

ARMAGH BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF ARMAGH BANBRIDGE AND CRAIGAVON DISTRICT COUNCIL

DATE: 19 February 2015

TIME: 6.00 pm

VENUE: The Mayes Hall, Craigavon Civic & Conference Centre

PRESIDING COUNCILLOR: Councillor D Causby

DEPUTY PRESIDING COUNCILLOR: Councillor D McNally

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillors:

G Barr	M T R Baxter	D Beattie
P Berry	C Black	J G Buckley
I Burns	M Campbell	B Curran
F Donnelly	S Doyle	H Gamble
P Greenfield	G A Hatch	S Haughey-Grimley
K Haughian	E Ingram	D Jones
G Keating	G Kennedy	F Lennon
C Lockhart	D McAlinden	J McCrum
C McCusker	G McKenna	P W J Moutray
J Nelson	S Nicholson	T O'Hanlon
P Rankin	C Seeley	R W Smith
J Speers	M J Tinsley	K J Twyble
G Wilson	M Woods	(40)

APOLOGIES: Councillor M Cairns (1)

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr R Wilson, Chief Executive
Ms W Geary, Democratic Services Manager
Mr E Kelly, Change Management Officer
Mr G Coulter, Head of Finance
Ms S Currans, Head of Human Resources
Mr J Briggs, Clerk and Chief Executive, Armagh City and District Council
Mr D Lindsay, Director of Environmental Services, Banbridge District Council
Mrs M Mallon, Democratic Services Officer, Armagh City and District Council
Miss A Robinson, Democratic Services Officer, Armagh City and District Council

1.0 **APOLOGIES**

NOTED: that an apology had been received from Councillor Cairns.

2.0 **OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS**

NOTED: that there were no announcements made.

2.0 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Item 13.1 -Reserve Spend Projects

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in the above matter in respect of the community project by Kilcluney Recreation Development.

4.0 **MINUTES OF SHADOW COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2015**

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Speers, seconded by Councillor Nicholson, that the minutes of the Shadow Council Meeting held on 29 January 2015 having been previously circulated, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

4.1 **Matters Arising**

NOTED: there were no matters arising.

5.0 **MINUTES OF SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 FEBRUARY 2015**

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Moutray, seconded by Councillor Woods, that the minutes of the Services Committee Meeting held on 4 February 2015 having been previously circulated, be approved, signed as a correct record and adopted.

Matters Arising

5.1 NOTED: There were no matters arising.

6.0 MINUTES OF SPECIAL FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2015

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Speers, seconded by Councillor Black, that the minutes of the Special Finance and Resources Committee Meeting held on 5 February 2015 having been previously circulated, be approved, signed as a correct record and adopted.

6.1 Matters Arising

6.1.1 Consideration of Rates Estimates Process for Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council for the Year 2015/16

SUGGESTED: by Councillor Speers that Council should invite personnel from the Lands and Property Agency to attend a meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee to discuss the rationale behind the proposed revaluations of commercial property, some of which were exorbitant. He believed that it would be useful to establish a mechanism that could challenge the valuation decisions.

IN RESPONSE: the Chief Executive advised that officers were trying to arrange a presentation to the Shadow Council meeting in March.

EMPHASISED: by Councillor Berry that it was a major consideration particularly for small businesses and those whose valuation had increased significantly. Although revaluation was outside Council's control, he highlighted that it should try to assist the public and advise them to challenge the figures provided in order to avoid potential business closures. He concurred with Councillor Speers' remarks.

Councillor Lockhart concurred with remarks that further information needed to be provided, particularly in light of disparity in some revaluations, especially in Lurgan. She understood that Land & Property Services staff would visit premises to check for accuracy and she emphasised that early intervention was key. She expressed her appreciation for officers' work in pre-empting the situation.

INDICATED: by Councillor Jones that he had advised property owners to seek a review of their revaluation at an early stage rather than waiting until rates were implemented.

Councillor Smith concurred with previous remarks and referred to cases of significantly increased valuations he was dealing with. He understood from Land & Property Services that valuation appeals would take place through a formal process, although officers would visit the premises.

NOTED.

7.0 MINUTES OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 5 FEBRUARY 2015

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Lockhart, seconded by Councillor Tinsley, that the minutes of the Finance and Resources Committee Meeting held on 5 February 2015 having been previously circulated, be approved, signed as a correct record and adopted.

7.1 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

8.0 MINUTES OF STRATEGY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 FEBRUARY 2015

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Twyble, seconded by Councillor Buckley, that the minutes of the Strategy and Governance Committee meeting held on 11 February 2015 having been previously circulated, be approved, signed as a correct record and adopted.

8.1 Matters Arising

NOTED: there were no matters arising.

9.0 MINUTES OF SHADOW PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2015

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Wilson, seconded by Councillor McKenna, that the minutes of the Shadow Planning Committee meeting held on 12 February 2015 having been previously circulated, be approved, signed as a correct record and adopted.

9.1 Matters Arising

9.1.1 Mock Planning Committee Meeting

Councillor McKenna acknowledged officers' work in respect of the above and encouraged all Members to attend the next one.

REMARKED: by Councillor Wilson that he had found it a very useful process to see the exact procedure and protocol being followed. He queried whether the training requirements for Planning Committee membership would be reviewed in light of how useful the Mock Committee meeting had been for those who attended.

IN RESPONSE: the Chief Executive advised that the Area Planning Manager intended to organise a further session for Members who were unable to attend the previous training. He reminded Members of the forthcoming sessions taking place on Tuesday 24 February and Wednesday 25 February on the Code of Conduct in relation to Planning, at which legal advisors would be present.

Councillor Hatch asked that if the next meeting would contain more difficult applications where there was no clear cut answer.

REMARKED: by Councillor Curran that during the study visit to Norwich City Council the importance of facilitating proper training had been highlighted. He recalled that the Mock Committee meeting had still lasted for several hours despite the 3 applications being very straightforward and emphasised that decision-making was Members' responsibility and it was not up to Planning officers to provide them with robust instruction.

Councillor Nicholson believed that the Mock Committee meeting had highlighted some deficiencies and also the importance of training in respect of appropriate remarks and adhering to the material considerations of each application.

CLARIFIED: by Councillor Lockhart that she believed that Planning officers needed to be upfront with Members in identifying what issues were not within Planning guidance and should therefore not be discussed.

CAUTIONED: by Councillor Nelson that Council was in danger of stifling all the Planning processes and if Members were well-advised they should base their decisions on proper Planning policies as currently defined.

CONCERN: expressed by Councillor Hatch on the requirement for Members to sign a Code of Conduct. In relation to the Code of Conduct on Planning, he felt it unfair that he would not be allowed to confer with a colleague on a planning application.

NOTED.

10.0 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL SHADOW COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 12 FEBRUARY 2015**

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Donnelly, seconded by Councillor Nicholson, that the minutes of the Special Shadow Council meeting held on 12 February 2015 having been previously circulated, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

10.1 **Matters Arising**

NOTED: there were no matters arising.

11.0 **NAME AND BOROUGH STATUS**

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: copy report SC-15-03.

11.1 **Borough Status**

The Chief Executive briefly guided Members through this section of the report.

PROPOSED: by Councillor Buckley that the Council would move to seek Borough status as it would be a great honour to bestow on the citizens of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon.

SECONDED: by Councillor Moutray.

Councillor O'Hanlon requested that information on the costs associated with Borough status be presented to Members. He disagreed with Councillor Buckley's remarks and in the absence of detailed information from the NIO, the Department and the Cabinet Office he believed it would be premature to move forward on the matter.

CLARIFIED: by the Chief Executive that the process of applying for Borough status differed from City status as the Council would be passing a resolution to continue with one of the existing Borough status Charters; therefore costs would be based on other issues around robes etc. that Council would subsequently decide upon.

Councillor Speers emphasised his disappointment that the Council's name and status still remained unresolved and he expressed his support for the proposal to move to Borough status.

EXPRESSED: by Councillors Jones and Hatch their support for the proposal.

IN RESPONSE: to an enquiry from Councillor Haughey-Grimley, the Chief Executive explained that in order for Council to have a Lord Mayor it had to have a Mayor, for which Borough status was required. He indicated that he was awaiting information from the Cabinet Office as to which Borough Charter to continue with and this matter would be discussed at a later stage to ensure the appropriate Charter was chosen.

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Buckley, seconded by Councillor Moutray that the Council move to seek Borough status.

11.2 Naming of New Council

The Chief Executive briefly guided Members through this section of the report.

ADVISED: by the Chief Executive that until such time as the Department approved any change in name and the necessary Regulations were made, he suggested branding the Council as Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council.

EMPHASISED: by Councillor Lockhart that her Party was not pedantic about the ordering of the Council name as its key aim was to have all 3 areas represented within it given the strengths of each.

PROPOSED: by Councillor Lockhart that the new Council be named “Banbridge, Craigavon and Armagh City Council” which she believed provided scope for the inclusion of Borough status in the name if necessary, while officers began to move towards the branding process which should represent all 3 areas.

Councillor Speers seconded Councillor Lockhart’s proposal. He referred briefly to the strengths of each area and emphasised that it was important to have these in the name.

IN RESPONSE: to an enquiry from Councillor O’Hanlon, the Chief Executive advised that the intention would be to procure a minimum of branded items to service priority areas.

Councillor O’Hanlon advised that his Party’s preferred name for the Council was “Armagh and Bann District”, although they would also be content with “Armagh and Upper Bann District” which referred to the Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies. He suggested that amending the proposed name to “Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council” would mean that any branding undertaken would consist of one cost exercise. He asked whether the Chief Executive had sought any advice from the Cabinet Office in relation to including “City Council” in the name.

ADVISED: by the Chief Executive that the Council had just decided to seek Borough status and the Council would become a Borough Council and was not a City Council.

PROPOSED: by Councillor O’Hanlon that the new Council name should be “Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Council”.

SECONDED: by Councillor Curran.

ADVISED: by the Presiding Councillor that Councillor O’Hanlon’s proposal would be taken as an amendment to Councillor Lockhart’s proposal.

Councillor Curran indicated that his party had proposed “Armagh Bann” or “Armagh Upper Bann” as names. However, he believed that there was little point in reordering the name as it currently stood as the public was already familiar with it.

Councillor Nelson said he saw the naming of this new Council as an opportunity for a fresh start and to deliver for the residents of the new Council area.

Councillor Berry remarked that it was important to have Borough status and also the Lord Mayoralty. He believed that all Members felt that Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon should be included in the name. He cautioned that if there were significant changes to the name after the branding process had started it would incur costs and he said that Members should not be perceived to be arguing over the name.

ADVISED: by the Presiding Councillor, in response to a query from Councillor Berry, that the decision to include “Borough” in the name would be a decision for Council.

ENQUIRED: by Councillor Berry whether Armagh’s City status would be lessened if Council agreed to have “Banbridge, Craigavon and Armagh City Borough Council” as its name. He believed that Council needed to think of its long term goals in terms of what would be easier or attractive to brand. He enquired whether it would be more beneficial to have “Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon City Council” as the name and, suggested that rural areas should be focused upon in Council’s branding.

Councillor Keating indicated that his preferred Council name was “Armagh Upper Bann” as it denoted the region, included County Armagh and was less parochial than including “Armagh City” in the name.

REMARKED: by Councillor Barr that the suggestion of “Armagh and Upper Bann” would not reflect areas such as Lagan River and South Down in the Banbridge area.

IN RESPONSE: to an enquiry from Councillor Barr, the Chief Executive advised that provision would be made for existing Freemen to transfer into the new Council and such issues would form part of the proposed regulations.

Councillor Buckley referred to Councillor Berry’s remarks regarding the inclusion of all 3 areas in the name and remarked that it represented a win for everyone and it was important that Members agreed on it. He welcomed the change from the SDLP in proposing that all 3 areas be included in the Council name.

CLARIFICATION: sought by Councillor Baxter, with reference to Councillor Lockhart’s proposal, on whether the Council’s legal title could differ from its working and branded title.

(Councillor Haughian retired from the meeting at 7.05pm.)

IN RESPONSE: to Councillor Baxter, the Chief Executive understood that Councillor Lockhart's proposal provided scope to explore such detailed issues with the Department and the Cabinet Office following Members' decision.

(Councillor Keating retired temporarily from the meeting at 7.10pm.)

EXPRESSED: by Councillor Haughey-Grimley her support for Councillor O'Hanlon's proposal which she believed was a sensible way forward for the whole area. She remarked that as rural areas would not be included in the Council name it was up to Members to represent those areas. She emphasised the importance of including "Armagh City" in the title as it was the only City within the District and Armagh's position within Ireland should be highlighted.

(Councillor McKenna retired temporarily from the meeting at 7.12pm.)

(Councillor Keating re-joined the meeting at 7.12pm.)

REMARKED: by Councillor Jones that the various suggestions put forward were still too lengthy. He expressed his disappointment that Members had not suggested a name that encompassed all areas including rural ones. He expressed concern that if the name was significantly changed from its existing format it would cause greater expense and would be difficult for people to become familiar with.

(Councillor McKenna re-joined the meeting at 7.15pm.)

OBSERVED: by Councillor Berry that the area names in the order of "Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon" were already in the public's mind and using that format would send a strong message that Council was ready to do business. He enquired whether Councillor Lockhart would consider withdrawing her proposal.

Councillor Speers expressed his surprise at the change in the views of Councillor O'Hanlon and also the Sinn Féin party.

WELCOMED: by Councillor Lockhart the change in views from Members of the Sinn Féin and SDLP parties as the inclusion of the 3 areas in the Council name had been achieved and she was happy to work with that format.

Councillor Speers suggested that the meeting would now adjourn for a brief period.

The Presiding Councillor sought approval from Members to agree to adjourn the meeting for a brief period.

AGREED: that the meeting be adjourned for a brief period.

(The meeting adjourned at 7.25pm.)

(The meeting resumed at 7.40pm.)

The Presiding Councillor invited Councillor O'Hanlon, as the proposer of the amendment, to speak.

ADVISED: by Councillor O'Hanlon that he wished to withdraw his proposed amendment to Councillor Lockhart's proposal.

Councillor Curran advised that he wished to withdraw his seconding of Councillor O'Hanlon's proposal.

Councillor Lockhart advised that she wished to withdraw her proposal.

Councillor Speers advised that he wished to withdraw his seconding of Councillor Lockhart's proposal.

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Lockhart, seconded by Councillor Speers, that the Council be named "Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council", subject to the Department's approval.

(Councillor O'Hanlon retired from the meeting at 7.45pm.)

(Councillor Berry retired temporarily from the meeting at 7.45pm.)

12.0 **ANY OTHER RELEVANT BUSINESS**

12.1 **New District Policing Plan**

Councillor Wilson referred to the issue of crime and its prevention in relation to the new District Policing Plan which had been debated at length with the new District Commander (Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon) at the Armagh Policing and Community Safety Partnership meeting the previous evening.

(Councillor Smith retired from the meeting at 7.46pm.)

EMPHASISED: by Councillor Wilson that the Council should familiarise itself with the new Plan. He expressed concern that no assurances could be given by the District Commander that a consultation process for the Plan would take place and stressed the importance of the public having the opportunity to comment.

(Councillor Berry re-joined the meeting at 7.47pm.)

(Councillor McCusker retired from the meeting at 7.47pm.)

AGREED: that correspondence be sent to the District Commander seeking clarification as to whether a public consultation would be held in respect of the new District Policing Plan.

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Black, seconded by Councillor Buckley, that the Council would go “Into Committee” for consideration of the next item.

(The Head of Human Resources, the Director of Environmental Services (Banbridge District Council) and members of the Press retired from the meeting at 7.50pm.)

(The Council went “Into Committee” at this point.)

13.0 **CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS**

13. **CONFIDENTIAL ITEM REMOVED**

AGREED: on the proposal of Councillor Hatch, seconded by Councillor Moutray, that the Council would come “Out of Committee” and adopt the proposal made “In Committee”.

ADVISED: by the Presiding Councillor that Members were invited to view progress on the Council Chamber following the meeting.

The business having been completed, the meeting concluded at 7.55pm.

SIGNED:-

PRESIDING COUNCILLOR:

CHIEF EXECUTIVE:

DATE:

19 March 2015