



MID AND EAST ANTRIM
VOLUNTARY TRANSITION COMMITTEE

**Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday, 25th May, 2010 at 7.00 p.m. in the
Committee Room, “Ardeevin”, 80 Galgorm Road, Ballymena**

In the Chair: Ald. W. Ashe (Carrickfergus Borough Council)

Present: Ballymena Borough Council

Ald. J. Alexander
Ald. P. J. McAvoy
Cr. M. T. Mills (from 7.05 p.m.)
Cr. T. Nicholl

Carrickfergus Borough Council

Cr. D. Ferguson (from 7.05 p.m.)
Cr. Ms. L. McClurg

Larne Borough Council

Cr. R. Craig
Cr. W. Fulton
Cr. Ms. G. Mulvenna (from 7.37 p.m.)
Cr. M. Wilson

In Attendance:

Mrs. A. Donaghy,	}	
Town Clerk and Chief Executive;	}	
Mrs. J. Fulton,	}	Ballymena
Transition Co-ordination Manager;	}	Borough Council.
Mrs. R. Craig,	}	
Lead Committee Administrator.	}	
Mr. A. Cardwell,	}	Carrickfergus
Town Clerk and Chief Executive.	}	Borough Council.
Mrs. G. McGahey,	}	Larne Borough
Town Clerk and Chief Executive.	}	Council.

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>MINUTE</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1	<u>APOLOGIES</u>	
	Apologies were received from Ald. D. Hilditch, Crs. J. Currie, S. Dickson, A. Wilson and Ms. G. Mulvenna (who would be late).	
	The Chairman referred to the recent death of Cr. J. Currie's Mother-in-law and advised that a sympathy card would be sent on behalf of the Committee.	
2	<u>MINUTES OF THE VOLUNTARY TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27TH APRIL, 2010</u>	
	<u>Tabled and previously circulated:</u> Minutes of Voluntary Transition Committee Meeting held on 27 th April, 2010.	
	On the proposal of Ald. J. Alexander, seconded by Cr. R. Craig it was	
	<u>Agreed:</u> That the Minutes of the Voluntary Transition Committee Meeting held on 27 th April, 2010, be approved and adopted.	
3	<u>MATTERS ARISING</u>	
(i)	<u>Network N.I.</u>	
	Mrs. Donaghy provided an update on progress with regard to implementation of Network N.I. A number of meetings had been held with the I.T. Officers and Eircom around two key issues, i.e. the 'on-boarding' process and hosting of the system.	
	With regard to the 'on-boarding' process, the three Chief Executives had signed a letter of commitment with Eircom that in essence was an agreement to comply with the principles of ISO 27001. This would now allow Eircom and the I.T. Officers to carry out a baseline audit of the systems across the three Councils against the ISO Standard, and the gaps identified would form the basis of the project plan for implementation. I.T. Officers had also mapped the different systems and equipment across the three Councils. The next stage would be to draw up an implementation plan in relation to I.P. address ranges across the three Councils. Implementation would be carried out over a weekend period to avoid any disruption during working hours. It was anticipated that work would be completed in September 2010.	
	With respect to the hosting of the system, it had now come to light that Eircom could provide a platform to enable the system to be hosted remotely thereby avoiding the need for any one location to be chosen.	
	<u>Noted.</u>	

(ii) Planning Related Issues

Mrs. G. McGahey advised that communication had been received from the Divisional Planning Manager stating that, due to ongoing issues within Planning Service, she had been unable to dedicate sufficient time to provide the Committee with answers to its queries, however, she gave an assurance that this information would be provided next month.

With regard to baseline data collection for the Area Plan as part of the pilot programme, Mrs. McGahey advised that Mr. Scott Symington, Area Planning Team, hoped to attend the next Meeting of the Voluntary Transition Committee to discuss this matter with Members.

Mrs. McGahey circulated a copy of the letter which had been sent, on behalf of the Transition Committee, to Minister of the Environment, D.O.E. Permanent Secretary and the Chief Executive of Planning Service, expressing Members' concerns about the reduction in staff within Planning Service and also the proposal that the Community Places service be provided 'in house' by Planning Service. Mrs. McGahey would brief Members once a response had been received.

G. McG.**Noted.****4 PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT OFFICE MONITORING REPORT**

Tabled and previously circulated: Programme Management Office Monitoring Report.

Mrs. Donaghy advised that the submission, in respect of April 2010, was presented to the Committee for approval. The submission was similar to last month with the addition of Issue BCL 5 that related to inadequate funding for capacity building available to underpin effective implementation of the transition process.

On the proposal of Ald. P. J. McAvoy, seconded by Cr. D. Ferguson it was

Agreed: That the PMO Monitoring Return for the month of April 2010 was approved for submission.

5 LOCAL GOVERNMENT SECTOR EFFICIENCY AND COLLABORATION

Tabled and previously circulated: Key Outcomes from Strategic Leadership Board Meeting held on 14th April 2010.

Mrs. G. McGahey advised that the joint N.I.L.G.A./S.O.L.A.C.E. paper on local government efficiencies and collaboration had been presented to the Minister of the Environment at the S.L.B. Meeting on 14th April. The Minister recognised that local government should

have ownership of the process being accountable for delivery.

Arising from the discussions, a number of working groups had been established and she alluded to key issues to be addressed. The papers produced by the working groups would then be presented through the N.I.L.G.A. Executive and the S.L.B. to the Minister and, when complete, would also be brought to the Voluntary Transition Committee.

Mrs. McGahey advised that it was unlikely that there would be any Ministerial statement on the future of R.P.A. until June.

In response to Ald. P. J. McAvoy's query regarding whether or not the Transition Committee would continue until May, 2011 in its voluntary capacity given the uncertainty around R.P.A., Mrs. McGahey advised that any collaborative arrangement had not yet been agreed, however, it was hoped that the Voluntary Transition Committee would continue and she pointed out that funding was available until April, 2011.

Cr. M. Wilson was of the opinion that, although there was uncertainty around R.P.A., this also provided an opportunity to send a positive message to the Minister that this Committee would endeavour to continue to work together in a constructive manner towards a new Council. Whilst there may be an election for 26 Councils next year, Cr. Wilson believed that the three Councils could still work collaboratively to attract savings and realise benefits for the residents of each Borough.

Mrs. McGahey advised that this was the message being conveyed from the Committee, i.e. that it wished to build on the work already carried out and that the Committee was well placed to deliver projects and savings beyond the cluster.

The Chair agreed that the Committee should seize this opportunity and, in addition to sending a positive message to the Minister, he believed that it was important to keep colleagues and the workforce enthused.

Mrs. McGahey was to provide a further update on the position at the next Meeting.

G. McG.

6 INTERIM REPORT ON ASSETS AND LIABILITIES DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

Tabled and previously circulated: Interim Report on the Data Collection Process for Estates Assets and Liabilities.

Mr. A. Cardwell summarised the process being undertaken in relation to collation of information on assets and liabilities.

He stated that the existence of a reliable database was an important tool in business, and was essential to the emerging Council in order to have a complete picture of assets and liabilities across the Mid and

East Antrim area. The process for data collection had been set out in Circular LG 01/10 and this template had subsequently been agreed by the Voluntary Transition Committee in March 2010. The data collection exercise would include assets to be transferred from central government departments, e.g. Planning Service. Another important part of the process would be the preparation of condition and contamination surveys on assets where necessary.

With regard to timeframe, it was anticipated that the initial collation of financial information would be completed by the end of August 2010; any condition/contamination reports would be undertaken by the end of December 2010. The inclusion of assets transferring from central government departments would be completed by the end of March 2011.

In conclusion, Mr. Cardwell drew attention to the total value of assets across all three Councils, together with the value of outstanding loans. He agreed to bring back a final report to the Voluntary Transition Committee following completion of the data collection process.

A.C.

Noted.

7

KEY TASKS AND MILESTONES TRANSITION PLAN

Tabled and previously circulated: Update on Key Tasks and Milestones Transition Plan.

Mrs. Donaghy reminded Members that, at the February Meeting of the Committee, Members had approved the implementation of the Key Tasks and Milestones Transition Plan which was in line with Circular LG 07/09. The next phase of the journey in transition to the new Council was to establish six new key issues groups, i.e. Corporate, Finance, Human Resources, I.C.T., Policies and Procedures, and Location. Implementation of the Plan was due to commence in September, 2010, following the winding up of the 10 current work groups and completion of their scoping exercises. Mrs. Donaghy provided an update on groups that had completed their scoping work and those which were nearing completion.

Mrs. J. Fulton would now pull together a report on the implications of the outcomes from these 10 groups and this would be fed into the Key Tasks and Milestones Transition Plan. In order to prepare this report, Mrs. Fulton intended to meet with the Chairs of each of the existing groups. Mrs. Donaghy stated that this Plan would remain valid regardless of whether the future required transition to a new Council or collaboration and efficiencies. In the meantime, the Key Tasks and Milestones Transition Plan was being updated in terms of timescales.

Noted and Agreed.

J.F.

8 COMMUNITY PLANNING

Following Phase II of the Big Lottery application process with respect to delivery of community planning projects in N.I., Mrs. Donaghy informed Members that the Committee had been unsuccessful in its bid. However, she wished to thank those staff that had played a very active role in the preparation of the bid. She pointed out that this work would not be lost as the thinking process and underpinning rationale remained valid. A report would be presented in due course to the Transition Management Team and Voluntary Transition Committee on the scoping work being undertaken by the Community Planning Working Group, together with a recommendation on how to progress forward in terms of community planning.

A.D.

In response to Ald. P. J. McAvoy's query, Mrs. Donaghy advised that Officers would endeavour to obtain information relating to the scores allocated by Big Lottery and the reason why the bid had not been successful.

A.D.

9 MEDIA REQUESTS

Mr. Cardwell informed Members that the Ballymena Guardian had submitted four questions in the recent past related to the R.P.A. process and the Transition Committee. He advised of the questions received and the associated responses forwarded.

He also advised of a request for information, through the Freedom of Information Act, from Mr. F. Cobain, M.L.A. relating to the reform of local government. A response was being prepared and would be issued within the stipulated timeframe.

Cr. M. Wilson suggested that the response being prepared should include, as a supplementary, the cost of providing the information to Mr. Cobain. As Ballymena Borough Council was the lead with respect to financial issues on behalf of the Voluntary Transition Committee, a response would be drafted and circulated to the Chief Executives within the cluster.

A.D.

Noted and Agreed.

10 FINANCE

(i) Update on Transition Monies

Mrs. Donaghy referred to the confirmation from the Minister of transition funding of £150,000.00 to April 2011. In line with the Department's expectations, it would be prudent for this Committee to ensure that monies were allocated against specific tasks and projects for spend. She alluded to the monies already committed and advised that there was a small amount remaining for specific projects.

The Chair suggested that any remaining money could be used towards

progressing community planning work and this was agreed. Cr. M. Wilson suggested that capacity building would be beneficial for Members in moving forward and he felt that it would be useful to organise a further Planning Day for members of the Voluntary Transition Committee.

Mrs. Donaghy felt that this would line up with the previous Report on the Key Tasks and Milestones Transition Plan and moving to the six new groups in September. The Chair agreed that a Planning Day would provide an opportunity to reflect on achievements to date and plan for the way ahead.

It was agreed that (1) a Report would be brought back on community planning proposals for allocation of remaining monies; (2) a Planning Day be arranged for early September (*see details under Item 13 later in Meeting*).

A.D.

(ii) Loan Sanctions

Tabled and previously circulated: Report detailing Loan Sanctions in respect of Larne Borough Council.

Noted.

In response to a query by Cr. W. Fulton, the Chair was of the understanding that, if the Transition Committees did not become statutory, then striking of the Rates for the 2011/12 year would be undertaken by the three individual Councils rather than collectively. However, he stated that he would welcome some form of cooperation across the Councils in this process. Cr. Fulton asked that this matter be placed on the Agenda for discussion by each of the three Councils at a future date and it could also be included on the programme for the September Planning Session.

J.F.

Agreed.

11 **CORRESPONDENCE**

(i) Invitation to Transition Committee - Planning Reform Workshop

Tabled and previously circulated: Letter dated 6th May, 2010 from Ministerial Advisory Group for Architecture and the Built Environment for N.I. offering to hold a Planning Reform Workshop in the Mid and East Antrim area in June, 2010.

Mrs. McGahey explained that the Ministerial Advisory Group was a group of volunteers who were members of the Royal Town Planning Institute. The Group was offering to hold a workshop with Transition Committee Members and Mrs. McGahey suggested that Officers would endeavour to establish the topics for discussion at any future workshop and report back.

It was agreed that Officers should endeavour to have this session by

J.F.

M.A.G. incorporated into the Committee's Planning Day in September with a limit of one hour.

(ii) Review of Public Administration

Letter dated 28th April 2010 from Minister for the Environment in response to a letter from Ballymena Borough Council seeking clarity around progress with regard to severance arrangements and emphasising the importance of community planning legislation being enacted as soon as possible regardless of any delays to R.P.A.

Mrs. Donaghy informed Members that a similar letter had also been sent to the Minister on behalf of the Transition Committee.

Noted.

12 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

There was no additional business to be considered.

13 **DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

(i) Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next Meeting of the Committee would be held on Tuesday, 29th June, 2010 at 7.00 p.m. in the Town Hall, Carrickfergus Borough Council.

(ii) July/August Meetings

It was agreed that there would be no Committee Meetings held during the months of July or August.

With regard to the organisation of the Planning and Capacity Building Session to be held in early September, discussion ensued following which Cr. D. Ferguson proposed that a two-day event be arranged in a suitable venue outside the three Boroughs and that a facilitator be organised for the event.

Agreed.

A.D./J.F.

Based on this approval, Mrs. Donaghy advised that Officers would endeavour to prepare a draft programme for the Planning Day to be presented to Members at the June Committee Meeting for approval.

Noted and Agreed.

The Meeting terminated at 7.55 p.m.

Chief Executive, Ballymena B.C.	A.D.
Chief Executive, Carrickfergus B.C.	A.C.
Chief Executive, Larne B.C.	G.McG.
Transition Co-ordination Manager	J.F.

