

## **Derry City and Strabane District Council**

**Minutes of Meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Committee (Open)  
held in the Council Chamber - Strabane Council Offices on Wednesday 12  
September 2018 at 4.00 pm**

**Present:- Councillor Reilly (in the Chair), Aldermen Hussey and Warke,  
Councillors Campbell, Dobbins, Duffy, Hastings, Jackson, D Kelly, R McHugh  
and Tierney.**

**In Attendance:- Director of Environment and Regeneration (Mrs K Phillips),  
Head of Capital Development and Building Control (Mr F Morrison),  
Regeneration Manager (Mr T Monaghan) and Committee Services Assistant  
(Ms N Meehan).**

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### **ER186/18 Notice and Summons of Meeting**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration read the Notice and Summons for the Meeting.

### **ER187/18 Apologies**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration completed the roll call and recorded apologies for Aldermen Bresland and Ramsey.

### **ER188/18 Declarations of Members' Interests**

Councillor Reilly declared an interest in Items 12, 14 and 25 as a Member of the Walled City Partnership.

Councillor Campbell declared an interest in Item 8.

Alderman Warke declared an interest in Item 4.

Councillor Hastings declared an interest in Item 4 as a member of the Management Committee - Dove House.

Councillor Hastings declared an interest in Item 29 as a member of ERNACT.

**ER189/18 Deputation - To receive representatives from Urban Villages to discuss progress on Meenan Square Shops (presentation attached)**

The Committee received Mr G Murray, Programme Manager and Mr C McGurk, Capital Manager The Urban Villages Initiative to the Meeting. Mr Murray advised Members that unfortunately due to a family bereavement, Ms Farrell was unable to attend the Meeting. Mr Murray gave a power-point presentation on The Urban Villages Initiative Derry-Londonderry – Bogside, Fountain and Bishop Street as follows:

**The Urban Villages Initiative has three aims:**

- Foster positive community identities
- Build community capacity
- Improve the physical environment

**2017/18 Derry-Londonderry Proposed Capital Projects**

Abercorn Road Revitalisation Scheme	Meenan Square Redevelopment	Gaol Tower (Fountain Estate)
Destined – Foyle Valley Railway Museum	Gasyard Heritage & Exhibition Centre	The Realm
New Gate Arts & Culture Centre	The Cathedral Youth Club (CYC)	

**Capital Project Update**

**Partnership Approach**

- A Strategic Approach to Delivery
- Delivery Partners
- Partnership Funding Contributions

Mr Murray advised Members that it was anticipated that the Abercorn Road Revitalisation Scheme and the Destined Refurbishment Scheme would be completed within the 2019 financial year. He stated that it was hoped to get acquisition of the Meenan Square site during the current financial year. In terms of the Gaol Tower and the Realm, feasibility works were required and the schemes would not begin until the 2020/21 financial year.

Mr Murray stated that it had been anticipated that the site for the Meenan Square Redevelopment Scheme could be purchased by Apex Housing Association. However, this had not yet transpired and the Urban Villages Team had been advised by the estate agent that the site was in the process of being sold to a private purchaser. The details of The Urban Villages Initiative's plans had been forwarded to the purchaser's Agent in an effort to establish if works on the project could proceed. He stated that Urban Villages would continue with the business case however it was difficult to determine the situation until the new owners' intentions had been established. He continued that the new owners had indicated, through their Agent, that they would be willing to consult with The Urban Villages Initiative to set out their intentions for the site and it was anticipated that following this it would be possible to progress with the project. Mr Murray informed Members that The Urban Villages Initiative held regular political briefings for elected representatives in Urban Village areas. Members from all Parties thanked Mr Murray and Mr McGurk for their presentation and commended them on the excellent work carried out by The Urban Villages Initiative.

Alderman Devenney welcomed the presentation and acknowledged the great working being carried out by Urban Village Initiative. In relation to the Meenan Square redevelopment he queried if the business case would be affected, if, following negotiations, it became apparent that the new owners had different aspirations for the site.

Mr Murray pointed out that there was considerable speculation regarding the new owners' intentions. He stated that if the new owners were prepared to resell the site the funding could be made available to Apex to purchase the works and the works could proceed. He referred to the need to establish if the new owners had intentions for all or part of the site, and, if so, possibly work with them to develop certain aspects of the project.

Councillor Campbell enquired if the sale of the site had been confirmed. He stated that the site currently presented a major health and safety issue as one of the main bonfire sites in the City. It was also a popular space for underage drinking and anti-social behaviour. He enquired who was responsible for the site at present and referred to the need for the new owner to be contacted to have the site secured. He pointed out that the Youth First Youth Club who occupied premises on this site, carried out excellent work particularly during bonfire season. He pointed out however that the building in which they were based was in a serious state of disrepair resulting in its closure.

However, as the Youth Club no longer had a point of contact it had not been able to address this problem. He referred to the likelihood of Council investigating the possibility of demolishing the building given the health and safety risk it presented. He acknowledged the works which had been carried out in respect of the redevelopment but expressed concern regarding the site. He anticipated that during the coming year the site would be transferred and the dangers removed and hoped that the new owners were open to discussions. He referred to the need for immediate contact with them in this regard.

Councillor Tierney referred to the level of anti-social behaviour which local residents had been subjected to particularly during bonfire season. He stated that the Meenan Square complex was creating and housing some of the worst anti-social behaviour in the City and this ongoing problem must be addressed as a matter of urgency. He referred to mounting rumours regarding the sale of the site and welcomed clarification of the sale. He said it was now necessary to move forward in an effort to transform the area and address the antisocial behaviour problem.

Councillor Tierney expressed concern that The Urban Villages Initiative were concentrating solely on the Bogside and the Fountain areas whilst in Belfast there were four Urban Villages. He expressed the hope that more Urban Villages could be created within the Derry City and Strabane District Council area. He stated that this was an excellent project which had been well executed. He acknowledged the assistance which had been given to the Bogside Community Association in terms of the Gasyard Feile and the Festival of Light. In regards to suggested political briefings, he suggested that it would be preferable if The Urban Villages Initiative presented to Committee on a more regular basis, particularly given the current situation at Meenan Square.

In relation to Councillor Campbell's queries regarding responsibility for the site, the Director of Environment and Regeneration advised that through Council's Health and Communities Directorate, the Environmental Health Section did have powers to request the owner to secure the site. She stated that they had been in constant contact with the previous owner of the site and referred to the need to ensure they were furnished with contact details for the new owner in order that contact could be made. She stated that the Environmental Health Section were extremely pro-active in addressing such issues and anticipated that with their assistance the site would be secured. She stated that Council were obliged to remove any materials encroaching

onto a public highway and, through Council's Environment Section a contractor had been appointed to carry out these works.

Mr McGurk acknowledged that in the interim Council had the power to have the site secured and in the meantime The Urban Villages Initiative would continue with the business case. If the new owner was willing to take enter into discussions he anticipated that a positive outcome could be realised. He continued that the business case would allow for remedial works to be carried out.

In response to a query from Councillor Campbell, Mr McGurk advised that the identity of the new owner of the site was unknown. He stated that as soon as this information became available Members would be advised accordingly. He pointed out that Land and Property Services had been contacted in accordance with the new owner's obligation to register and The Urban Villages Initiative were doing all in their power to be made aware of the details of the new owner. However, the selling agent was under strict instructions not to reveal their identity. Mr Murray stated that whilst The Urban Villages Initiative did not have statutory powers to intervene they had been endeavouring to assist the local community to address the situation through festivals and events and to support diversionary activities and provide positivity. He referred to the wider issues in terms of emergency funding being made available for community groups to carry out works. He continued that representatives from The Urban Villages Initiative would be willing to attend Committee Meetings on an ongoing basis to provide Members with regular updates. He stated that in addition to political briefings, the Initiative also offered an ezine together with Focus Magazine which provided a continuous source of information and he would be happy to make these available for Members. He also undertook to meet with individual Members to discuss specific issues of concern.

In relation to extending the project, Mr Murray stated that this was beyond his responsibility although previous reference has been made to such a possibility. He advised that the timescale for the project highlighted would be the end of the 2020/2021 financial year. He felt however at that stage, if monies were available, a decision would be made regarding the future of the project.

Councillor Tierney sought confirmation in relation to the sale of the site particularly given the rumours regarding its sale and the lack of information regarding the new owner.

In terms of health and safety, Councillor Tierney enquired if, given the sale of the site, it would be necessary for a new Notice to be issued.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration stated that the latest information from Council's Environmental Health Section was that it would be necessary to re-serve the Environmental Health Notice. However, this was a quick process and they were in contact with both the previous owner of the site and the selling agent to establish contact details of the new owner. They were confident that this information would be forthcoming given the statutory requirement for this information to be provided.

Mr Murray said he was very confident regarding the sale of the site particularly given the information he had received from the selling agent. He confirmed that action would be taken as soon as the identity of the owner was revealed.

**ER190/18 Urban Villages - Abercorn Road Revitalisation Regeneration Programme**

The Regeneration Manager presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to update Members in relation to Council's successful funding application to the Urban Villages programme for the delivery of a Revitalisation regeneration on Abercorn Road and to outline proposed next steps and to seek authority to grant Council's Chief Executive delegated authority in signing off all procurement matters related to the delivery of this programme.

Alderman Hussey endorsed the concept outlined at 4.1 of the report that the grant being offered by TEO was part of this Revitalisation Programme was being funded at a rate of 100%. He also welcomed the fact and that eligible works to participating property owners would also be at a rate of 100% given previous difficulties experienced by property owners in terms of moving forward with a rate less than 50%. He anticipated that a similar approach would be adopted in the rural area.

Councillor Tierney also welcomed the 100% funding and the fact that this would have no financial implications for Council.

In response to a query from Alderman Warke, Mr McGurk confirmed that at present there were no plans to alter the entrance to the scheme at Fountain Estate. He advised that a Vacancy and Dereliction Properties study of the area was underway when representations and

plans would be taken forward on those areas in the Fountain and Bogside which contained derelict and vacant properties which would lend themselves to the project. He referred to the fact that the bonfire site at the Fountain was derelict and vacant. He also referred to the possibility of establishing, through Council, which routes and sites were vacant within The Urban Villages area. It was anticipated that this study could be completed within the coming months and the information collated shared with Council. He continued that, as yet, there was no budget in place for further projects. However if the Stormont Executive were to return to power, a bid would be made for further funding.

In response to a query from Alderman Warke, Mr McGurk confirmed that there were no plans to include Carlisle Road in the Vacancy and Dereliction Properties Study. He further advised that as part of the Study comments had been invited however there were no definite plans, as yet, to carry out any re-dereliction works.

Councillor Campbell welcomed the report and stated that not only was Abercorn Road a main gateway into The Urban Villages area but was also a main arterial route into the City.

The Regeneration Manager advised that Officers were actively working with the Department for Communities who would be carrying out a re-vitalisation programme for Carlisle Road and which was currently part of a scoping exercise and it was anticipated that funding would be received to take this forward during the next financial year.

Councillor Hastings referred to the condition of the former Tillie and Henderson's factory site and enquired if there were any plans to carry out maintenance works to this building.

The Regeneration Manager advised that this was among a number of sites which had received funding as part of a DoE Dereliction Scheme to facilitate the carrying out of general maintenance works. He said this was a privately owned site which he acknowledged was in a state disrepair however he did not envisage any additional funding being made available in respect thereof. He undertook to raise this issue with the owner of the site as required.

The Committee

**Recommended**      **(a) that Members note the contents of the report and grant delegated authority for the Council's Chief Executive to sign off on the appointment of all contracts**

**associated with the delivery of this project; and**

**(b) that update reports be presented to Committee for information in relation to all the appointments related to the project as well as status updates.**

**ER191/18 Confirmation of the Open Minutes of the Environment and Regeneration Committee held on Wednesday 18 July 2018**

The Open Minutes of the Environment and Regeneration Committee held on 18 July 2018 (ER157/18-ER173/18) were confirmed and signed by the Chair.

**ER193/18 Audit of Columban Heritage in County Donegal and Derry City and Strabane District Council (Ref ER163/18)**

Alderman Hussey referred to comments he had made at the previous Meeting of the Committee regarding the potential of other ecclesiastical links, in particular St Eugene, and enquired if any progress had been made in relation thereto.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration advised that this was currently being pursued through Council's Business and Culture Directorate and the Heritage Development Officer and a detailed report on how this could be taken forward would be presented to a future Meeting of the Committee.

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In response to a query from Alderman Warke, Mr McGurk confirmed that at present there were no plans to alter the entrance to the scheme at Fountain Estate. He advised that a Vacancy and Dereliction Properties study of the area was underway when representations and plans would be taken forward on those areas in the Fountain and Bogside which contained derelict and vacant properties which would lend themselves to the project. He referred to the fact that the bonfire site at the Fountain was derelict and vacant. He also referred to the possibility of establishing, through Council, which routes and sites were vacant within The Urban Villages area. It was anticipated that this study could be completed within the coming months and the information collated shared with Council. He continued that, as yet, there was no budget in place for further projects. However if the Stormont Executive were to return to power, a bid would be made for further funding.

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The Committee

**Recommended (a) that Members note the contents of the report and grant delegated authority for the Council's Chief Executive to sign off on the appointment of all contracts associated with the delivery of this project; and**

**(b) that update reports be presented to Committee for information in relation to all the appointments related to the project as well as status updates.**

**ER196/18 Action Renewables Energy Association**

The Head of Capital Development and Building Control presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to seek approval to renew Council's membership of Action Renewables Energy Association (AREA).

The Committee

**Recommended that Members agree to renew membership of the Action Renewables Energy Association (AREA) as a Partner Member for an annual fee of £1,000 excluding VAT.**

**ER197/18 European Green Leaf Award**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. She advised that the purpose of the report was to seek Members' endorsement to make an application for the 2020 European Green Leaf Awards.

Alderman Hussey welcomed the Award which he felt was timely. He advised that the previous weekend he had represented his Party at a Waste Management in Armenia when he was asked to address the issue of waste. He referred to the fact that this issue stemmed worldwide and was a matter of international concern. He stated that this Award provided an opportunity to further address the issues around environmental awareness and involvement and provided a wider remit which would ultimately feed into the community planning process. He queried Council's eligibility to apply for the Award post Brexit given Council's experience in relation to the European City of Culture.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration confirmed that Council Officers had contacted the European Green Leaf Secretariat for guidance on Council's eligibility to apply for the award post Brexit and were advised that the Secretariat had received no direction on the matter and therefore were expecting applications from UK based cities.

Alderman Hussey expressed concern that Council had received similar advice in the past which had proved incorrect.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration acknowledged the need to be aware of possible problems in this regard. She felt however, that it would prove beneficial to Officers, the organisation and local citizens to proceed with the application process which would enable Officers to concentrate on the delivery of the projects in the topic areas and to see how the strands of the various Directorates would interact and ultimately benefit. This would also provide a valuable learning process and would provide the potential to carry on with some of the initiatives involved. She suggested that given that there were no financial

implications to Council in preparation of the application process and the work was being carried out in-house, Council proceed with its application to the 2020 European Green Leaf Awards. Councillor Tierney expressed concern that during the European Youth Capital process, Council Officers had continuously sought assurances regarding Council's eligibility and were given a similar response. He acknowledged that there were no financial implications to Council but said he would wish to avoid any embarrassment to Council further down the line and whilst accepting that the work would be carried out in-house suggested that there would still be a cost to Council.

Whilst acknowledging the risk involved, the Director of Environment and Regeneration suggested that Council proceed with the application given the benefits to derived from engaging in the process both for Council and its' citizens and due to the limited resources required.

The Committee

**Recommended that Members endorse Council's application to the 2020 European Green Leaf Awards.**

**ER198/18 Applications Processed under Building Regulations (NI)**

The Head of Capital Development and Building Control presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of applications processed under Building Regulations (NI) between 1 June 2018 and 31 July 2018

Members noted the content of the report.

**ER199/18 Update on the Walled City Conference - Unlocking Prosperity through Heritage led Regeneration 11-12 October 2018**

The Regeneration Manager presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to update Members on progress in relation to the Walled City Conference – **Unlocking Prosperity through Heritage-led Regeneration** – which will be held in the Guildhall on 11-12 October 2018 and provide details on the programme content, keynote speakers and booking details.

Members noted the content of the report.

**ER200/18 SMARTrenew European Projects**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. She advised that the purpose of the report was to inform Members of the notification by the NPA Secretariat that the SMARTrenew Project has been successful in its application to receive funding under the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) Programme, Priority Axis 3 – Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy.

Members noted the content of the report.

**ER201/18 Walled City Townscape Heritage Initiative**

The Regeneration Manager presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to update Members regarding the ongoing progress towards delivery of heritage led capital regeneration projects by Council's partner organisation the Walled City Partnership Limited (WCP) within a designated area of the Historic City Conservation Area of Derry.

Members noted the content of the report.

**ER202/18 The Landfill Allowance Scheme (NI) Regulations 2004 (as amended) 13th Scheme 2017/18 (Draft Reconciliation)**

The Head of Environment presented the above report, a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of the report was to update Members on the status of landfill allowance for Derry City and Strabane District Council in consideration of the Northern Ireland Landfill Allowance Scheme for 2017/18.

Members noted the content of the report.

**The Meeting then went into Confidential Business.**

**The meeting terminated at Time Not Specified**