabout football pitch, the Council should designate the replacement pitch similarly and should not charge for its use.

2007/05 : CARRYDUFF LAND SALE – PRESENTATION BY THE ELIM CHURCH

The Mayor welcomed Pastor George Ritchie from the Elim Church to the meeting.

Pastor Ritchie thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak to Members. In a powerpoint presentation, he outlined the Church's background and its plans for the land. He reported that a new Church had been built in 1999 and had 45 parking spaces and 7 disabled spaces although the Church's requirements had been for 100 spaces. From a small congregation of about 40 people, the Church now had 100-150 members. He reported that the Church had purchased the nearby Methodist Hall and was developing projects with children and young people to provide a drop in centre and address issues such as underage drinking, substance abuse and vandalism. He referred to recent events organized by the Church including May Day celebrations attended by more than 2,000 people.

Pastor Ritchie advised that the Church's plans involved a total investment of over £1 million. He indicated that the land being requested from the Council would allow the Church to provide 50 extra car parking spaces.

The Mayor thanked Pastor Ritchie for his presentation. In response to Members' queries, Pastor Ritchie reassured Members that public parking and access to the park would be maintained.

(Councillor Henderson left the meeting at 6.10 pm)

2007/06 : CARRYDUFF LAND SALE – MR GARY HUTCHINSON

The Mayor welcomed Mr Gary Hutchinson to the meeting. Mr Hutchinson thanked Members for allowing him the opportunity to speak to the Council at short notice. He stated that he owned commercial premises in Carryduff and had operated a business there for 25 years. He indicated that his premises were on Edgar Road and he was proposing to develop a new unit of 9,500 square feet. He wished to buy a small piece of land from the Council to facilitate additional car parking and access.

Mr Hutchinson reported that in 1999 he had purchased a similar strip of ground from the Council when developing another unit. He stated that that unit was now let and was employing 12 people. It was a high tech industry selling goods throughout Europe and was producing rates revenue of £12,500 per annum. Mr Hutchinson hoped that the new unit would replicate the success of the first one.

In response to a query by the Planning Officer, Mr Hutchinson confirmed that he had full planning permission for the new unit.

Mr Hutchinson then left the meeting.

2007/07 : CARRYDUFF LAND SALES

Councillor Long enquired whether the Council had an obligation to advertise any land that it wished to sell in order to ensure that it obtained the best possible price. The Chief Executive responded that that the Council had discretion in this matter. With regard to the small piece of land required by Elim Church, he stated that it could be argued that it would have little market value to any other buyer and its sale to the Church would benefit the community and it could therefore be sold at a value decided by the District Valuer.

In relation to the land requested by Turkington Holdings, Alderman Robinson pointed out that the Council could end up getting less money on the open market than by negotiating directly with the potential purchaser. He stated that a piece of land was worth what a willing purchaser would pay for it and, if put on the open market, the purchaser would only have to outbid whoever else was bidding whereas the District Valuer could negotiate a price with the purchaser that would reflect the additional value of the land to that purchaser.

Alderman Rice objected to the sale of Council land to a developer in view of the need in Carryduff for social housing.

In response to a query from Councillor J. Beattie, the Planning Officer indicated that the Planning Service might in this instance regard the proposal to develop open space favourably. The proposed provision of an enhanced football pitch could make the proposal acceptable to comply with PPS8.

After discussion it was proposed by Alderman P Robinson, seconded by Councillor White and, on a show of hands 11 for and 3 against, it was

RESOLVED: that the council agree in principle to sell the designated lands to Turkington Holdings and to Elim Church but that the Chief Executive be asked to discuss with the Local Government Auditor how the Council could get the maximum amount of money on behalf of its ratepayers.

After further discussion it was

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Council do not agree to sell the triangular area of land in the centre of the park, in which Mr Hutchinson had an interest, as this would cut the park in two.

- (b) that the Council agree in principle to sell the narrow strip of land running down to Comber Road on condition that the purchaser relocate the fencing, security lighting and services and that the Chief Executive be asked to discuss with the Local Government Auditor how the Council could get the maximum amount of money on behalf of its ratepayers.

STAFF IN COMMITTEE

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2007/09 : MEMBERSHIP OF ESTIMATE SUB-COMMITTEE

At the request of Councillor Drysdale, who indicated that he was unable to attend meetings of the Estimates Sub-Committee, it was

RESOLVED: That Councillor Henderson attend meetings of the Estimates Sub-Committee in place of Councillor Drysdale.

As there was no further business, the meeting ended at 6.47 pm

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE