

**Minutes of the North Belfast Housing and Environmental Forum Meeting
held on Monday 5th March 2007 at 11.00AM in the Partnership Offices,
Unit 42 – 44 North City Business Park, 2 Duncairn Gardens**

In attendance: -

Murdo Murray	North Belfast Partnership (Chairperson)
Tracey McCullough	North Belfast Partnership
Sharon Beattie	North Belfast Strategy Project Leader
Ann Heaney	North Belfast Strategy Team
Paul Wasson	Ligoniel Improvement Association
Joe Kelly	New Lodge Housing Forum
Jennifer Crockard	Lower North Belfast Community Council
Brian Mullan	Antrim Road Regeneration Council
Manus Maguire	Cliftonville Community Regeneration Forum
Ian Crozier	Lower North Belfast Community Council
Michael Cunningham	Cliftonville CEP
Philip Magee	North Belfast Community Action Unit
Liam Wiggins	New Lodge Housing Forum
Sean McKenna	NIHE, District Manager North Belfast Office
Kathy Rea	NIHE, North Belfast Office
Valerie Crozier	Rathcoole CEP
Marie McKee	Ardoyne Association
Eileen Captain	Ardoyne Association
Trevor Cummins	Vine Centre
David Porter	NIHE – Queen’s University Students
Mark Butler	NIHE – Queen’s University Students
Winnie Mulholland	North Belfast Strategy Team (Minutes)

1.0 Apologies: -

Pat Benson	Sailortown Regeneration
Sean Baker	Sailortown Regeneration
Ruth Moore	Upper North Belfast CEP
Conor Flanagan	NITAP
Eileen Uprichard	New Lodge Housing Forum
Peter Farquarson	Habitat for Humanity

Murdo welcomed everyone and introduced students Mark Butler and David Porter, who are currently on a week’s placement with the North Belfast Strategy Team.

2.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed. Minutes were proposed by Valerie Crozier and seconded by Paul Wasson.

3.0 Matters Arising

3.1 North Foreshore Trip

Tracey advised that an advertising campaign is underway and that consultation was ongoing with CTA. Tracey distributed copies of the Giant's Park Consultation and Public Awareness Final Plan and a list of dates for Events for Public, Community and Special Interest groups. Tracey has spoken to CTA to make them aware of the Forum's involvement with BCC and past consultation exercises. She also informed them of the Forum's interest in the project and offered them the opportunity to meet with the Forum if they felt this would be useful.

Tracey advised the group that the North Belfast Inter – Agency Meeting which was due to be held on 7th March 2007 has been postponed until Wednesday 6th June 2007 at 10.00 am to allow time for consultation on the North Belfast Strategy Review.

Sharon advised there had been a number of apologies for the postponement of the meeting including

1. The election is happening on 7th March 2007 and it would be more practical to hold the meeting in June.
2. It is hoped to have more information on Crumlin Road Jail and Girdwood.
3. It will tie in with end of year 6 review.

4.0 North Belfast Strategy Review – NIHE

Sharon gave a detailed presentation on the North Belfast Strategy Review and the presentation was followed by a question and answer session.

Murdo advised that George Mackie from the North Belfast Partnership Board has given some thought to the Review and is currently working on bringing these ideas forward. Murdo felt it would be helpful to record some of the key views of the Forum to be brought back to the Housing Executive.

The first part of the presentation gave a progress report to end of year 5 and the second part dealt with the key drivers for the future of the Strategy. A summary of the main points of the presentation and concerns raised by the Forum are as follows: -

- The number of derelict properties at interface areas especially in perceived Protestant areas was discussed and it was explained that these properties are mostly in the social sector, area areas of low demand and are long term. Derelict properties in high demand areas have been picked up and where appropriate vesting was used. Sharon advised that any remaining vacancies should be picked up under Urban Renewal.
- The figures quoted for land acquisition, the loss of sites and the complex issues involved in acquiring land, vesting etc.
- Higher density against housing size, mix, land availability and housing need projection.
- Regeneration is stabilising local communities especially in Protestant areas and there has been a reduction in levels of unfitness mainly through URA programmes. Early predictions indicate that Protestant housing demands have increased.
- The issue of territoriality was raised and it was agreed that segregation is a big issue and that this needs to be progressed through shared future, but cannot be imposed and needs to be addressed by consent.
- The number of people in private rented accommodation has doubled in the last 5 years and the emergence of ethnic communities and migrant workers is impacting on the private rental sector. Affordability with regard to buying and private rental. Smartmove seminar for North Belfast landlords.
- It was highlighted that the level of new build starts is near where it was projected however, land availability is decreasing, resources are decreasing but the Waiting List is still increasing. Sharon acknowledged this and the fact that we are dealing with a complex housing market.
- Sharon stated that the numbers of starts prior to the Strategy were 20 and that although the figure has increased since the Strategy it has still not increased to the extent the Housing Executive wanted.
- The issue of the decrease in the number of kitchen replacement schemes quoted at start of Strategy was raised. Sean McKenna explained that the numbers of kitchen schemes started were delayed in the early years but that they are now on the increase. Part of the reason for the decrease was to do with a shift in Housing Executive internal costings. Waiting times for repairs and COT repairs were also raised.
- The amalgamation of NIHE District's 4 and 6 was discussed and Sean advised that information regarding the amalgamation was sent to all tenants, people on the Waiting List, Community Groups, Public Representatives and other interested parties. An information day has been arranged for Thursday 8th March 2007 for the launch of the new North Belfast Office. Sharon said the changes would be well publicised in the press.
- Murdo reminded the group that comments, conclusions and recommendations due in by 30th April 2007.

5.0 N.B. Inter-Agency Representation

Murdo explained the background behind this item and Tracey advised that there are two broad areas included

1. The role of nominated representative – are we making good use of the role.
2. Review of current arrangements – given retirement of Betty Rice.

Murdo advised the group that more time may be needed to discuss these issues and suggested leaving this item until the next Forum meeting before the Inter-Agency as this would give more time for consideration and discussion.

Murdo suggested that it might be useful to prepare a paper outlining the background to the Forum's participation at the North Belfast Inter-Agency Group and options for the future selection of representatives. Tracey agreed to do this.

Action: Tracey McCullough

Sharon stated that issues such as gender, mix, cross-community needs to be addressed before selection or change made to Inter-Agency representation. It was agreed this item should be postponed until the next Forum meeting.

6.0 Any Other Business

There was no other business to discuss.

7.0 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting will be Monday 16th April 2007 at 10.00 am.

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