

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, 18 October 2007, at 7.15 p.m.

PRESENT: Councillor M Chambers
(in the Chair)

ALDERMEN: M Copeland
J Norris MBE
G Rice MBE

COUNCILLORS: Mrs A M Beattie (from 8.05 pm)
J Beattie
J Cochrane
D Drysdale (from 7.30 pm)
Mrs S Duncan
C Hall
B Hanvey
M Henderson
Miss R Hughes MBE
T Jeffers
M Long
V McCoy
G Robinson
J Spratt
C Tosh
L Walker

IN ATTENDANCE: Chief Executive and Assistant Members' Services Officer

APOLOGIES: Apologies were received on behalf of Aldermen Rice, Robinson and White and Councillors Bunting and Henderson

2007/555 : PRESENTATION BY THE ELECTORAL OFFICE

The Chairman welcomed Ms Jeanette Murray, Newtownards Area Electoral Officer, to the meeting.

Ms Murray began the presentation by outlining the details of continuous registration, which had now replaced the annual canvass. The last annual canvass had taken place in 2006, and it was anticipated that the next canvass would be carried out in 2010 and every ten years from then on.

The aim of continuous registration is to keep registers as accurate and comprehensive as they were at the last canvass and to update the register as

soon as changes are notified. A revised version of the register will be published on 1 December each year.

New statutory powers mean that the Electoral Office can obtain information from:

- Central Services Agency
- Department of Work and Pensions
- NIHE
- Registrar General
- District Councils

The new form will be widely available throughout Northern Ireland and can be obtained in many different languages. There will also be a change to the law, allowing individuals to register up to 11 days before any election.

Registered persons will also be able to obtain an Electoral Identity Card, which will carry the PASS logo and which can be used as proof of identity or age. Measures are also taken to guard against the risk of identity theft.

The Electoral Office will remind people that, unless they are registered, they will not be able to vote, and they might face difficulties in obtaining credit etc. Furthermore, failing to provide information to the Electoral Office when requested is an offence carrying a maximum fine of £1,000.

During the ensuing discussion, Councillor Duncan enquired whether the Electoral Office had contacted immigrants in the province, particularly East Europeans. Ms Murray replied that contact had been made with a Polish community worker in Newtownards. Information was also obtained from NIHE, and there were plans to contact other housing associations and estate agents as well. Councillor Duncan suggested that the Citizens' Advice Bureau might be a useful source of information regarding immigrants.

Councillor Robinson enquired about the length of time it would take for the Electoral Office to refer persons who ignore requests for information to the PPS for prosecution. Ms Murray advised that Officers made three attempts in writing to request information, and if no response had been received, the Chief Electoral Officer would be informed. However, currently the Electoral Office was in the process of gathering information.

Alderman Rice advised that elderly people might not be aware of these changes, therefore she felt it would be beneficial if representatives from the Electoral Office contacted them or representatives from housing associations such as Oakley to explain the process.

The Chairman thanked Ms Murray for her presentation.

Noted.

2007/556 : PRESENTATION BY THE ROADS SERVICE – EASTERN DIVISION REPORT AUTUMN 2007

The Chairman welcomed Mr Kevin Monaghan, Deputy Divisional Roads Manager, and Mr John Kee, Section Engineer for Castlereagh, to the meeting.

Mr Monaghan stated that the main purpose of the presentation was to provide Members with an update of operations. He took Members through the report and answered queries relating to the following points:

- Concern regarding the length of time taken to carry out additional works near the junction of the Moneyreagh Road / Hillsborough Road, as there had been several accidents
- Concern regarding surface water on the B178 near Carryduff, which had caused accidents
- Repeated request for traffic lights at Primrose Hill
- Concern regarding lack of safer school routes in Saintfield Road
- Concern regarding the site for park 'n ride
- Concern regarding proposed replacement of safety fencing on Gilnahirk Road
- Concern that no changes to road layout at the new development at the Gilnahirk Road / Lisleen Road East had been made by the developer
- Request for additional parking spaces in Ballybeen Estate
- Concern regarding 50 mph speed limit at the Tesco roundabout near the Purdysburn Road
- Concern regarding roadworks carried out by Phoenix Gas to lay gas pipes
- Concern regarding the length of time taken to finish the carriageway at Glenholme and Beechgrove Crescent
- Replacement of bus shelter at Newtown Park
- Concern regarding motorbikes and quad bikes on Comber Greenway

Mr Monaghan advised that an economic assessment needed to be carried out in respect of the Moneyreagh Road. He also advised that the Department had been in contact with the developer of the Primrose Hill development regarding the installation of traffic lights.

With regard to the park 'n ride site, Mr Monaghan stated that the site had been identified in the Belfast Metropolitan Area Transport Plan and had gone through the planning process.

Regarding Members' concerns about the roundabout at the Newtownbreda Tesco store, Mr Monaghan advised that Tesco had been very co-operative and he would pass Members' comments on.

Mr Monaghan responded to Members' queries about the replacement of a bus shelter at Newtown Park by explaining that the Department had had difficulties in getting the bus shelter replaced, but he anticipated that it would be installed in November.

The Chairman thanked Mr Monaghan and Mr Kee for giving their presentation.

Noted.

2007/557 : GILNAHIRK ROAD RIGHT OF WAY – PUBLIC INQUIRY

Councillor Robinson reiterated the Council's resolution to write to the Environment Heritage Service in respect of the extinguishment of right of way in the Gilnahirk Road area. He further requested that the Council contact the Chairman of the public inquiry, who is an independent adjudicator from Scotland, advising that all parties in this Council object to the extinguishment of right of way. Councillor Robinson also requested approval that the Planning Officer attend the inquiry on 8 November 2007 to represent the Council's view in this regard.

Councillor Long stated that it was important to bring this issue to residents' attention, therefore he seconded the proposal, and it was

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the Council contact the Chairman of the public inquiry, advising that all parties in this Council object to the extinguishment of right of way in the Gilnahirk Road area
- (b) That approval be granted that the Planning Officer attend the public inquiry hearing on 8 November 2007.

2007/558 : PRESENTATION BY THE NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING EXECUTIVE – DISTRICT HOUSING PLAN FOR CASTLEREAGH 2007-2008

The Chairman welcomed Ms Lorraine Campbell, South-East Area Manager, and Mr Colm McCaughley, Director of Housing and Regeneration, to the meeting.

Mr McCaughley passed on Mr Paddy McIntyre's thanks for the Council's support during the past year. He continued to say that he hoped the Council would continue to offer support in the years ahead.

Ms Campbell then took Members through the details of the District Housing Plan. She outlined the key issues for Castlereagh:

- A total allocation of £9,286 million for services in the financial year March 2007-2008, including energy efficiency initiatives such as heating conversions, cavity wall insulation and installation of solar panels
- District Offices work closely with 45 community groups in the area regarding issues such as crime prevention, interpretation services for migrant workers and community safety issues
- Decrease of sales to sitting tenants from 205 in 2004 to 81 in 2007
- Need for social housing, with 1,101 applicants in December 2006, 639 of which were deemed to be in housing stress, and 250 allocations during the year

- Claimants receiving housing benefit in the private sector had increased from 952 in 2005-2006 to 977 in 2006-2007
- Housing Associations had completed 17 units of new accommodation in 2006-2007, and another 101 units are currently under construction, and three schemes totaled 53 units of general needs housing and one scheme for 20 units of supported housing are due to commence in 2007-2008
- In 2006-2007 improvements and planned maintenance had been carried out to 393 properties, with ten schemes for 1,095 units currently being carried out as well as plans to carry out a further 13 schemes totaling 1,037 units during the next year, with a total spend of £8,102 million on improvements, repairs and adaptation of homes.

Ms Campbell also thanked Councillor White for his contribution as a member of the Northern Ireland Housing Council and the Council for the support and relief offered to residents during the recent floods.

During the ensuing discussion, Alderman Rice enquired in respect of housing applications in the Carryduff area. Furthermore, she enquired how the NIHE intended to make efficiency savings that would have no adverse effects. Ms Campbell replied that the NIHE was aware of a housing shortage in the Carryduff area, and there were plans to support a scheme creating 23 homes.

Councillor Long offered his thanks to the Housing Executive for their help during the floods. He also enquired whether the Council would be involved in shared future housing schemes. Ms Campbell replied that the pilot scheme in Enniskillen had been very positive, and the NIHE continued to work with the Department for Social Development, Housing Associations etc to develop proposals for a number of pilot projects for shared future housing schemes.

Councillor Robinson also thanked the NIHE for their support and assistance. In respect of planned modernisation of services, he enquired how this would be progressed. Councillor Robinson felt that especially the elderly preferred more personal services. Ms Campbell explained that there were no plans for dilution of services and that the NIHE intended to retain local offices, but that, in addition, plans included the establishment of processing centres.

Councillor J Beattie raised concerns in respect of lack of housing to suit applicants. Mr McCaughley replied that housing was allocated according to needs and all areas would be risk-assessed by April 2008.

Following the discussion, the Chairman thanked the representatives from the NIHE for their presentation.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 10.00 pm.

MAYOR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE