

ARDS BOROUGH COUNCIL

A meeting of the Council Services Committee was held in the Boardroom, 2 Church Street, Newtownards on Tuesday, 20 January 2009 at 7.00 p.m.

PRESENT:-

In the Chair: Councillor Elliot

Aldermen: Craig
Gibson

Councillors: Bell (7.13pm) Gregory (7.08pm)
Boyle McBriar
Carson McDowell
Drysdale Montgomery
Ferguson (7.06pm) Smyth
Fletcher

In Attendance: Chief Executive, Director of Environmental Services, Director of Leisure Services, Borough Inspector, Public Relations Officer, Project Officer & Senior Committee Administrator

Apologies: Aldermen Ennis, McCarthy & Shannon
Councillors S Hamilton, T Hamilton, Magill, McIlveen & Oswald

DEPUTATION

OS 7964

Mrs Margaret Cox & Mr John Gibson - Glen Ward Community Development Association

The Chairman welcomed Mrs Cox and Mr Gibson to the meeting and invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Gibson began by informing members that the Glen Ward comprised of 460 homes, all of which were occupied. The estate had a population of 2,797, at the last census in 2001, a figure which had undoubtedly increased due to the high number of young families living in the area. Members were informed that the NIHE currently held some 560 names on its waiting list for housing in the estate. Mr Gibson expressed the view that this was due to its reputation as a friendly and outgoing location.

Continuing, he stated that the Glen Ward Community Development Association was one of the oldest community

groups in the Ards Borough which provided community-based assistance to people of all ages. The Association currently operated a Youth Club with over 30 regular attendees as well as a number of casual attendees. It had also run the Summer School Splash in conjunction with the Council and attracted in the region of 50 children three nights a week over the summer months. In addition the Association was also about to start a drama class, which to date 50 people had signed up to attend, and was in the process of organising 'Midnight Soccer', with the help of the Council.

(Councillor Ferguson entered the meeting at this stage - 7.06 p.m.)

Members were reminded that the Glen Estate had been listed as an area of deprivation by the Minister for Social Development, Margaret Ritchie, and had been highlighted as an area which required attention. The Community Development Association had subsequently received funding from the DSD (ending March 2009) to provide classes, as referred to above. In addition a Community Development Worker post had been funded.

(Councillor Gregory entered the meeting at this stage - 7.08 p.m.)

Mr Gibson then referred to a recent survey carried out which indicated that only 10% of the residents were satisfied with the facilities for young people. He stated therefore that the purpose of the presentation was to ask the Council to provide a play area in the estate.

Continuing, Mr Gibson claimed that the Council had given a commitment in 1999 to provide a play area in the estate, as it was the only housing estate in the town that did not have its own dedicated facilities. Referring once again to the NISRA survey, he stressed that one quarter of the residents of the Glen were under 16 years of age.

He acknowledged that the play area situated at Hartford Link was within walking distance of the estate, but explained that to access the facility children had to cross two main roads which raised the issue of their safety.

Mr Gibson informed members that the Community Development Association worked extensively with the Trust, whose representatives were also of the opinion that a play area should be provided in the estate to encourage physical activity amongst the younger residents. He claimed that the PSNI had also indicated that a play area would be beneficial and would assist in reducing the incidences of anti-social behaviour in the estate.

Members were reminded that since 1999 several options had been raised and he referred in particular to the suggestion to site a play area on land backing onto the Whiteways area. This was rejected due to the close proximity of a main road and the attendant safety implications. It had also been suggested more recently that land at the North Road Quarry be developed. The Community Development Association was unhappy with this suggestion, given the health and safety risks.

Mr Gibson stressed the importance of child safety and in doing so suggested that the preferred location for such a play area would be Dicksonia Drive or Ilex Avenue. He then read aloud an email received from the District Manager of the Housing Executive, Mr Owen Brady, which stated that a play area was much in need and would be greatly welcomed by the entire community.

Reference was then made to a previous undertaking on the part of the NIHE to transfer a portion of land to the Council for the provision of a play area. He stated that it was his understanding that the Housing Executive remained willing to transfer this land. He also referred to a previous offer on the part of the Council to provide "second hand" play equipment in the Glen Estate. He stated this was not deemed appropriate.

In concluding, Mr Gibson stated that a safe and fun play facility was much needed in the Glen Estate and he sought the support of the Council to provide facilities on land previously offered by the NIHE.

(Councillor Bell entered the meeting at this stage – 7.13 p.m.)

Members were then invited to raise any questions and the following responses were received as a result:-

- Mr Gibson confirmed that the NIHE had given an assurance that land could be transferred to the Council for the provision of a play area.
- Mr Gibson stated that Playboard had carried out a consultation with children in the area, adding that he was shocked the area had not been highlighted as one in need of play area facilities. He commented that he would be more than happy to engage in a further consultation.
- Mr Gibson confirmed that the Community Development Association had access to open space at the rear of Bees Nees Nursery for football.
- He reiterated the need for a play area in the Glen Estate, highlighting Dicksonia Avenue as the ideal location for an adventure type play area.

The Director of Leisure Services reminded members that the Council had adopted the Playboard report, and the recommendations contained therein, which presented difficulties if it now wished to reconsider the location of one of the facilities. In respect of the consultation with the young people, he explained that it related more to the equipment included within play areas as opposed to the siting of such facilities.

The Chairman thanked Mr Gibson and Mrs Cox for attending the meeting.

(Mr Gibson & Mrs Cox left the meeting at this stage 7.20 p.m.)

CG 2618 **REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTMENT** (Appendix I)

Report of the Chief Executive's Department (copy previously circulated) was tabled.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor Smyth, seconded by Alderman Craig, **THAT** the report be adopted.

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES REPORTS

CG 2620 **Technical Services** (Appendix II)

Technical Services Report (copy previously circulated) was tabled.

Pages 1-2 – Revision of Commercial Waste Charges for 2009-10

The Director of Environmental Services drew members' attention to the above, which recommended that commercial waste charges be increased. He stated that it had come to his intention that currently less than 40% of commercial businesses used the recycling facilities offered by the Council and he highlighted the significant savings that could be realised by local businesses if they chose to recycle, rather than send waste to landfill. He stated that the revised costs would come into effect on 1 April 2009 and that information on recycling would be forwarded to all businesses within the Borough. In addition the Waste Services Officer would visit local businesses to promote and encourage them to recycle. He stressed that this would provide savings for the Council as well as local businesses.

In response to a query, the Director of Environmental Services indicated that commercial waste charges from private sector

companies were higher than those of the Council. He reminded members that the Council merely sought cost-recovery, while the private sector required to make a profit, therefore their costs were higher. He pointed out that landfill costs were becoming more expensive and that gate fees were increasing.

In response to a further query, he stated that specialist disposal businesses collected waste from butcher shops. He agreed that such companies could include other waste from butcher shops, although the meat and bone would have to be disposed off in a prescribed manner.

In respect of glass, the Director of Environmental Services confirmed that the majority of Public Houses had their own arrangements for glass disposal, with bottles going back to the distributors for re-use. He commented however that commercial businesses were encouraged to segregate their waste and recycle glass.

It was noted that regardless of the economic downturn, a reduction in household and commercial waste was not anticipated.

One member commended the Waste Services Officer for the excellent work he carried out, particularly in local schools.

NOTED.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor Smyth, seconded by Councillor Bell, **THAT** the report be adopted.

CG 2619 **Environmental Health** (Appendix III)

Environmental Health Report (copy previously circulated) was tabled.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor Smyth, seconded by Alderman Craig, **THAT** the report be adopted.

CG 2621 **Building Control** (Appendix IV)

Building Control Report (copy previously circulated) was tabled.

Current Downturn

A discussion ensued on the current economic downturn and the impact this was having on the Council's Building Control section.

The Director of Environmental Services stated that while the Council was seeing a significant reduction in the number of new planning applications, there had been an increase in the number of Building Control applications relating to extensions and alterations to properties which were often more labour intensive than new-builds. He added that officers were currently working on applications already in the system.

Continuing, he stated that the Council had a statutory requirement to provide a Building Control function, although consideration was presently being given to resources required within the section.

The Chief Executive confirmed that a proposal would be put to the Rates Sub-Committee in respect of resources within the section.

NOTED.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Alderman Gibson, seconded by Councillor McBriar, **THAT** the report be adopted.

CG 2616 **LEISURE SERVICES REPORT** (Appendix V)

Leisure Services Report (copy previously circulated) was tabled.

Page 1 – SD 60 – Development of Londonderry Park

In response to a query, the Director of Leisure Services confirmed that the proposed surface for the hockey pitch, sand-filled, would meet the needs of senior hockey clubs. He added that while both water-filled and sand-filled surfaces were used by senior clubs, he was aware that after the 2012 Olympics that international hockey would be played on sand-filled surfaces.

He further confirmed that the funding package had not yet been formally launched, and that an application would be submitted in due course. He added that the Council could receive as much as 90% of the total project costs.

NOTED.

Page 4 – CG 9046D – Construction of “Stand Alone” Stadium at Portaferry Road

One member referred to a recent newspaper article which he had read in the Newsletter regarding Moyola Football Club, which was currently building a state of the art stadium. He

referred to the costs which had been documented and suggested that the Director seek a copy of the article.

The Director of Leisure Services confirmed that he would obtain information on the development, adding that the costings obtained to date in respect of a facility in Ards had been produced by an Architect, who specialised in this field.

NOTED.

Page 1 – CG 10459 – Construction of Leisure Centre at Dairy Hall

In response to a query, the Director of Leisure Services informed members of four possible solutions regarding access to the above site, as recommended by the roads consultants. He added the Chief Executive and he had held preliminary discussions with the Roads Service and that a fifth option had been identified. The Director of Leisure Services was meeting with the consultants the following day to discuss the matter further.

NOTED.

Page 3 – CG 9046 – Community Provision in Comber

The Director of Leisure Services reported that he was due to meet with Strategic Leisure the following week to discuss this issue and that he hoped to report to the Council in February.

NOTED.

Page 4 – ALC 1 – Queen’s Hall Pantomime

One member congratulated the Leisure Ards and Arts Centre staff on the Pantomime, Goldilocks and the Three Bears, held at Christmas which had returned a profit.

NOTED.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor Smyth, seconded by Councillor Bell, **THAT** the report be adopted.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS

CG 10473 **Signage to be Erected at The Square, Comber**

The Chief Executive advised members that Councillor Oswald had requested the motion be deferred to the following month, as he was ill, and unable to be in attendance.

Councillor Montgomery reported that Councillor Oswald had asked him to proceed with the Motion in his absence.

Councillor Montgomery proposed, seconded by Alderman Gibson, that the Council erects appropriate signage in the vicinity of the Memorial Garden, The Square, Comber to discourage the parking of vehicles within the garden.

The proposer explained that the motion related specifically to motorcycles. He reported that quite frequently motorcycle clubs used The Square in Comber as a rendezvous point. He stated that the motorcyclists were parking in the Garden of Remembrance, which he felt was inappropriate. He was keen for signage to be erected discouraging this practice and also queried the possibility of removable bollards being placed there.

The seconder concurred with the comments of the previous speaker, adding that these motorcycles posed a risk to young children.

A discussion ensued on the motion and it was suggested that local motorcycle clubs be contacted to advise that the current practice was unacceptable. Discussion also took place on the most suitable wording for the proposed signage.

The Chief Executive explained to members that it may not be appropriate to erect bollards, as this could prevent wheelchair users and parents with prams entering the area. He added that, under the bye-laws, the Council could only prohibit the use of motorised cycles and that the Council's officers would have enforcement responsibility.

It was noted that since the Greenway had opened a high number of cyclists were cycling into Comber to visit local coffee shops. Members were not keen to discourage this practice and it was suggested that parking facilities for cyclists be considered.

The Chief Executive reported that discussions had taken place with the DSD regarding this issue.

Following discussion, it was agreed that officers consider the most appropriate wording for the signage.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor Montgomery, seconded by Alderman Gibson, **THAT** the Council erects appropriate signage in the vicinity of the Memorial Garden, The Square, Comber to discourage the parking of vehicles within the garden.

CG 10496 **Health & Safety Issues - Civic Amenity Sites**

Councillor Ferguson proposed, seconded by Councillor Carson, that the Council considers erecting signage at its Recycling Centres advising that children should remain in vehicles when visiting such facilities.

The proposer informed members that he had recently visited the Recycling Centre in Millisle. The site had been extremely busy during his visit as a skip was being emptied at the time. During the operation the skip had been suspended in the air and he had witnessed a child exit a vehicle and stand near the suspended skip. He stated that the incident had shocked him and that he had spoken to the member of staff in charge. The staff member had indicated that he could not approach children, due to Child Protection issues. Consequently the member was keen for signage to be erected stating that children should remain in vehicles for health and safety reasons.

The seconder expressed the view that it was not appropriate for children to be outside vehicles in Recycling Centres.

The Chief Executive informed members that signage was in place which stated that children should be supervised at all times.

The Director of Environmental Services added that all Council staff had received Child Protection Training. In addition he stated that Recycling Centre attendants were obliged to ensure the safety of everyone visiting the site. He added that it was his intention to raise the issue with the attendant in question.

He then referred to education, adding that children were encouraged to visit Recycling Centres and to use their facilities. Indeed a number of schools visited the sites.

The Chief Executive suggested that the wording of the current signage be changed, however he felt an age limit of 10 years be used as technically a child was anyone under 18 years of age. (It was noted that the Courts had determined that generally children of 10 years could determine right from wrong.)

A further member felt signage stating that children should be supervised was more effective. He commented that if children were left in vehicles that they could follow their parents without their knowledge, which was even more dangerous.

A discussion then ensued on the practice of closing sites while skips were being emptied. One member observed that the sites now remained opened as the skips were of a smaller size. The

Director of Environmental Services undertook to raise the issue with the Council's Health and Safety Officer.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor Ferguson, seconded by Councillor Carson, **THAT** a report on the issue of erecting signage at Council-operated Recycling Centres, advising that children should remain in vehicles when visiting them, be brought to the next meeting. Further to ask for an update on the policy in respect of closing sites when skips are being emptied.

MINUTES

Minutes of Meeting of Bonfire Working Group held on 14 January 2009

Minutes of Meeting of Bonfire Working Group held on 14 January 2009 (copy previously circulated) were tabled.

It was **AGREED TO RECOMMEND**, on the proposal of Councillor McBriar, seconded by Alderman Gibson, **THAT** the minutes be adopted.

THAT CONCLUDED THE BUSINESS
(The meeting terminated at 8.26 p.m.)