Derry City and Strabane District Council

Open Minutes of Environment and Regeneration Committee held in the Council Chamber, Guildhall on Wednesday, 7 December, 2016 at 4.00 pm

Present:- Councillor C Kelly (in the Chair), Aldermen Bresland, Hussey, Ramsey and Warke, Councillors Campbell, Dobbins, Duffy, Hassan, Hastings, D Kelly, M McHugh, Robinson and Tierney.

Non-Members of Committee – Alderman Devenney, Councillors Boyle, Donnelly and Reilly.

In Attendance:- Director of Environment and Regeneration (Mrs K Phillips), Head of Environment (Mr C Canning), Regeneration Manager (Mr T Monaghan) and Committee Services Assistant (Ms N Meehan).

ER255/16 Notice and Summons for Meeting

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

ER256/16 Apology

There were no apologies.

ER257/16 Declarations of Members’ Interests

There were no declarations of Interest.

Open for Decision

ER258/16 Deputation - To receive Representatives from NIE to present Members with an Update on their Winter Preparations.

The Committee received Mr Con Feeney, Network Performance and Safety Director and Mr Eddie Byrne, Finance Director who gave a powerpoint presentation outlining the following areas:

Investing For The Future
- Who we are and what we do
- Work in your area
- Storm response
- Investment plans for the future

NIE Networks is the electricity networks business in Northern Ireland

What we do

- 860,000 customers
- Over 1,200 employees
- 300 major substations
- 49,200km of network
- Network charges are less than a quarter of the electricity bill
- £100million invested in the network annually

Working in your area

c£8.5 million investment since 2012 (RP5)

Major substation asset replacement schemes:

- Coolkeeragh
- Strabane Main
- Drumahoe West
- Maydown
- New Buildihngs (in planning)

Network re-inforcement, including:

- Castlederg
- Ardstraw
- Foyle Road-Corporation Street

c400km network refurbishment

Meter replacement programme

Storm Response

Looking Forward: developing our 2017-2024 plan
Utility Regulator approach document

- Energy policy
- Stakeholder engagement
- External expert reports
- Long term asset management
- Growth in low carbon technologies
- Learning from GB

Delivering For Customers

Capital expenditure by category

- 12% Metering
- 9% Other network capex
- 12% New safety legislation
- 10% Network reinforcement
- 2% Innovation capex
- 55% Asset replacement

Proposed programmes

Core Programme:

- Asset replacement
- ESQCR
- Distribution load
- 33kV congestion
- Low carbon

Additional

- Transmission load

Optional

- Sever weather eg ice accretion

Potential additional distribution expenditure

- Strengthen 11kV OH line networks - £25.6m
- Increase flood defences - £2.6m
- **Accelerated tree cutting - £0.7m**
- **Reduce unplanned power cuts - £16.5m**

**Conclusion**

- **NIE Networks is working for today’s customer and planning for tomorrow’s**
- **We are a 24/7 customer-focused business**
- **Our employees are working in your area everyday**

Members from all Parties thanked the deputation and commended them on their comprehensive presentation. Members then raised the following issues:

- Welcomed NIE’s apparent preparation for winter and commended those staff who worked in all weather conditions to repair damage caused by extreme inclement weather.
- Enquired if the £500M referred to in the presentation had been set aside for additional works to be carried out?
- With regard to renewable energy concern that many who had installed turbines and other types of generators were unable to access the grid. If this service was to be contracted out how effective might it become?
- Commended the apparent dedication of NIE staff.
- Reference to complaints received from businesses in Spencer Road regarding the continuous blackouts being experienced in the area resulting in the cancellation of a number of private functions and a considerable loss of revenue at this seasonal period. Could assurances be given that this problem would be addressed?
- With regard to NIE’s 6 Year Plan would it be possible to sustain the current 1,200 employees or was it anticipated that this number would expand?
- Concern at the exorbitant connection fee (in excess of £100,000) in respect of anaerobic digesters for customers in rural areas who had already experienced serious delays in having this service provided.
- Concern that electricity charges in Northern Ireland were much more expensive that the rest of the UK and enquired if these would be reduced by the installation of the North/South inter-connector.

Mr Feeney and Mr Byrne responded as follows:
- It was anticipated that the £500M referred to would be invested in the network in the following five year period. NIE had a current asset value of £5 billion.
- In relation to renewables and problems being experienced in terms of connecting to the grid there were congestion issues and the cost to the consumer for renewable generators to address this was massive. In terms of target setting there was sufficient connections to achieve the targeted 40%. Per connected customer in a UK context, there had been more connectable energy sources in NI than in any other area. However acknowledged that some problems were being experienced in relation to small scale distributors and the returns were not worthwhile for those connected to a small scale generator. NIE were not in a position to address this problem.
- Apologised for continuous problems being experienced in Spencer Road and committed to investigate the specifics in relation thereto.
- NIE had submitted its proposed investment for the coming 6 year period which would be subject to a regulatory process and the Regulators would ultimately decide on investment levels. It was not anticipated that there would be any significant change in employee numbers and that these would remain around 1200 unless decided by Regulators. NIE tended to have more core employees and less contractor compared to other businesses across UK.
- Advised that the North/South Inter-connector was linked to capacity and growth in the 2020 timeframe. The purpose of the Interconnector was to reduce energy costs with potential customer savings of £120M being achieved. Both SONI and the Regulators were committed to the building of the North/South Inter-Connector and a strong business case had been prepared. The Inter-Connector was currently in the planning process and it was anticipated that Planning permission would be granted in respect of this structure.
- Explained that there were a number of costs which contributed to the electricity bill. Having recently benchmarked their network costs in a UK perspective, NIE costings marked well.
- Advised that NIE were not responsible for the policy in relation to connection fees for anaerobic digesters. This was the responsibility of the Utility Regulator. The policy was specified that the connecting Party was responsible for voltage costs and payment was in accordance with the level of voltage used. NIE’s connection costs were compared and it was anticipated would be open to market competition in the future. Advised that there had been an
unprecedented level of connection to the grid in the past number of years.

The Chairperson then thanked the deputation for their presentation and they withdrew from the Meeting.

**Chairperson’s Business**

**ER259/16 Transport NI Gritting Policy**

The Chairperson raised the issue of gritting footpaths in key urban areas during icy conditions and asked that Officers urgently consider options to enable these areas to be gritted.

With the permission of the Chairperson, the Director of Environment and Regeneration referred to confusion regarding who was responsible for gritting of roadways/pavements.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that Transport NI had powers to grit roadways/pavements and stated that there was currently a memorandum of understanding between Council and Transport NI whereby they would call on Council for assistance during periods of prolonged and severe weather. She continued that to date Transport NI had not requested such assistance from Council this winter. She advised that Officers had met with Transport NI during the recent cold spell to discuss this issue and were currently satisfied with the existing arrangements. She pointed out that Council could consider arrangements over and above the memorandum of understanding however there were no budgetary provision or current arrangements in place to do so.

The Director of Environment advised that Officers were considering a number of options for consideration by Members however, these might have significant budgetary implications. She advised that these could be considered through the rates estimates process.

In response to concerns expressed by a Member of the DUP grouping regarding the dangerous condition of the Peace Bridge, the Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that the Peace Bridge had been adopted and was the responsibility of Transport NI and was therefore regarded the same as other footways throughout the City centre.
A Member of the UUP grouping referred to the need to be mindful of other areas throughout the Council district. He enquired as to the potential benefits of identifying all areas of concern which should be treated. He commended the excellent work being carried out by community groups and stated that gritting services had to be made available to all.

A Member of the SDLP grouping referred to the number of accidents which had occurred during the recent cold spell. He stated that it was important that any formal arrangements were activated as soon as possible and referred to the importance of such arrangements being implemented early in the day.

An Independent Member of Council who was a non-Member of Committee, in referring to the number of historically dangerous areas which existed which prevented people coming into the City centre welcomed any process which would address this issue. He expressed concern that during the recent cold spell the fountains in Guildhall Square had been not been turned off until 8 pm in the evening which resulted in extremely dangerous conditions for those entering the Guildhall Square and Waterloo Place. The gritter was in operation at 9 pm which seemed somewhat illogical.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that this year the fountains had been turned off on the first day of the recent cold period. However, it had taken time for the drainage to be complete. She referred to the option of having the fountains turned off when cold weather was anticipated. She recommended that from 2017 the fountains should be turned off at Halloween and reactivated in spring.

A Member of the SDLP grouping referred to the need for an interim plan to be put in place.

An Independent Member of Council who was a non-Member of Committee acknowledged that it was impossible for gritting to be made available in all areas. He requested that Officers investigate complaints received from a number of rural dwellers that salt piles had not been made available in their area as in previous years.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration advised that this was a function of Transport NI and therefore did not envisage that Council Officers would assume responsibility for this task. However she undertook to raise the matter with Transport NI.
An Independent Member of Council who was a non-Member of Committee expressed concern that the customary 16 weekly inspection of roadways to identify necessary maintenance/repair works had now been extended to 24 weeks. Following these inspections works were graded and if considered to be minor a considerable period of time could elapse until the works were carried out. He stated that this process was totally unacceptable.

The said Member expressed concern that there was only one Gully Cleaner in this area. He pointed out that following the amalgamation of the two Councils there had been a decrease in the number of staff in this Section from 29 to 19 rendering it under-staffed, under-funded and under-resourced to perform their duties. He stated gullies along minor roads were not being cleaned.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration undertook to advise Transport NI accordingly and suggested that the matter be raised at the Special Committee Meeting to receive Transport scheduled for 14 December 2016.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended** that in the future Council Officers, in consultation with Transport NI carry out necessary gritting works at the onset of periods of cold weather to ensure the safety of the general public.

**ER260/16 Consultation – Translink**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration referred to correspondence received from Translink advising of a consultation which they were carrying out regarding the North West Multi-Modal Transport in respect of which responses were to be received by 20 January 2017. This information was received too late for inclusion on the agenda for the Meeting. She understood this correspondence had also been forwarded to Members.

A Member of the SDLP grouping referred to the importance of responses being submitted to the consultation process given the significance of this issue and encouraged involvement from all sectors. However, he referred to a previous consultation process the outcome
of which displayed overwhelming support for the reopening of the original Waterside Train Station which had huge potential.

A Member of the DUP grouping that this correspondence be placed on social media to encourage public support.

**ER261/16** Confirmation of the Open Minutes of the Environment and Regeneration Committee held on 9 November 2016

Minutes of the Environment and Regeneration Committee held on 9 November 2016 (ER233/16-ER246/16) were confirmed and signed by the Chairperson as correct.

**Matters Arising From Minutes**

**ER262/16** Recycling Facility at Pennyburn (ER239/16)

A Member of the SDLP grouping sought an update in respect of a report requested at the June Meeting of the Committee on options available for collecting information on the amount of waste being disposed of in this Council area by cars with Donegal registrations.

The Head of Environment confirmed that data had been collected however, difficulties were being experienced in determining between users who were resident in the Republic of Ireland and those whose vehicles had a Republic of Ireland registration. He stated that endeavouring to identify and breakdown this information was proving a considerable task however, it was nearing completion. It was anticipated that a report thereon would be presented to the January, or at the latest February Meeting of the Committee.

The said Member referred to the importance of acquiring this information as quickly and accurately as possible.

In response to a query from a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping regarding figures he had requested relating to Play Parks, the Director of Environment and Regeneration undertook to seek additional information in this regard and report thereon in due course.

**ER263/16** Bishop Street Car Park – Environmental Improvement Works

The Regeneration Manager presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated to Members. He advised that the
purpose of the report was to update Members on proposals to develop an environmental improvement scheme for the Bishop Street car park and to seek Members’ approval for Officers to progress with preparing an external funding application for this project.

A Member of the SDLP grouping, as a regular user of the car park in question, welcomed these works. He expressed concern however that the lighting at the top end of the car park was continuously broken and was proving a danger and requested that this be addressed.

The said Member requested that a system be installed at Spencer Road car park advising of space availability similar to those facilities in operation at other car parks throughout the City.

The Committee

Recommended that authority be granted to scope out a proposed regeneration scheme for Bishop Street car park and to submit an application to the DFC for external funding support.

ER264/16 Historic Environment Fund – District Council Maintenance Week Catalyst

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 the DFC Historic Environment Division – Historic Environment Fund-Revival Stream Grant and to seek Members’ authority for Officers to accept grant in the sum of £20,000.

In response to a query from a Member of the UUP grouping, the Regeneration Manager explained that there were five conservation areas within the district. He stated that there was limited funding available and it was felt that in terms of requirements and the greater impact Newtownstewart would be the preferred area. He pointed out however that this funding would be available in the future and application would be made in respect of other areas within the City and District.

A Member of the SDLP grouping welcomed this funding.
A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping enquired if any discussion had taken place with NIEA who had recognised the shortcomings in particular to Newtownstewart. He enquired if there was any scope to augment works being carried out in terms of conservation areas.

The Regeneration Manager explained that this was a discreet issue and there were other proposals coming forward in respect of shop fronts. He referred to the need for a more focused discussion to take place with NIEA which he undertook to discuss directly with the said Member. He stated that work was currently taking place with the Historic Environment Division in terms of a joint resource and the appointment of a Heritage Officer for the City and District.

Subsequently the Committee

   **Recommended** that authority be granted to accept grant from the Historic Environment Division in the sum of £20,000 and for Officers to proceed with the delivery of the project.

**ER265/16 Adoption of Fleet Safety Policy**

The Head of Environment presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that he purpose of the report was to seek Members approval with regard to a revised Fleet Safety Policy dated 2016 to replace the previous version dated 2006.

In response to concerns expressed by a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping, the Head of Environment explained that the term ‘Grey Fleet’ referred to employees who use their private vehicle whilst on Council business and claimed mileage and included Councillors. He said unfortunately as the vehicles did not belong to Council the policy could not be applied to individual users. He stated that Council could advise staff and monitor the situation but did not have powers beyond this to enforce the policy on users. He continued that work with Trade Unions was ongoing to determine how additional controls could be introduced.

In response to a query from a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping seeking clarification on this issue, the Director of Environment and Regeneration pointed out that there were general health and safety regulations regarding vehicle use and that discussion would take place
with Health and Safety Officers and she ensured that Members were provided with clarity regarding this issue.

The Committee

**Recommended** that Members approve the attached document as the ‘Fleet Safety Policy’ for Derry City and Strabane District Council.

**ER266/16 Food and Green Waste Collections**

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 provide Members with an update on the progress on food and green waste collections within the district.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping enquired if there had been any improvement in usage of the food waste collection service and if not how could Council encourage greater public participation.

The Head of Environment advised that unfortunately participation had not increased and stated that it was intended to provide a further targeted Education Awareness Campaign to advise of the benefits of using this facility. He stated that Council would endeavour to achieve 100 per cent participation in the scheme and in attempting to achieve this it may be necessary to consider banning food waste in black bins. However such a situation would not be imminent and would only arise following the conclusion of the Education Awareness Campaign. He stated that this was a serious issue facing all Councils. He continued that in terms of targets being met it was vital that householders maximised recycling initiatives which would also result in financial benefits to Council.

A Member of the UUP grouping suggested that steps be taken to reduce the amount of food waste. He stated that there was a responsibility on supermarkets not to encourage shoppers to overspend and referred to the need for more emphasis to be placed on ‘reducing’.

In response to a query from the said Member, the Head of Environment explained that whilst there was no statutory date for the completion of the roll out of a green waste collection service to households within the Council area, it was anticipated that this would continue to be rolled
out to all relevant properties. He stated that with maximising participation in the food and green waste collection schemes would reduce the need for black bin collections.

A Member of the Ulster Unionist grouping referred to the importance of all households within the Council area receiving food waste collection.

The Head of Environment referred to information recently produced which stated that the only way that Council would meet its target would be providing weekly food waste collections. He stated that Derry City and Strabane District Council had an advantage over other Councils which would enable it to maximise efficiency within the existing service.

A Member of the SDLP grouping expressed concern that approximately only fifty percent of those households who had received a brown bin participated in the scheme. He expressed concern regarding a number of issues regarding the Food Waste Collection Scheme such as replacing the container bags and a number of instances in the Ballyarnett area when brown bins had not been collected. He said if Council hoped to encourage the public to participate in this scheme it was important to ensure that these issues were addressed. He also referred to the need to address how the scheme would be rolled out throughout the district given the apparent difficulties being experienced with the existing scheme. The Member referred to the need for a large-scale publicity campaign in respect of the scheme.

Another Member of the SDLP grouping praised this initiative. He referred to a possible reduction in the number of black bin collections which could potentially free-up vehicles for use in other areas.

An Independent Member of Council who was a non-Member of the Committee stated that any initiative which produced savings for ratepayers was to be welcomed. He referred to Council’s bulky waste collection service and expressed concern that there was up to two week waiting period to avail of this service which might ultimately encourage illegal dumping. He inquired if this period could be reduced. He referred to the fact that many householders were engaging private businesses to dispose of these objects but were not assured that the items were being disposed in approved sites.
The Head of Environment explained that there was normally a seven day waiting period in respect of this service which Council provided free of charge to the public. However this did increase at different periods throughout the year. He pointed out that large electrical items such as cookers were generally taken to a scrap yard. Whilst Council was aware of private collections it was not aware of where these item were disposed. He continued that Council had identified rubbish which had been dumped illegally and urged caution to any householder tempted to engage in such activity. He also suggested that householders who had enlisted a private business to dispose of waste should enquire as to where this was being disposed. He stated that fines in respect of waste dumped illegally which had been identified would be the responsibility of the householder concerned.

The Head of Environment stated that ultimately all bulky metal items collected were recycled through a legitimate source. However, he did urge caution in relation to the private dumping of items which were of little or no value.

In response to a query from a Member of the SDLP grouping the Head of Environment confirmed that a bin was used for the green waste collection and was carried out on a fortnightly basis. However, the number of employees involved in the delivery of this service was reduced during the winter period which provided necessary holiday cover therefore providing a more efficient service. He stated that it was hoped to maximise the crew to provide necessary cover and ultimately a more efficient service.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended** that Members endorse the approach as detailed in the report with regard to this matter.

**ER267/16 Cleaning of Mews Lanes Within the Council District**

The Head of Environment presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of Council’s current position with regard to the cleaning of mews lanes.

A lengthy discussion ensued following which Members raised the following issues:
- Commended the Head of Environment for the comprehensive report.
- Welcomed the work carried out by community organisations throughout the City involved in the maintenance and general upkeep of mews lanes.
- Suggested that in going forward Officers consider options open to Council regarding the upkeep/maintenance of mews lanes.
- Further to Council’s position regarding the maintenance/upkeep of mews lanes concern was expressed that whilst not in its ownership Council had carried out maintenance works to the Diamond War Memorial at a cost of £250,000.
- Need for Council to consider all requests for assistance.
- Commend Council staff on the efficient manner in which they have carried out maintenance/repair works.
- Congratulate those community groups who had undertaken these necessary works but acknowledged that in some instances this was not possible due to a lack of resources.
- Referred to the need to pursue those individuals responsible for fly tipping and illegal dumping.
- Made specific reference to works carried out by community groups to mews lanes in the Ballyarnett where residents had been unable to leave their bins for collection.
- Referred to the fact that there was a responsibility on all to ensure that laneways were maintained and the need to have the problem resolved without delay.
- Expressed concern at competition between community groups and concern that the issue was being used for political point scoring.
- Concern expressed that those living in the areas concern were causing the problem.
- Referred to the need for Council to promote a zero tolerance approach in regards to this issue and publish figures in respect of the number of fines issued to perpetrators in respect of such offences.
- The need for residents to be vigilant in terms of illegal dumping in laneways.
- Expressed concern at suggestions that Council was abdicating its responsibility in relation to the maintenance/upkeep of mews lanes which was an utter fabrication.
- Commend those employees concerned on their response and the excellent work carried out in relation to the maintenance/upkeep of mews lanes.
- Whilst referring to the responsibility on neighbourhoods in terms of the upkeep/maintenance of mews lanes/laneways acknowledged difficulties because of the transient nature of residents which had to be addressed.
- Referred to the need for Council to be more creative in terms of dealing with those responsible for illegal dumping.
- The need to make residents aware of their responsibility to maintain alleyways/laneways outside their properties.
- Referred to the responsibility on other Agencies in relation to enforcement and targeting offenders.
- Enquired as to the number of prosecutions in this regard which might provide some reflection on how successful Council was in addressing this problem.
- Referred to the need for an audit of the sites concerned.
- Referred to the need to establish responsibility for the carrying out of maintenance/upkeep works to laneways/alleyways.
- Referred to the need to establish costings involved in the carrying out of these works.
- Whilst not suggesting that Council was abdicating its responsibility in this regard but expressed concern that when contacted by members of the public to have cleaning works carried out members of the public had been advised that this was not the responsibility of Council. Subsequent concerns that ratepayers money had been used for maintenance works to the Diamond War Memorial.
- Commended Council staff on their efficiency in dealing with the 300 bags of refuse collected from laneways during the previous week. But expressed concern that regardless of these works having been carried out the problem continued.

The Head of Environment advised that to date since April 2016 147 incidents of fly tipping had been reported and investigated. 48 penalty notices were issued.

The Head of Environment advised that in 2015 315 incidents had been reported and investigated. 374 fixed penalty notices were issued. He advised that all incidents reported to Council were investigated.

A Member of the SDLP grouping sought clarity in regards to the figures. He said he did not feel they reflected the severity of the problem. He said evidence would suggest that the problem was much greater and Council was experiencing difficulties in terms of
successfully prosecuting offenders. However he urged that this work continue.

In response to a suggestion from a Member of the DUP grouping, a Member of the SDLP grouping suggested that to fine the owners of contaminated bins would surely increase the incidence of fly tipping.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended**

(a) that Members endorse the approach being taken by Council to deal with this issue; and

(b) that Council Officers (i) prepare a report outlining options available to Council for consideration which would facilitate the development of a strategy of working together to ensure the upkeep/maintenance of the area and also (ii) provide information on the number of mews lanes/alleyways throughout the City and district and the financial implications of the maintenance thereof to Council; and (iii) identify which statutory organisations/agencies had responsibility for mews lanes/alleyways and include them in this process.

**ER268/16 Newtownstewart – Shopfront Enhancement Scheme**

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 proposals to develop a shopfront enhancement scheme in Newtownstewart and to seek Members approval for Officers to progress with preparing an external funding application for this project, including the appointment of an architect to develop proposals to planning stage.

A Member of the UU grouping welcomed this scheme and anticipated that this would be a pilot for other rural communities. He state that in the past such schemes were in respect of urban areas and previously there had also been cross-border schemes.
In response to a query from the said Member, the Regeneration Manager confirmed that he £15,000 commitment from Council was in respect of administrative costs.

The said Member anticipated that this was the beginning of a process.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping welcomed Council’s pro-active approach in this regard. He assumed the project was solely in respect of conservation zones.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended**

(a) that authority be granted to scope out a proposed shopfront enhancement scheme for selected buildings within Newtownstewart and to submit an application for external funding support through the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020; and

(b) apart from Officer time and input, the only direct financial implications envisaged to Council will be the commitment of £15,000 to support the development of the project.

In response to a request from a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping the Committee agreed that item 28 be discussed in Open Business.

**ER269/16 Christmas Lights Budget**

The Head of Environment presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He advised that the purpose of this report was to update Members with regard to the overall budget for Christmas lights and the purchase of additional lighting schemes.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which the following issues were raised:

- Concerns expressed regarding an issue which had arisen in terms of Christmas lighting in Sion Mills.
- Outlined the disappointment expressed by the residents of Sion Mills regarding the Christmas lighting display.
- Acknowledged work carried out by Council throughout the City and district to accommodate communities in terms of the Christmas lights installation.
- Whilst the owners of the Christmas lighting supply in Castlederg had donated their stock to Council, in Sion Mills they had refused to do so.
- Council Officers had to operate within the limited resources available.
- Referred to £5000 which had been made available to community associations in previous years in respect of the installation of the Christmas lights display and if these monies were still available could they be incorporated into the budget of the Department responsible for the installation of Christmas lighting. This could be used to improve the standard of the display in Sion Mills.
- Concern that Councillors were being blamed by the local community for the quality of the Christmas lighting display in Sion Mills.
- Referred to the tremendous Christmas lighting display in Sion Mills in previous years carried out by the local community.
- Concern expressed at the decision of the Sion Mills community not to donate their Christmas lighting display to Council and referred to possible health and safety issues which may have arisen concerning the stock.
- Referred to the need for appropriate action to be taken to allay the feeling of community resentment.
- Referred to the possibility of this issue being addressed through the community planning process.
- Referred to a lack of knowledge among elected representatives regarding the background of this situation.
- Referred to the need to reduce hostility among the Sion Mills community in relation to this issue.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration stated that as Members would be aware directly following the amalgamation of the two Councils arrangements had been put in place in respect of the different areas. She stated that in terms of the installation of Christmas lighting, it had been agreed initially that as per previous legacy Strabane District Council arrangements, in the first year, Council had installed the lighting display within the Strabane area and the local communities installed lighting within the areas of Castlederg, Newtownstewart and Sion Mills and received a grant of £5,000 from the community services budget in respect thereof. However, a review of the situation had been carried out when a number of health and safety issues had arisen. She
advised that Council had initially installed additional infrastructure to enable the installation of the Christmas lighting display more securely and had subsequently met with community groups to discuss the option that Council install the lighting in Castlederg, Newtownstewart and Sion Mills. She stated that agreement was reached in with the community groups in Castlederg and Newtownstewart that Council carry out this task and donated their existing supplies to Council. However, in Sion Mills this was not the case. She stated that discussions had taken place in relation to the nature of health and safety requirements in order to facilitate the safe and secure installation of the Christmas lighting. The community group advised however that they were not able to comply with these requirements. Council Officers subsequently offered to install the lighting display available and carry out testing in terms of safety requirements. However this was also declined. She advised that Council therefore had to consider options in terms of installing a different scheme for the current year which differed visibly from previous years Christmas lighting displays.

The Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that in moving forward Council was anticipating engaging with the local community in Sion Mills and take on board the views expressed by them. In terms of budget allocation for the installation of Christmas lighting displays, this had come from the community services budget made available within the transfer Council and remained within the Health and Communities budget with the intention that it would be used within the area of community services in respect of local community planning issues. She continued that in terms of the provision of Christmas lighting Council had incurred the cost of the installation of displays which would have been met by the original grant. She confirmed that Officers would be willing to meet with the local community in terms of moving forward.

In response to a query from a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping the Director of Environment and Regeneration confirmed that Officers could explore the possibility of future funding in respect of the provision of this service being made available from the community services budget and the matter be subsequently progressed through the Department responsible.

A Member of the UU grouping welcomed the potential within the coming days for an enhancement of the present scheme in Sion Mills. He expressed concern that the local community did not donate their lighting display to Council staff for installation.
The Director of Environment and Regeneration reiterated that this option had been offered to the Sion Mills community group.

A Member of the UUP grouping welcomed the assistance from Council Officers in this regard.

In response to concerns expressed by a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping regarding the transfer budget, the Director of Environment and Regeneration said she understood the under the former Strabane District Council monies from the community services grant had been allocated in respect of the Christmas lighting installation. She continued that following the amalgamation of the two Councils the cost of lighting installation within Castlederg, Newtownstewart and Sion Mills had been met from within the Environment and Regeneration budget. She advised that further discussion would take place however in this regard.

Subsequently the Committee

**Recommended** (a) that Members approve the purchase of additional Council lights in the sum of £75,000 funded from savings and efficiencies within the Environment Directorate budget; and

(b) that those monies contained in the transfer budget be allocated to enhance the Christmas lighting displays in Sion Mills, Castlederg and Newtownstewart.

**ER270/16 Ballynagard Lands, Culmore – Update on Development Brief Process**

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 the ongoing development brief process at Ballynagard Lands, Alder Road, Culmore.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER271/16 Applications Processed under Building Regulations (NI)**
The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of applications processed under Building Regulations (NI) between 1 October 2016 and 30 October 2016.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER272/16 DFI Road Abandonment Proposal – Bann Drive**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of correspondence from Department for Infrastructure (DFI) on a proposal to abandon 190 metres of road, consisting of two areas of footpath on Bann Drive, outside the Community Centre.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER273/16 Recycling Initiative in Gobnascale**

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 a proposed recycling initiative within the Gobnascale area in response to indiscriminate dumping at Derry View Terrace, Waterside, Derry.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER274/16 Litter Picking and Grass Cutting Along Rural Roads, Dual Carriageway and Trunk Roads Within District**

The Head of Environment presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. He pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of the Health and Safety issues relating to the provision of street cleansing and grounds maintenance services on dual carriageways, rural and trunk roads in the Derry City and Strabane District Council area.

The Head of Environment said it was anticipated that the cleansing/maintenance works would be carried out as soon as possible and when the necessary procedures were in place.
In response to a query from a member of the DUP grouping Council’s Streetscape Manager explained that all relevant staff had been trained to T1 and T2 – the minimum required. All relevant safety managers required appropriate training up to T6 and T7 (supervisory standard and this training had now been completed. He stated that it was proposed that in all instances to develop and implement an Action Plan to address specific health and safety concerns on an individual road basis.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping queried if works had begun given that the health and safety issues had now been addressed.

The Head of Environment pointed out that the process had begun and risk assessments in respect of each of the roads would be carried out on an individual basis. On roads where speed was not an issue works would be carried out more rapidly than on roads where speed did present an issue where the issue of public safety must be guaranteed.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping asked if rural roads, which carried a 60mph speed limit would be assessed on the same basis as perhaps the A5.

The Streetscape Manager explained that where the speed limit on rural roads was 60 mph and not considered high risk it would not be necessary to carry out a risk assessment. This would not be to the same on higher risk category roads. He continued however, that there were some rural roads which were considered high risk and this would be addressed. He advised that it could take considerable time to for the completion of the cleansing/maintenance works to all of the roads concerned.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping advised that in accordance with Party policy Sinn Fein would be recommending the adoption of 4.4 of the report - 1- In-House Crew.

The Head of Environment advised that Council adopted a pragmatic approach and in accordance therewith the works would be carried out as soon as was reasonably possible in terms of adhering to health and safety requirements.
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 update Members on recent response received from Transport NI in respect to a recommendation made at October’s Council Meeting for Officers to write to Department for Infrastructure on traffic calming measures at Oak Country Manor/Sevenoaks, Crescent Link.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER276/16 Sion Mills Heritage Led Masterplan**

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 the progress of the heritage-led regeneration masterplan for Sion Mills and next steps.

A Member of the Sinn Fein grouping referred to the need to ensure that the proposed consultation is thoroughly inclusive. He referred to concerns within the local community that where projects which were heritage-led tended to be heritage dominated to the exclusion of other concerns. He referred to the need for all relevant groups to have an opportunity to contribute to the Masterplan.

The Regeneration Manager explained that this was not a conservation scheme and would consider the village in its entirety and all requirements would be addressed.

A Member of the UUP grouping welcomed that the consultation process would be inclusive of the entire community.

**ER277/16 Strabane Town Centre – Proposed Shopfront Enhancement Scheme**

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 developments to the Shopfront Enhancement Scheme for Strabane Town Centre.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER278/16 Transport NI Correspondence on Proposed Traffic Calming Scheme in Springvale Park**
The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members on Transport NI’s proposed traffic calming scheme in Springvale Park/Strangford Park/Bantry Road.

In response to a query from a Member of the Sinn Fein grouping regarding a facility on Members’ iPads to access maps and indepth plans, the Director of Environment and Regeneration explained that the appendices included in the above report had been forwarded to Council by the Department and subsequently copied and attached. However she undertook to raise the Member’s concerns accordingly.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER279/16 Transport NI – Proposed Limited Waiting and Loading Bay Relocation – Market Street, Strabane**

The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of a letter received dated 4 November 2016 from Transport NI, Network Development Section proposing to move an existing loading bay from 42 Main Street to the front of Rummage Charity Shop and replace the existing loading bay at this location with a limited waiting time of Monday to Saturday 8am to 7pm.

Members noted the contents of the report.

**ER280/16 Correspondence from Transport NI – Private Street (NI) Order 1980**

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 a private street adoption by Transport NI.

In response to concerns expressed by a Member of the UUP grouping, the Director of Environment and Regeneration advised that the said Member could address his concerns regarding the completion of works by Transport NI and the Department of Infrastructure at the Special Meeting scheduled for Wednesday 14 December 2016.

**ER281/16 Proposed Provision of Disabled Parking Bays**
The Director of Environment and Regeneration presented the above report a copy of which had previously been circulated. She pointed out that the purpose of the report was to advise Members of correspondence received dated 31 October 2016 and 2 November 2016 from Transport NI, Network Development Section regarding provision of disabled parking bays at Bishop Street, Philip Street and Nicholson Terrace, Derry.

Members noted the contents of the report.

The Meeting terminated at 6.15 pm