

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Meeting of Council held in the Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn, on Monday 18 January 2016 at 6:04 pm

PRESENT:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor R T Beckett

Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Redpath

ALDERMEN:

A G Ewart, W J Dillon MBE, D Drysdale, M Henderson MBE,
S P Porter, G Rice MBE and J Tinsley

COUNCILLORS:

N Anderson, R Butler, S Carson, P Catney, A Ewing,
J Gallen, A Girvin, A Givan, J Gray MBE, A Grehan,
B Hanvey, V Kamble, U Mackin, B Mallon, T Mitchell,
T Morrow, Jenny Palmer, John Palmer, L Poots, S Scott,
M Tolerton and R Walker

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Leisure and Community Services
Lead Head – Planning and Building Control
Community Planning Manager
IT Officer
Committee Secretary
Attendance Clerk

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Mr Gerry Flynn, Director of Landlord Services
Mr Aengus Hannaway, Area Manager
Mr Robin Hawe, Regional Manager
Mr Stephen Semple, Strategic Planning
Ms Alison Methven, Housing Services Manager

Firmus Energy

Mr Niall Martindale, Director of Regulation & Pricing
Mr Paul Stanfield, Director of Sales, Marketing & Customer
Services

Purpose of Special Meeting

The Special Meeting of Council had been convened in order to receive the following deputations:-

- Northern Ireland Housing Executive – to present on the Lisburn and Castlereagh Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019.
- Translink NI - to present on Translink Service Provision within the Lisburn and Castlereagh Council area.

Purpose of Special Meeting (Cont'd)

- Firmus Energy – to present on Firmus Energy Network Building Projects planned for the Council area.

Commencement of the Meeting

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, having thanked those present for their attendance, informed the Meeting that Translink had contacted the Council this morning to advise that due to sickness the officials from Translink were unable to be in attendance to present to Members.

Councillor V Kamble entered the Meeting at 6.06 pm.

It was agreed on a proposal by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman A G Ewart, and agreed that a letter be furnished to:

- a) Translink - conveying in the strongest terms the Council's dissatisfaction and concern with the decision of Translink not to send alternative officials to make their presentation at the Special Meeting, particularly in light of the fact that there had been a number of previous occasions when Translink had been unable to attend pre-arranged meetings or invitations to present to the Council, and
- b) The Minister for Regional Development, Michelle McIlveen MLA, conveying the Council's dissatisfaction and concern in relation to the recent actions of Translink NI, which the Council felt were treating this Council with contempt, and requesting that the Minister takes any action she considers appropriate to address this situation.

At this juncture The Right Worshipful the Mayor requested that all mobile phones be put on silent for the duration of the meeting.

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Aldermen T Jeffers, W A Leathem and S Martin, Councillors J Baird, B Bloomfield MBE, O Gawith, H Legge, J McCarthy and A McIntyre, and the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Director of Development & Planning and the Director of Environmental Services.

Alderman G Rice and Councillor A Grehan entered the Meeting at 6.07 pm.

At this point The Right Worshipful the Mayor advised the Council that Translink had agreed that the questions submitted by Members in advance of the Special Meeting would be responded to in writing. The Right Worshipful the Mayor thanked those Members for having taken time to submit a question(s) and assured that this matter would be followed up with Translink.

2. Declarations of Interest

Alderman A G Ewart declared an interest in item 3.1 – ‘Presentation by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive’ in view of his employment as an advisor to the Minister for Social Development.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor requested that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert him accordingly so that the Committee Secretary might accurately reflect arrival and departure times in the minutes.

3. Presentations:

3.1 Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) - Presentation on the Lisburn and Castlereagh Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019)

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, welcomed the undernoted officials from NIHE and put on record the Council’s thanks and appreciation to NIHE for all the work carried out across the Council area:

- Mr Gerry Flynn, Director of Landlord Services
- Mr Aengus Hannaway, Area Manager
- Mr Robin Hawe, Regional Manager
- Mr Stephen Semple, Strategic Planning
- Ms Alison Methvern, Housing Services Manager

Mr Gerry Flynn commenced the presentation by thanking Members for the opportunity to come and present on the Lisburn and Castlereagh Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019 and with the aid of PowerPoint provided the Council with an overview of the Housing Investment Plan and highlighted the following:

- The purpose of the new Housing Investment Plan (HIP), under five themes, and how the HIP informed Community Planning
 - Theme 1 Identify and meet housing need and demand
 - Theme 2 Improve People’s Homes
 - Theme 3 Transform People’s Lives
 - Theme 4 Enable Sustainable Neighbourhoods
 - Theme 5 Delivery Quality Services

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor A Redpath, entered the Meeting at 6.15 pm.

- investment in terms of actual spend across all areas of work for 2014/2015 and projected investment for 2015/2016
- a number of key housing issues for Lisburn and Castlereagh
- next steps in terms of an overarching approach for the Housing Investment Plan, the Community Plan and the new Local Development Plan.

At the conclusion of the presentation Mr Flynn and Mr Hannaway responded to questions from Members in connection with the following issues:

- plans in the HIP for refurbishment to the high rise flats in the Lisburn area

3.1 Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) – Presentation on the Lisburn and Castlereagh Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019 (Cont'd)

- the percentage of tenants on benefits of any kind receiving full housing benefit. Mr Hannaway undertook to investigate these figures and report back to Councillor S Carson.
- plans for double glazing schemes in the Hillhall Estate
- plans for the Castlereagh NIHE Office. Councillor S Scott put on record her thanks and appreciation to Mr James McBratney in the Castlereagh Office who answered Members' queries in a prompt and efficient manner.
- the need for additional social housing in Castlereagh South. Mr Hannaway undertook to convene a meeting with the Housing Services Manager in order to consider this matter further and to discuss a way forward.
- the ongoing problem of antisocial behaviour in certain areas of Lisburn and the input from the Community Planning sector in efforts to address antisocial behaviour
- Clanmill Housing Association's failure to deliver on the regeneration of the former Hilden Mill site. Mr Hannaway gave an assurance that there was a commitment by the Housing Association movement and NIHE to do more collectively in the delivery of social housing.
- the extent of tenancy fraud across Northern Ireland, which had become known following the BBC Spotlight programme in March 2014, and actions taken by NIHE to tackle this problem
- the high demand for new homes in the Lisburn/Castlereagh area and the lack of Housing Associations in the Province to meet this level of demand
- the application for planning permission for the building project at Enniscarn
- the non-availability of projected spend for next year's Affordable Warmth Scheme in view of the continued demand for this scheme
- the high rental of Oaklee Housing Association homes in Carryduff compared to rental prices on the open market. Mr Hannaway agreed to provide to Councillor Kamble the detail on the rental cost by Oaklee Housing Association homes, which factored in energy costs also.
- the high cost of properties in the Lisburn area compared to the rest of Northern Ireland
- the number of buildings/'blocks' of properties empty over six months and plans to refurbish or otherwise. Alderman D Drysdale paid tribute to the Officers in the Castlereagh Office on doing an excellent job and commended Mr James Bratney, in that office, for having dealt with one particular complex case recently in the Ballybeen area. Alderman Drysdale asked that Mr Hannaway pass on his comments to Mr Bratney.

3.1 Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) – Presentation on the Lisburn and Castlereagh Housing Investment Plan 2015-2019 (Cont'd)

Alderman J Tinsley left the Meeting at 6.57 pm.

- the need for more focus by NIHE on delivering on sanctions for those who continued to default. Alderman S P Porter commended the recent investment in Social Housing in the Seymour Hill area. Alderman S P Porter extended thanks and appreciation to the support provided by Mr Hannaway and his team in the Lisburn NIHE Office and emphasised the need for a holistic approach when addressing difficult issues under the theme 'transforming people's lives,'

Councillor S Scott and Councillor A Grehan left the Meeting at 7.00 pm and 7.01 pm, respectively.

- the plans for the area of waste ground in Tirowen Drive, Knockmore Estate

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, referred to email correspondence he had received from a constituent in connection with a number of issues, mostly concerning policy issues, and agreed to forward the email to Mr Hannaway for his response thereon.

At the conclusion of the question and answer session, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, thanked the deputation for having taken the time to present to the Council and answer questions, following which the deputation left the Meeting (7.05 pm).

Councillor N Anderson left the Meeting at 7.05 pm.

Councillor S Scott returned to the Meeting at 7.05 pm.

3.2 Firmus Energy – Presentation on the Firmus Energy Network Building Projects

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, welcomed the undernoted officials from Firmus Energy:

- Mr Niall Martindale, Director of Regulation & Pricing
- Mr Paul Stanfield, Director of Sales, Marketing & Customer Services

Alderman J Tinsley returned to the Meeting at 7.06 pm.

Aldermen D Drysdale and M Henderson and Councillor S Carson left the Meeting at 7.06 pm.

Mr Martindale having introduced himself and Mr Paul Stanfield to the Meeting, thanked Members for the opportunity to come and present on the Firmus Energy Network Buildings Projects planned for the Council area over the next six years in terms of distribution (laying of pipes). With the aid of PowerPoint Mr Martindale commenced the presentation with some key figures from 2014 in terms of connections/customers and network size.

The Community Planning Manager left the Meeting at 7.07 pm.

3.2 Firmus Energy – Presentation on the Firmus Energy Network Building Projects
(Cont'd)

Mr Martindale proceeded to discuss the following in regard to the operation of Firmus Energy:

- a significant contributor to the Northern Ireland Economy in terms of social and economic impact, environmental issues, and continuous innovation
- key achievements in terms of Health & Safety, efficiency, customer service, and a strong dedicated professional team

Councillors N Anderson and S Scott returned to the Meeting at 7.08 pm.

- extensive engagement undertaken with stakeholders

Alderman D Drysdale returned to the Meeting at 7.10 pm.

- the guiding principles to develop the GD17 strategic plan in line with Utility Regulator guidance, key outputs and themes for GD17 marketplace challenges

Alderman S P Porter left the Meeting at 7.14 pm.

Mr Paul Stanfield discussed the network build plan for the next 10 years in Moira and Maghaberry, and associated capital investment costs, subject to approval by the Utility Regulator. Mr Stanfield advised that once approval was in place Firmus Energy would report back to the Council to give some indication when gas would be available in particular areas.

Alderman D Drysdale left the Meeting at 7.21 pm.

Following the presentation Mr Martindale invited questions from Members on issues arising out of the presentation.

At this juncture Alderman Ewart commended the work of the contractors who had laid the pipes in Moira.

Councillor S Carson left the Meeting at 7.24 pm.

Mr Martindale responded to questions from Alderman G Rice in regard to the high price to convert to gas in the Castlereagh South area and the likelihood of prices coming down if there was competition in the area. In response Mr Martindale discussed the three different distribution operators in Northern Ireland, ie. Firmus Energy, Pheonix Gas and SGN and elaborated on the issues with the Utility Regulator which controlled the margins that the distributors could work to.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, thanked the deputation for attending and Mr Martindale and Mr Stanfield left the meeting (7.27 pm).

There being no further business, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor R T Beckett, thanked Members for their attendance and also the members of the public seated in the Public Gallery.

The Special Meeting of Council concluded at 7.28 pm.

Mayor