

MINUTES OF MEETING OF STRANORLAR ELECTORAL AREA
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 25TH JANUARY, 2005 IN
THE VILLA ROSE HOTEL, BALLYBOFEY

Members Present: -

Cllr J J Reid (Chairperson)
Cllr Patrick McGowan
Cllr Alice Bonnar

Officials Present: -

Gerry Gilroy, Area Manager, Corporate Services
Eileen Doherty, Staff Officer, Corporate Services
Peadar Thomas, Area Manager, Roads & Transportation
Claire Mulhall, Community & Enterprise Development Officer
Claire McGeever, Area Engineer, Roads
Mary Hannigan, Area Manager, Housing
Denis Kelly, Area Manager, Planning & Economic Development
Conal McGettigan, Area Planner
Mary McBride, Central Planning Unit
Michael Breslin, Area Manager, Water/Environment/Emergency Services
Jim Harley, Senior Planner, Planning & Economic Development

Youth Councillors Present: -

Cathy McNamee
Sean Armstrong
Andrew McNulty, Project Officer

Apologies: -

Brendan Porter, Area Engineer, Water/Environment/Emergency Services
Clíodhna Campbell, Senior Executive Engineer

SEC 01/00 ADOPTION OF MINUTES

01.01 Adoption of Minutes

On the proposal of Cllr McGowan seconded by Cllr Bonnar the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 30th November, 2004 were agreed subject to the following amendment - Minute 58.1 to be amended to read 'Members expressed their concern at the current situation in Convoy submitting that if the problems with the Committees are not resolved then the progress of the proposed community site would be threatened.'

SEC 02/00 ROADS & TRANSPORTATION
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02.01 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Bus Shelters

Ms McGeever advised Members that she had a meeting with Mr John McLaughlin, CIE that morning to discuss the bus shelter along the Lifford Road and she now had a drawing for the proposal. Members expressed their annoyance at the lack of progress in this matter submitting an agreement had been reached at a meeting with CIE 6 months ago to prioritise the Stranorlar area however drawings were only becoming available now.

Mr Thomas submitted that the provision of bus shelters was in fact a matter for CIE and not the Council however the Council were accommodating CIE with the provision of the shelter at this location. Ms McGeever advised that kerbing would be done at this location within 1 month and the shelter could then be progressed.

Cllr McGowan requested that provision be made on the other side of the road also for passengers disembarking from buses. Cllrs Reid & Bonnar supported this request.

Taxi Rank

Members raised a number of queries regarding the legal position of the existing ranks outside the Balor Theatre and whether there were one or two properly designated ranks.

Cllr Reid questioned if the ranks were properly marked out and also if the spaces were the right size.

Mr Thomas referred to the bye-laws however Cllr Bonnar submitted that the bye-laws had not been adopted as she had objected to two ranks at the existing location as there was no room for lorries to park to service local businesses if two ranks were in place.

Mr Thomas agreed to check the situation and have a report for the next meeting, which would fully clarify the matter.

Following further discussion it was suggested that one Taxi Rank be designated outside the Balor Theatre and another suitable space be designated on the opposite side of the Road, above McElhinneys.

Cllr Reid submitted that both spaces should be beside each other.

It was agreed that the Planning Service and Roads Service would meet to consider suitable locations for a taxi rank and bring proposals back to members.

House at Killygordon

Ms McGeever advised Members that the safety bollards had now been erected at this location.

Lighting in Ballybofey Car Park

Ms McGeever advised Members that she had sent a plan to the ESB for the upgrading of lighting in the car park around the Supervalu area and she estimated that it would cost in the region of €16,000. All the existing lights would be removed and replaced and it is hoped that the works would be carried out immediately. The cost of the works would be charged against income from the Pay & Display.

Cllr McGowan also requested that the lighting situation be examined on the other side of the road at Lower Main Street, as this area was also fairly dark. He submitted that there was light to be erected outside Justin Brady's however this did not happen. Ms McGeever agreed to follow up.

02.02 2005 Road Works Programme

Mr Thomas advised the Members that confirmation of funding was currently being awaited for the 2005 Road Works programme.

Mr Thomas circulated a draft Surface Dressing programme at the meeting. He requested Members to examine this list and to revert to him at the next meeting with their comments/proposals.

02.03 Stranorlar Car Park

Mr Thomas advised Members that Ms Campbell had sent her apologies, as she was not available for today's meeting. She is to attend the next meeting however and an up to date report on this matter will be available. Members agreed to defer this matter until the next meeting.

02.04 McClay's Corner

In the absence of Ms Campbell this matter was also deferred.

02.05 Other Matters Arising

Castlefin Bridge

Cllr McGowan raised a query in relation to the upgrading of Castlefin Bridge and the possibility of securing Cross Border funding for this initiative. Mr Thomas submitted that Ms Campbell's report on this matter would possibly include this proposal.

Drainage at Dreenan Bridge

Cllr Bonnar referred to two bad drains at Dreenan Bridge and another one along Dreenan Road, which caused problems during the recent flooding in the area. An update on proposals for this area would be available for the next meeting.

Deputations received by the Electoral Area Committee

Members referred to issues raised by Deputations recently received by the Electoral Area Committee - Navenny St. Residents, Ard McCool Residents and requested that Ms McGeever liase with the local FAS schemes in the area, who could do some of the work in these areas.

Members requested that all issues raised by the Ard McCool residents be addressed. A programme of work should be drawn up and rolled out in this area.

Members also requested that the ramp at Millbrae be painted to highlight the ramp to motorists.

Logue's Bridge

Cllr McGowan referred to the condition of the bridge at this location submitting that you could see down through the cracks where the potholes were.

Grass-cutting

Cllr McGowan raised a query in relation to the proposals for 2005.

Ms Hannigan submitted that the procedure in place for 2004 had worked well and it is hoped to follow the same procedure this year. She also submitted that the Housing section would be proposing incentives this year to get residents involved and take ownership of their estates. There was now an estate management fund in place.

SEC 03/00 PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
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03.01 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Development at Convoy - 99/3375

Mr Kelly advised that as, the developer had taken no action; the Council were proceeding with a prosecution in this matter.

Enforcement Notice - P622221358

Mr Kelly advised Members that Court proceedings had been postponed in this instance to allow the applicant to regularise the matter.

03.01 Registration of Quarries - Planning & Development Act 2000

Mr Harley circulated a report to Members at the meeting outlining details on the above matter. He advised that the Act placed an onus on quarry owners, who haven't received planning permission in the five years up to 28th April 2004, to register their quarries with the Council before 27 April 2005. If the quarries aren't registered they will be deemed unauthorised and the Council will take action against the developers. Mr Harley advised Members that as at today's date 25th January 2005 no applications to register had been received.

Cllr Bonnar queried what the next step would be following registration. Mr Harley advised that the Council would examine the development and if the quarry was over 5 hectares in size, was near an SAC or if the Council felt there was a threat to the environment then the developer would be requested to submit a planning application and an EIS if applicable. The Council would also take into account the fact that the quarries were being used for a number of years. He submitted that the Act was a facility for the Council to bring older quarries up to standard.

Cllr McGowan submitted that there was a reluctance on behalf of developers to register their quarries and suggested that if there were no registrations by the closing date then the Council should organise a workshop for all interested parties to explain the situation and relay developers fears on the matter. Mr Harley advised that the Council did hold a workshop 18 months ago and the matter was also advertised in the papers. He also submitted that advertisements would be published in papers again shortly. Cllr McGowan suggested that a Council Official be designated to go out to talk to each quarry owner to encourage them to register their quarries. Mr Harley acknowledged that there was reluctance among quarry owners to register their quarries however under the Act the onus was on them to make application to the Council.

03.02 County Development Plan Review 2005 - Rural Housing Policy

Mr. Harley advised the meeting that following the County Manager's report, which set out the Council's view on the submissions arising from the initial round of Workshops with the general public, the Council must now proceed to the next phase of the County Development Plan review- the drafting of an initial Draft Plan. This must be completed within 12

weeks of the County Manager's report i.e. by 4th April 2005. The Council members then have a maximum period of 8 weeks to consider same before the Draft Plan is presented to the public for consultation and comment. The formal Draft County Development Plan will therefore be published on or before 30th May 2005.

This presentation was to allow the members at a local level consider the issue of Rural Housing Policy and the implications of the consultation paper issued in March 2004, by the Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, "Sustainable Rural Housing". These guidelines set out how the Government's policies on rural housing are to be implemented in the development plans of Local Authorities and on the decisions on planning applications.

Mr Harley circulated maps to Members that identified the existing urban areas from the rural areas. He advised that the existing control points as set out in the County Development Plan 2000 (as varied) have sufficient capacity to facilitate growth and should not be extended under this plan review. Rural areas would then be further divided into Weak Rural Areas and Strong Rural Areas. The existing 'Clar' areas could be used as a guideline for the weaker rural areas.

He also submitted that Landscape categories as set out in the Current County Development Plan 2000 (as varied) should be retained with the provisions that pockets of land within one category, if considered more appropriate to another lower classification, could be accommodated. Members noted that a 'workshop' to be attended by all the elected members would be arranged before the Draft Plan is presented to the full Council.

03.03 Recent Refusals

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda.

03.04 Planning Enforcements

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda.

03.05 Planning statistics

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda.

Mr Kelly submitted that the number of refusals in the Stranorlar Electoral Area was low compared to the other Electoral Areas however he expressed disappointment at the number of invalid applications being received from agents in the area. He advised that he would have statistics available for the next meeting on the number of invalid applications being received from individual agents. Agents would not be named in this report.

Mr Kelly advised that the Planning Section have been in contact with the relevant agents in this regard as the matter raised issues not only for the Planning Department but also for the agents and the applicants concerned.

Agents have been give an opportunity to talk to a technician within the Planning Department and they have also been made aware that performance indicators have been established and that these will also be made available to the public.

Mr Kelly advised he would have the performance indicators available for a future meeting.

SEC 04/00 HOUSING

04.01 Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

Allocation of Housing Starts

The allocation of housing starts is being considered in the context of the Action Plan submitted by each Local Authority to the Department and it is hoped they will be notified to the Council over the coming months.

Cllr Bonnar submitted that, in view of the current housing need in the Twin Towns, that all available 'starts' should be used there.

Cllr Reid expressed his disappointment at the lack of local authority housing in the area.

Ms Hannigan advised that she was talking to developers on a continuous basis to secure housing through the Part V procedure.

Voluntary Housing Scheme Convoy

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda confirming that North and West Housing had recently signed the contract to purchase the site at Convoy, and that as soon as this is finalised, mortgage documents will be completed and work can commence on the erection of the housing units.

Ms Hannigan advised that a formal written request had now been received from the Convoy and District Development Association Ltd requesting that the Council transfer the site identified for the proposed 'Community Facility' to them. Members were reminded that the funding for this facility as a result of the development of the Voluntary Housing Project could only be paid to the approved Voluntary Housing Body. This had been discussed with the Council's solicitor who had advised that the preferred option to progress this matter was for the site to remain in the ownership of the Voluntary Housing Body, and an agreement be entered into between them and the Development Association in relation to the funding and the operation of the facility. Ms Hannigan was recommending that the Council progress the matter by inviting both parties to enter discussions with a view to reaching such an agreement.

Cllr McGowan referred to concerns he had in relation to the 'representative role' of the Development Association. He made reference to an unresolved 'split' in the community and pointed out that some of these groups had not met for a number of years. He also had questions in relation to the documentation produced in support of the group and questioned its authenticity. He went on to request that the Council fully investigate these matters before deciding how this project is progressed.

Cllr Reid recommended that the Council proceed as recommended and invite both parties to begin discussions.

Cllr Bonnar raised the issue of the current ownership of this area of land and how it was funded. It was agreed this would be clarified.

Cllr McGowan then proposed that an early meeting be arranged with the Senior Housing Officials dealing with this matter, the three elected members and the Council's solicitor. It was also proposed that the Voluntary Housing Association be invited to attend. This was supported by Cllr Bonnar and agreed.

Voluntary Housing Scheme Mullindrait

Ms Hannigan advised the Members that the tenders for this project were currently being assessed.

Voluntary Housing Project Cloghan

Ms Hannigan advised Members that this project had recently received funding of €450,000. The group must now form a limited company that can be approved as a housing association with charitable status to allow the voluntary housing element of the proposal to proceed. The next stage now is for the Council to dispose of the land in Cloghan to the group. Ms Hannigan advised that a Section 183 notice would be placed before Members for approval at the next full Council meeting. This was agreed.

Advertisement for Turnkey Developments

Ms Hannigan advised the Members that the closing date for receipt of submissions was the 27th January 2005. Cllr Bonnar requested and it was agreed that a meeting be arranged with relevant Housing Officials after this date to discuss the proposals received.

04.02 Housing Capital Programme

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda.

04.03 Social Housing

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda

04.04 Casual Vacancies

Members noted the report circulated with the agenda.

Ms Hannigan advised the Members that the houses at Emmet Park, Castlefin and 24 Cois na Finn, Ballybofey had been accepted.

04.05 Other Matters Arising

Housing Development at Donegal Road, Ballybofey

The Department has now approved this 7-house development, which includes one specially adapted house. The next stage is to have the contract documents agreed and signed after which construction can commence.

S.I Houses

Cllr McGowan raised a query in relation to progress on a number S.I houses. He submitted that all documentation was in place however the houses were taking years to progress. Ms Hannigan acknowledged that progress was slow with SI houses but she would follow up on the applications he had referred to.

Departure of John Gallagher.

Ms Hannigan wished to pay tribute to Mr John Gallagher, Executive Engineer who had recently left the Housing Section on promotion. She wished to thank him for his help and support and congratulated him on his well-deserved promotion.

Members also wished to be associated with these well wishes.

Ms Hannigan advised that she hoped to have a replacement in place shortly. Donegal and Stranorlar Electoral areas would now each have their own engineer. An Assistant Engineer would be assigned to the Stranorlar area and an Executive Engineer assigned to the Donegal area.

04.06 Office Accommodation

Ms Hannigan circulated a copy of the submission made by Donegal County Council on 13th December 2004, to the Department of Environment, Heritage & Local Government seeking funding for the Stranorlar Public Service Centre.

She advised that a reply is currently awaited and Members will be kept informed.

SEC 05/00 COMMUNITY, CULTURE AND ENTERPRISE
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05.01 Report on Community & Enterprise Service

Donegal Sports Partnerships

Ms Mulhall advised Members that grants under this initiative would be made available again in 2005. Details will be published within the next week or two. Ms Mulhall advised that the grants were to promote participation in sports in the county and would be geared more towards newly established clubs.

Tourism Brochure

Ms Mulhall advised that the second meeting regarding the preparation of a tourism brochure had taken place last week. The deadline for the completion of the brochure is 28th February. The chamber of commerce have now appointed a designer. The final meeting will take place on 16th February, 2005 in Kee's Hotel, Stranorlar at 2pm at which time the designer will bring the final draft to the committee for approval. Ms Mulhall invited the Members to attend.

Green Space

Ms Mulhall advised the Members that Coillte had requested a meeting with the Forest Link Officer regarding the development of Drumboe Woods. Coillte will be making an application to Failte Ireland for funding for the project. A meeting will be organised shortly with Coillte and the Members will be invited to attend.

Forest Link Project

Ms Mulhall advised the Members that under this project a Forestry Directory would be issued to all Members for the Donegal and Northern Ireland areas.

E-Forum

Ms Mulhall advised Members that this consultation forum would be going live over the next few weeks.

05.02 Youth Council

Ms Mulhall introduced Andrew McNulty, Project Officer, Cathy McNamee and Sean Armstrong, Youth Councillors to the committee.

The Youth Councillors updated the Members on their activities since their election.

Teenage Kicks - Alcohol Awareness Project

The Scholar Card - Discount scheme for young people

Dail na n'Og - All Ireland Youth Parliament

North West Alcohol Forum - Are using the Youth Council as a focus group

Newsletter - Preparing a newsletter for publication

Courses attended - Research courses, website training, media training

The Youth Councillors also advised Members of the meeting held recently with the Lough Swilly Bus Company regarding School Transport.

The Youth Councillors referred to Planet Youth and the fact that the centre closed at 6pm on weekends and did not open on Sundays. The Youth Councillors were proposing that the Stranorlar Youth Council meet with the management at Planet Youth to discuss extending/altering the opening hours and requested Members support for this proposal.

They also queried if Members were aware of any plans to have a youth facility in the Butt Hall redevelopment.

Cllr Bonnar welcomed the Youth Councillors and congratulated them on their election. She agreed to attend a meeting with the Youth Councillors regarding Planet Youth however she was aware that there was a lack of volunteers thus the reason for the existing opening hours. She also advised that she had already spoken to the Butt Hall Committee regarding the need for facilities for young people in this redevelopment.

Cllr McGowan also welcomed the Youth Councillors and congratulated them on the way they handled the meeting with the Lough Swilly Bus Company. He suggested that a meeting be organised with Eugene Drumm, Planet Youth and he would attend.

Cllr Reid thanked the Youth Councillors for attending the meeting and congratulated them on their performance especially the day all the Youth Councillors met in Lifford. He submitted he was impressed with their grown up attitude especially around issues like drugs and alcohol.

05.03 Other Matters Arising

County Development Board

Following a recent County Development Board meeting Cllr McGowan raised a query in relation to funding. He expressed his concern that after 2006 a lot of funding available to date would come to an end. He submitted that a lot of projects are only set up for a period of time and won't need long term financing however there are other projects that will need funding after this time. It was agreed that this was a national issue and the Council should now be making plans to address this issue.

SEC 06/00 WATER/ENVIRONMENT/EMERGENCT SERVICES

06.01 Ballybofey/Stranorlar Leisure Centre

Following the meeting on the 12th November 2004 Mr Breslin advised that work was ongoing on the project and he would have a report for the next meeting. Members expressed their disappointment at the lack of information available and requested an urgent meeting with Mr Holohan and Mr Kilcoyne to discuss the project. It was agreed to hold the meeting on the same day as the housing meeting. Mr Breslin agreed to convey the Members' request to Mr Holohan and Mr Kilcoyne.

06.02 Lough Mourne/Letterkenny Water Supply

Mr Breslin advised the Members that the EIS and CPO for this project were being progressed. Tenders for the site investigation project are currently being considered. The next stage will be to prepare contract documents. Funding will then be required to carry out the advanced works at the head-works.

06.03 Wastewater Treatment Plant at Convoy

Mr Breslin advised the Members that the Council were currently awaiting the final Contract Documents from the Consulting Engineers. When these are finalised the project can then go to tender. It is hoped that works would commence on the project by the middle of the year.

Members expressed their frustration at this information submitting that at previous meetings they were informed that works would commence before the end of last year and now they were being informed work wouldn't commence until the middle of this year.

On the proposal of Cllr Reid seconded by Cllr McGowan it was agreed to request a representative from the Consulting Engineers to attend the next meeting with an up to date report regarding the project.

06.04 Group Schemes

Mr Breslin advised the Members that the up to date position in relation to group schemes was as follows: -

Woodlands/Dooish - Complete

Stralongford/Trentabouy - Scheme in progress

Creggan - 70% Complete

06.05 Fire Hydrants

A map outlining the location of all existing fire hydrants in the electoral area will be brought to Members at a future meeting.

06.06 Civic Amenity Centre

The Consulting Engineers have now recommended a Contractor for the project. As soon as all documentation is in order works can commence.

06.07 Other Matters Arising

Water problems at Kilross/Callan

Members raised a query in relation to the water being off for extended periods at this location.

Mr Breslin advised Members that funding had now become available to replace the worst part of the water main from Kilross junction to Meenavoy junction. It is hoped works will commence shortly. Members welcomed this news.

07.01 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Following a short discussion it was agreed that the next meeting would be held on Tuesday the 8th March 2005 and further meetings would be held every six weeks thereafter.