

CASTLEREAGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the proceedings of the special meeting of the Central Services Committee held, in committee, in the Council Chamber, Civic & Administrative Offices, Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB, on Tuesday 21 June 2011 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

Aldermen:

S Duncan
G Rice MBE
G Robinson

Councillors:

M Chambers
M Copeland
D Drysdale
M Gregg
B Hanvey
M Long
V McCoy (in the chair)
T Morrow
P O'Reilly
T Sandford
J Spratt MLA
J White (Mayor)

In attendance:

Director of Administration & Community Services,
Community Services Manager, Assistant Member
Services Officer

Apologies:

Aldermen Beattie and Henderson, Councillors Beattie,
Cochrane, Hall, Howard and Jeffers

CS/2011/80 : DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were invited to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests (including gifts and hospitality) they should have in respect of items on this agenda. There were no declarations of interest.

Councillor Robinson left the meeting at 7.05 pm

**CS/2011/81 : PRESENTATION FROM CLONDUFF COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION
RE: VOLUNTARY MANAGEMENT**

The Director of Administration & Community Services gave a brief background to the presentation. She advised that over the past year officers had been authorised by Council to enter into discussions with local community organisations regarding voluntary management arrangements for its non-staffed centres at Braniel, Clonduff and Dungoyne. She reported that arrangements for Dungoyne were at an advanced stage with the local bowling group taking over the lease and that Braniel Community Association would be making a presentation to Council in September.

With regard to Clonduff, she reported that Clonduff Community Association had previously brought forward a business case to Council. It had however been decided that it would be better for this matter to be considered afresh by the newly formed Council.

Councillor McCoy welcomed representatives of Clonduff Community Association to the meeting and Mr Jamie Leitch, Chair of the Association, addressed the meeting.

Mr Leitch thanked the Committee for the opportunity to present the Association's proposals for voluntary management of Clonduff Centre. He stated that the Association's objective was to develop a range of programmes and activities that would involve the whole community from the estate and surrounding areas.

With regard to management of the centre, he stated that the Association would like to put a Centre Manager in place for a probationary period of one year to be reviewed at regular intervals. He stated that the Association's management committee, which was made up of local people and representatives of groups that used the centre, would oversee the day to day running of the centre. He advised that a steering group was being set up and included some professional people with knowledge and experience in the community development field.

Mr Leitch stated that the Association was supported by CFNI and would receive guidance from them on various issues including fundraising and promoting the centre to other groups. The management committee would investigate training opportunities and several members were currently undertaking relevant educational and training courses. He stated that the Association was also meeting other groups in Belfast that had taken on a similar voluntary management role.

Mr Leitch advised that the Association had been formed in October 2002. He stated that it had been running the youth club since 2003 and other activities included a parent and toddlers group twice a week, a women's group and a summer scheme for older people. He advised that the Association had recently Entered into a partnership with local community groups in Cregagh, Braniel and Carryduff and with a view to investigating and accessing funding opportunities to

develop community development activities. However it was also envisaged that the Association might be able to access capital monies for centre improvement.

Mr Leitch stated that it was envisaged that the Association would continue to be supported by the Council with the current Council rental rates for user groups being maintained by the Association. It would be a priority for the Association to welcome new groups and promote increased rental of facilities. He stated that the Association hoped to attract two social economy projects and other new user groups such as after schools groups, diner clubs, senior citizen groups and women's groups. It was considered that income generated by new groups as well as the existing user groups would be in the region of £14,000 per annum.

Mr Leitch indicated that it was hoped that the rental income together with financial support from the Council would enable the Association to run the centre and this would be an important factor in promoting increased usage of the centre. He stated that the Association were investigating funding opportunities with the Big Lottery and OFMDFM. If the Association could secure a 10 year lease on the centre, it would hope to secure funding from the Big Lottery to carryout refurbishment and improvements such as installation of efficient heating systems and solar panels.

Alderman Rice arrived at 7.20 pm

In conclusion, Mr Leitch stated that, with financial support from the Council and a 10 year lease on the centre, Clonduff Community Association was confident that it could manage and develop the centre to make it a modern and well used facility for the community.

The Chair thanked Mr Leitch for his presentation and opened the meeting to Members' questions.

With regard to Mr Leitch's reference to OFMDFM funding, Councillor Spratt declared an interest on the basis that he was a member of the NI Assembly's OFMDFM Committee. Councillor Spratt raised queries regarding the social economic projects referred to by Mr Leitch and the professional qualifications/experience of the Association's management committee.

With regard to the social economic projects, Mr Leitch advised that these would be a café that would involve the diners club and a local shop. He indicated that these were longer term objectives that would require an extension to the centre to provide additional space. He also provided additional information on the background/qualifications of individual members of the management committee.

Councillor White enquired whether the Association would be running the café and shop itself. Mr Leitch stated that this was being investigated and that it was hoped that the local community would be enabled to run these businesses by the

provision of appropriate training. He confirmed that any profits from the businesses would be reinvested in the centre to ensure that it was self-sustaining.

Councillor Hanvey indicated that he would like to see more detailed information on the financial aspects of the proposal including anticipated rental income; the financial support package required from the Council and the duration of that support; and whether the Association's costings were fully inclusive of all relevant cost including maintenance, insurance, fuel, etc.

Mr Leitch stated that the Association's financial projections were based on the current running costs of the centre which were in the region of £18,000-£19,000 per annum. He advised that it was anticipated that the Centre Manager would undertake maintenance and cleaning duties in addition to running the centre. With regard to the duration of Council support, he advised that as a voluntary community group the Association would hope to receive ongoing support from the Council's community development section.

Councillor White referred to the list of activities that the Association hoped to provide at the centre and enquired whether it had been able to assess the demand for these activities. Mr Leitch responded that the Association was already providing a wide range of activities including martial arts and kick boxing and that funding had been secured to purchase equipment for these activities and this was currently stored in an outside storage container.

In response to a query by Alderman Rice as to the time scale for getting the social economy businesses up and running, Mr Leitch emphasised that these were long term projects and that the first priority of the Association would be to increase usage of the centre by attracting more user groups. The Association would then investigate funding opportunities in order to extend the centre facilities to provide additional space and to access training to build up the skill base required to run the businesses.

Mr Leitch advised that the Association kept in touch with the local community through its range of activities, by holding meetings to update people on progress and by other events such as fun days. He stated that the after schools group had resulted from a public meeting attended by 15 mothers, 5 of whom had volunteered to help with the group. He stated that 13 members of the Association had undergone Access NI checks and 4 of these would be helping with the after schools club. Any parents involved in the club would also be required to undergo the Access NI checks.

Councillor Copeland thanked Mr Leitch for his presentation and stated that he was very impressed with the Association's work in developing and presenting its proposal. In response to a query by Councillor White regarding banking arrangements, Mr Leitch stated that the Association already had banking arrangements in place for each of its activities.

The Director of Administration & Community Services advised that a sum of £23,000 had been included in the Council's financial estimates for Council to run the centre directly without full-time staff. She stated that the appointment of a Centre Manager would eat up most of that figure and she enquired how the Association would cover the salary costs together with all the other running costs of the centre. Mr Leitch advised that the financial support from the Council would still go towards covering running costs and it was hoped that additional rental income together with other sources of income could be generated in order to cover salary costs. He stated that he had been employed on a part-time basis over recent months by an outside body to increase usage of the centre and was beginning to attract new user groups. He also advised that the Association would be contributing to the management and running of the centre on a voluntary basis.

Councillor O'Reilly left the meeting at 7.45 pm

In response to a query by Councillor Gregg, Mr Leitch stated that he did not see a problem arising in any of the current user groups leaving the centre. He advised that the Association considered that by building up confidence in the community more user groups would be encouraged to use the centre and to seek funding opportunities to cover their activities. With regard to the Association's plans to extend the centre, he stated that the extension envisaged would be quite a modest one and that funding opportunities were now becoming available to groups and organisations that had not been able to secure funding under Peace III and other initiatives.

Mr Leitch and the representatives of Clonduff Community Association left the meeting at 7.55 pm

Members felt that the Community Association had made excellent progress in developing their proposals and plans for the voluntary management arrangement. Some concern was expressed that the proposals lacked more detailed financial information and an end date for the provision of ongoing financial support by the Council. They also raised queries about the readiness of the Association to assume management of the centre at this stage and felt that there was a need for Community Services staff to work closely with the group to prepare for the full take-over of responsibility.

The Director of Administration and Community Services reported that the Association's business plan had been circulated to the previous Council and, more recently, to the Central Services Committee.

The Director referred to a number of other local examples including support for Greenway Women's Centre and Ballybeen Women's Centre that had been provided for a period of 4/5 years after which the groups had been required to be self-sustaining. She advised that Clonduff Community Association had been

working with the Community Services section over the past year to develop its proposals and business plans and to undergo training to upgrade skills. She advised that voluntary management arrangements had been introduced in Belfast for community centres and sports pitches and had generally worked well. She also referred to management concerns about unstaffed centres and their unsupervised use by various groups.

Councillor Drysdale left the meeting at 8.05 pm

The Community Services Manager advised on the developmental work that had taken place with the Community Association. He confirmed that, while more work needed to be done on the financial aspects of the proposal, the Association would be in a position to access funding sources that would not be open to the Council. With regard to a query by Councillor Long regarding the Association's credit history, the Community Services Manager advised that, whilst there had been issues in the past, the account was being kept up to date.

Councillor Drysdale returned to the meeting at 8.10 pm

Councillor Spratt acknowledged the concerns expressed by Members but advised that, if the Council delayed the handover to the Association, funding opportunities that were available at this stage might not be available further down the line.

Councillor Hanvey left the meeting at 8.20 and returned at 8.23 pm

In response to issues raised by Councillor Chambers, the Community Services Manager advised that, as in the case of Dungoyne, the Council's solicitors would draw up a detailed agreement with appropriate safeguards including provisions specifying that ownership of the building remained with the Council and detailing the separate areas of responsibility of the Council and the voluntary management group and including clauses to cover the eventuality of the Council resuming control of the building if the agreement was not upheld by the voluntary management group.

Alderman Duncan and Councillor Copeland left the meeting at 8.35 pm

In response to a query by Councillor Hanvey regarding a Council strategy and protocols for other groups wishing to enter into similar voluntary management agreements, the Director advised that this issue was being included in the Council's Community Support Plan for 2011/2014.

Alderman Duncan returned to the meeting at 8.37 pm

After further discussion it was proposed by Councillor White, seconded by Councillor Drysdale and

RESOLVED: that officers continue to work with Clonduff Community Association with a view to bringing a transition plan back to Committee in September 2011, outlining the key steps and actions the group would need to undertake to enable a voluntary management agreement to be put in place for Clonduff Centre that would take effect from 1 April 2012.

CS/2011/82 : PRESENTATION FROM BLU ZEBRA CONSULTING RE: COMMUNITY SUPPORT PLAN 2011-2014

The Director of Administration & Community Services provided Members with details of the funding arrangements for community services and advised that, as part of these arrangements, the Council was required to produce a Community Support Plan. She stated that the presentation by Blu Zebra Consultants was to inform the Committee on findings and progress to date but that there was still some work to be completed before the Community Plan could be finalised including specific output targets and objectives. She indicated that Members' comments and input would be welcomed.

Councillors Drysdale and Sandford left the meeting and Councillor Copeland returned at 8.45 pm.

The Chair then welcomed the representatives of Blu Zebra Consulting, Ms Therese Hogg and Ms Ann McGeeney, to the meeting.

Ms Hogg outlined the background to the assignment stated that they had been asked to review the effectiveness of the Council's current community support function, to conduct a needs assessment and audit and, based on their findings, to develop a Community Support Plan for 2011-2014.

Councillors Copeland left the meeting and Councillor Drysdale returned to the meeting at 8.46 pm

Ms Hogg then outlined the aim of the Community Services Programme which was to strengthen local communities, increase community participation and promote social inclusion through the stimulation and support of community groups, community activity and local advice services. She stated that the expected programme outcomes were to produce communities that were active, influential, informed and sustainable.

Ms Hogg provided details of current community services measures and developmental strategic objectives as follows:

- Community Support/Capacity Building
- Communication
- Resourcing the Sector
- Financing the Sector

- Special Programmes and Activities
- Implementation/Corporate Cohesion

Councillor Chambers left the meeting at 8.50 pm

Ms Hogg then provided information on the background to the service including the council ward areas together with information on community centre facilities, staffing levels, grant aid delivery, summer schemes, etc. She then provided details of current budget and areas of expenditure, with budget allocations summarised as follows:

Community Support Staff	26%
Community Centres	52%
Grants to Voluntary Groups	2.2%
Advice Services	8%
Summer Schemes	11%

Alderman Rice and Councillor Spratt left the meeting and Councillor Sandford returned at 8.51 pm

Ms Hogg then provided details of consultation that had taken place over recent weeks in the community and with staff. She advised that a total of 160 people had taken part in the consultation process as well as in an on-line survey. She also thanked those Members who had contributed to the process by providing on-line interviews.

Alderman Rice and Councillors Copeland and Spratt returned to the meeting at 8.53 pm

Ms Hogg outlined a range of overarching issues as follows:

- Leadership by Elected Members - She advised that this needed to take the lead from the corporate strategy and that Members should be clear on vision of what the area would look like in 10/15 years' time and be clear on the end result.
- Community Services was a core connector and support to community planning – needed to be seen and understood by others; to be connected to the rest of what Council does, working as a corporate resource permeating the entire organisation and linked to good relations, equality and affirmative action.
- Area based planning model required – whole area planning; link to what other statutory players do; GIS mapping; Community planner role in preparation for the new community planning remit and potential RPA changes.

- Role of staff; Team direction and support; Community Development Staff; Facilities Managers/Assistants/Caretakers
- Role of Centres to be reviewed – tools for other activities; beacon for groups to get engaged; local service hub; upgrading of some centres; gaps in service; links with other organisations; GIS mapping of all centres and other facilities; link between play development, council's work, use of green space; voluntary management of centres; issues relating to staffed and unstaffed centres; equipment in unstaffed centres to be upgraded; streamline opening hours
- Redefine function of Summer Scheme – covering wider needs, education, health, family support, cross community approach – need for review
- Development of can do attitude by the groups
- Small programme development awards – consideration of potential.
- Networking between groups and between groups and statutory players, including local area based forums.
- Review of Advice Services
- Review of Grants

Councillor Spratt left at 9.05 pm; Councillors Copeland and Gregg left at 9.10 pm

Ms Hogg completed her presentation by outlining Indicators/Outcomes as follows:

- Improved information for communities about how to affect change
- Improved service delivery for local communities with quality and appropriate services
- Engaged in decision making and consulted on key decisions by Council
- Better connected and networked community
- More integrated approach to work in local areas
- Greater hope and sense of pride in local areas
- Improved influence by communities
- Improved asset management by communities
- Increased delivery of service on behalf of Council and others – empowered and self-sustained communities.

Ms Hogg then summarised the issues for discussion as follows: leadership for change; support to the communities; partnership building with other statutory players; networking with communities and with statutory agencies; information flow and signposting; resourcing the sector.

The Chair thanked Ms Hogg for her presentation and opened the meeting to Members' questions.

Councillor Long enquired about improving and increasing community engagement. He also referred to voluntary management of centres and suggested that centres run by the Council tended to be viewed as more neutral and professional. Ms Hogg stated that the Council needed to take a more proactive approach in its interaction with communities rather than offering support solely to those who come and ask for it. She stated that voluntary management of centre was a means of empowering communities and getting them to take responsibility for community services and facilities and that this would involve challenging communities to see the bigger picture and ensure that voluntary management centres were inclusive and professional.

Councillor Gregg returned to the meeting at 9.12 pm

Alderman Rice stated that one of the problems in Carryduff was that there were two communities: haves and have nots. She also considered that Lough Moss was an under used facility but suggested that consideration needed to be given to the distinction between a leisure facility and a community services facility. She referred to the level of housing development that had taken place in Carryduff with little other infrastructure or service development. She also stated that there was a large ethnic community in Carryduff that wished to become more integrated with the rest of the community.

Ms Hogg stated that Community Service must work with existing group and communities to build confidence and enable them to widen their remit and become more inclusive. She referred to successful work in Moneyreagh to develop and improve community relations and activities.

Councillor Hanvey referred to the difficulties of igniting the enthusiasm of people to motivate them to become involved with the Council and with their community. He also raised a query about GIS mapping.

Councillor Sandford left the meeting at 9.21 pm

Ms Hogg stated that she had discussed with GIS mapping exercise with the Council's Planning Officer and that this would include open spaces as well as buildings and facilities. With regard to capturing the imagination of people, Ms Hogg referred to a successful exercise whereby children in a community had been asked for their opinions on services and ideas for the future and parents had then been invited in to listen to the children's thoughts and, through this, had become motivated to get involved in development and delivery of community initiatives. She suggested that another means of motivating people was to let them know what services, opportunities and grants were available. Ms McGeeney stated that a lot

of people who were not involved in the community would say that they had never been asked and therefore the adoption of a more proactive approach could bring results.

The Director of Administration & Community Services stated that the consultants had carried out a lot of work to seek the views of the community, elected members and staff and that the next stage would be to put meat on the bones and establish specific targets and objectives. She envisaged that one of the major changes in the approach would be for Community Services to become more proactive rather than reactive, acting as the Council's link between the local community and Council services and resources through a central support model.

Councillor Gregg referred to the high level of housing development that had taken place in the Borough over the past 10-15 years and suggested that a rebalance of services and facilities was now required in view of this. He expressed disappointment that, despite the efforts of the consultants, the level of response to the consultation process was relatively small. He felt that a community planning approach might be of benefit.

Councillor White stated that the findings presented to the Committee by Blu Zebra Consultants was a good basis for building a Community Support Plan for the next 3-4 years.

It was then proposed by Councillor White, seconded by Councillor Long and

RESOLVED: that the Council accept the findings of Blu Zebra Consultants as presented to the Committee as a good basis on which to proceed with preparation of its Community Support Plan for 2011-2014.

There being no further business, the meeting ended at 9.30 pm

CHAIRMAN

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Adopted by the Council this _____ day of

_____ 2011 with the exception of

Minute Nos. _____

MAYOR

CHIEF EXECUTIVE