

**Minutes of the North Belfast Housing and Environmental Forum Meeting held on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007 at 10.00AM in the Partnership Offices, Unit 42 – 44 North City Business Park, 2 Duncairn Gardens**

**In attendance: -**

Murdo Murray	North Belfast Partnership (Chairperson)
Ann Heaney	North Belfast Strategy Team
Paul Wasson	Ligoniel Village Regeneration Partnership
Joe Kelly	New Lodge Housing Forum
Brian Mullan	Lower Antrim Road Regeneration Initiative
Valerie Crozier	Rathcoole CEP
Jim Rafferty	NIHE, Assistant District Manager 4
Winnie Mulholland	North Belfast Strategy Team (Minutes)

**1.0 Apologies: -**

Sharon Beattie	North Belfast Strategy Project Leader
Sean McKenna	NIHE, District Manager 4
Conor Flanagan	NITABP
Eileen Uprichard	New Lodge Housing Forum

Murdo welcomed everyone and wished them a Happy New Year. On behalf of the group, Joe Kelly expressed his sympathies to Tracey on her recent bereavement. Murdo apologised for the loss of momentum due to Tracey's absence, limited resources and the subsequent cancellation of September's meeting. However, he stated that he was keen to get the Forum up and running again. Murdo thanked the North Belfast Strategy Team for helping out in Tracey's absence. He welcomed Winnie back to the North Belfast Strategy Team and wished Katrina well in her new post.

**2.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

**3.0 Matters Arising**

**3.1 Foreshore Trip**

Ann advised that Tracey had organised two trips, one had taken place but the second trip was cancelled, Murdo said he would follow this up to see if those who went on the trip found it useful, and if another trip should be organised.

**Murdo Murray**

- 3.2** Murdo asked if matters had progressed with BCC and it was advised that Tom Cowan, BCC, said he would be keen to come back to the Forum to discuss the developments at Foreshore further. Murdo said he would get Tracey to follow this up when she returned.

**Tracey McCullough**

**4.0** There were no other matters arising from the previous minutes and as there had been no agenda set, it was agreed the meeting would be informal with a general report on: -

1. The North Belfast Strategy Update/Review.
2. The North West Quarter.
3. Joe Kelly requested an update on the Housing Executive's internal modernising services.
4. N.B. Inter Agency meeting and attendance.

#### **4.1 Presentation on the Review of the North Belfast Strategy**

Ann Heaney gave a presentation update on the North Belfast Strategy which included some of the detail incorporated in the North Belfast Strategy Review document, which is due for release at the end of the month.

Paul Wasson queried the figure for average house prices in North Belfast. He felt that the figure was lower than the average price of properties particularly in Ligoniel. Murdo suggested that perhaps in the future the Forum could look in more detail at changing trends. Murdo also felt there were non financial reasons for the increase in property values in North Belfast such as the current peace climate and that this should have been anticipated and projected into the future.

Joe Kelly asked about the sites currently being vested by NIHE. Ann explained that these are small derelict sites, like the site at the entrance to the Graymount estate site which are not suitable for housing. Joe stated that there are plots of land in the docklands and asked why the Housing Executive was not vesting there. Ann advised that most of this land is owned by the Harbour Commission.

Joe referred to 4 houses at the front of the Milk Marketing Board site and asked for confirmation that they were being sold privately on the open market for £250,000. Ann agreed to make inquiries and get back to him.

#### **4.2 The North West Quarter Exercise**

Murdo advised that this draft document is currently out for consultation and that the deadline for responses is 31 January 2007. He also advised that subsequent information can be fed in after the deadline as long as an initial response was submitted before then.

#### **4.3 Modernisation of the Housing Executive**

Joe raised the question of how the modernising service exercise would impact on community groups and whether it would affect the District 4 and 6 budgets.

Jim Rafferty advised that Sean would be inviting all District 4 and District 6 community groups to a meeting in the Lansdowne Court Hotel in

February to discuss the proposed changes and any subsequent impact. He explained the District will be given additional resources to manage the increased load and that the amalgamated office will be known as the North Belfast Office. He stated there will still be estate management officers providing an even better service.

Paul asked if there would be one or two District Maintenance Officers when the amalgamation takes place. Jim advised that two would remain for the present as the Housing Executive's focus was to deliver a reliable service. However, if in the long term there was only a need for one District Maintenance Officer then the Housing Executive would adapt to suit need.

Ann advised that under Modernising Services resources have been carefully looked at and centralised rather than cut. Services to tenants will not be affected; rather customer services should be greatly improved.

#### **5.0 N.B. Inter-agency Representation**

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Forum should be held before 7<sup>th</sup> March to try to resolve forum representation to the North Belfast Inter-agency Group.

#### **5.0 Any Other Business**

There was no other business to discuss.

#### **6.0 Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be 5<sup>th</sup> March 2007 from 11.00 am to 2.00 pm including lunch.

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