

**LAND AND PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING
WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2024**

No	Item	Summary of Key Recommendations
1.	Apologies	<i>Councillor Huggins, McShane, Nicholl</i>
2.	Declarations of Interest	<i>None</i>
3.	Deputation Portrush Heritage Group – Mrs Jade Thorne, Mrs Clare Rainey, Chairman, John McNally and John Moore in attendance	<i>Received</i>
4.	Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 6 th March 2024	<i>Confirmed as a correct record</i>
5.	Transformation Plan – Land and Property – Update	<i>To recommend that the Transformation Programme – Land and Property Action Plan Update and the actions contained therein is approved</i>
6.	Requests to Purchase/Dispose of Council Land/Property	
6.1	Requests to Purchase Council Land – Quarterly Update	<i>To recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the information provided in the report and further notes the closure of the files identified at 3.3 of the report.</i>
7.	Leases and Licenses	
7.1	Leases and Licenses – Renewal of Commercial Leases – Quarterly Update	<i>To recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the quarterly update presented on the renewal/review of commercial leases.</i>

8.	Legal Issues	
8.1	Council Title and First Registration – Quarterly Update	<i>To recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the Quarterly Progress Report as at 28th March 2024 and associated Appendix, previously circulated</i>
9.	Correspondence	<i>None</i>

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE LAND AND PROPERTY SUB-COMMITTEE
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON WEDNESDAY 10 APRIL 2024 AT 7.10PM**

Chair: Alderman Knight-McQuillan

Present: Alderman Fielding, Councillors C Archibald, Councillor McCully

Officers Present: M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services
P Donaghy, Democratic and Central Services Manager
J Mills, Council Solicitor, Land and Property
J Drillingcourt, Assistant Land and Property Officer
I Owens, Committee and Member Services Officer
S Carty, Business Support Assistant

C Thompson, ICT Operations Officer

In Attendance: J Thorne } Portrush Heritage Group
C Rainey }
J McNally }
J Moore }

Press: 2 no. (R)
Public: 4 no.

Key:
(R) Remote attendance via MS Teams

- * **The Chair opened the meeting at 7.10pm and declared a 10-minute recess.**
- * **The meeting reconvened at 7.20pm.**

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Councillors Huggins, McShane and Nicholl.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest recorded.

**3. DEPUTATION PORTRUSH HERITAGE GROUP – MRS JADE THORNE,
MRS CLARE RAINEY, CHAIRMAN, JOHN MCNALLY AND JOHN MOORE
IN ATTENANCE**

The Chair invited the speakers to present.

J Moore, J Thorne and C Rainey from Portrush Heritage Group assumed a seat at the top table and jointly presented the power point, summarised as follows:-

- Quigley’s Cottage or Ballywillan National School, as it was originally, is under consideration by Council for disposal.

- Portrush Heritage Group hope to convince the Land and Property Sub Committee to recommend to the Full Council that it should not be disposed of but retained in public ownership by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.
- This is a small building situated on Magheraboy Road with random rubble basalt walls, a door and two windows to the front and 3 small square windows to the rear.
- There is also a small external area to one side with a separate entrance.
- The doors open directly onto a busy road and the building is surrounded on three sides by the graveyard to a height of about six feet.
- Ballywillan Parish School was opened by the Established Church in 1829 and was attended by children of all religions.
- Following the establishment of a National Board of Education in 1831 private schools were gradually absorbed into the national system of primary education which explains why this school appears as Ballywillan National School on mid-19th Century maps.
- This building should be preserved and protected as it is historically important. It was the first properly established school in Portrush and the earliest still extant, welcomed children of both sexes and all religions.
- It is historically important due to its connection and co-location with the former Ballywillan Parish Church and its graveyard which dates to the 12th or 13th centuries and is one of very few surviving from that time in Ireland. The graveyard contains many old and interesting graves particularly that of the wife of James Ross, aka Princess Dorothea, alleged to be the illegitimate daughter of King James and the grave was said to have been paid for by Queen Anne, her half-sister.
- This grave is the first location on the council's own *Royal Connections* tour.
- The school building is an integral part of the site around the ruined church which is itself a scheduled monument.
- It is historically important because of its social and economic connection to the town through having educated several generations of Portrush children.
- The importance of the school is recognised and supported by Ulster Architectural Heritage who have provided us with a letter of support.
- In time and with external funding the school building might be developed as an educational resource similar to that which used to operate at the Causeway School, a visitor centre for tours of the historic building & graveyard or a museum of artifacts and information relating to the site for the benefit of future generations.
- At present Portrush Heritage Group does not have the resources to undertake such development and nor do we believe that the Council is in a position to move on this.
- If this building is now removed from public ownership and demolished that historically important potential resource will be lost for evermore.

- Local people, some of whom have written to Portrush Heritage Group, with family members buried in the cemetery are very concerned about the disturbance, desecration and damage of graves which would undoubtedly occur if the building were to be removed and work undertaken to construct a new building.
- Removal of the building would also risk damage, possibly collapse of the high stone wall along Magheraboy Road which retains the graveyard with consequent disturbance, desecration and damage of more graves which abut this wall.
- Site is unsuitable for redevelopment even as a private dwelling house as is a small site approximately 40 x 20 feet and of little use for a modern house.

The Chair invited questions from Elected Members.

At the request of Councillor McCully, the Chair advised that some alterations had been undertaken by Coleraine Borough Council. J Moore advised of the impact of the alterations on the building and suggested these could be reversed.

Councillor McCully referred to the focused campaign and concerns around desecration of graves and asked if there were options open for consideration.

The Director of Corporate Services advised that the building was bought by Portrush Urban District Council from a Mr. William John McNay by the way of conveyance dated 8th July 1935.

The Chair advised that ongoing consideration has been given to this matter since 2022, the matter has not been discarded by Council and said that this was one of only a few deputations which had been received by the Land and Property Sub Committee.

Alderman Fielding sought clarity on the cost implication to Council and the immediate intention of Portrush Heritage Group in respect of the building. J Moore advised that it could be kept from falling down and potentially used for a community building subject to securing external funding at no cost to Council.

The Chair thanked the deputation from Portrush Heritage Group for their attendance.

* **J Thorne, C Rainey and J Moore left the meeting in the Chamber at 7.35pm.**

4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 6 MARCH 2024

Redacted summary minute, previously circulated.

AGREED – the Minutes of the Land and Property Sub Committee meeting held 6 March 2024 were confirmed as a correct record.

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN COMMITTEE’

Proposed by Councillor McCully
Seconded by Alderman Fielding and

AGREED – to recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee move ‘*In Committee*’.

* **Press were disconnected from the meeting at 7.40pm.**

The information contained in the following items is restricted in accordance with Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

5. TRANSFORMATION PLAN – LAND AND PROPERTY – UPDATE

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 & 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to present the Transformation Action Plan Land and Property update.

Background

At the Special Council meeting on 27th March, where Council considered a number of independent reports, including “The Independent Review of Land and Property related Policies and Procedures in Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council.

Council resolved:

“That Council accept the Findings in these reports in full. Furthermore, that an implementation oversight panel is established (similar to what was taken forward with the Planning Review) to oversee the resolution of the issues outlined in these reports; to produce and progress an Action Plan and the implementation of these associated recommendations; the membership of 6 Elected Members by d’Hondt”

At the Special Council meeting on 30th October, Council resolved:

“That Council agree to implement all of the recommendations arising from the Reviews to address the recommendations from the Extraordinary Audit and to set these out as a comprehensive Transformation Programme to ensure that the matters that led to the Extraordinary Audit will not re-emerge.

Specifically, Council further RESOLVED:

- 1. To set up an Implementation Oversight Panel to oversee the Transformation Programme and its implementation.*

2. *As a priority, to engage the Local Government Staff Commission to undertake the review of the Senior Leadership structure and the Organisational 'Health Check'.*
3. *To appoint an Independent Implementation Oversight Adviser to oversee the programme of work, Chairing an Implementation Steering Group and provide quarterly reports to the Department for Communities.*

The Council has agreed that the timeframe for completion of all the recommendations is 30th October 2024.

Land and Property Recommendations

- The recommendations from the independent report are detailed in Appendix A, previously circulated, Transformation Action Plan – Land and Property.
- The Land and Property Sub-Committee is asked to consider the content of the Action Plan and agree the actions contained.
- An updated Action Plan with relevant recommendations will be brought to the Land and Property Sub-Committee monthly.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Transformation Programme – Land and Property Action Plan Update and the actions contained therein is approved.

Proposed by Councillor Archibald
Seconded by Councillor McCully and

AGREED – to recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee approve the Transformation Programme – Land and Property Action Plan Update and the actions contained therein.

6. REQUESTS TO PURCHASE/DISPOSE OF COUNCIL LAND/PROPERTY

6.1 Requests to Purchase Council Land – Quarterly Update

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Assistant Land and Property Officer.

By virtue of paragraphs 1-3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update the Sub-Committee regarding the current 3rd party requests to purchase Council Land received by the Land & Property section.

Background

In June 2023 a report was presented to the Land & Property Sub-Committee (L&P SC) detailing the current 3rd party requests to purchase Council land. Members were advised that all requests have been registered, acknowledged and applicants advised of the approximate timescale for consideration.

The next quarterly report is due to be presented to the Land and Property Sub Committee in June 2024.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Sub-Committee notes the information provided in the report and further notes the closure of the files identified at 3.3 of the report.

Proposed by Councillor Archibald
Seconded by Councillor McCully and

AGREED – to recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the information provided in the report and further notes the closure of the files identified at 3.3 of the report.

7. LEASES AND LICENCES

7.1 Leases and Licenses – Renewal of Commercial Leases – Quarterly Update

Confidential report, previously circulated, was presented by the Assistant Land and Property Officer.

By virtue of paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a quarterly update to the Sub-Committee regarding the progress of the renewal of Council's commercial leases.

Background

In June 2021 the Sub-Committee was advised that the Land and Property section had commenced a review of all outstanding leases renewals and rent reviews.

Updates have been brought to the Land and Property Sub-Committee in September 2021, January, April and October 2022, and January, April, June and September 2023, and January 2024.

Proposals were circulated within the confidential report.

A further quarterly update will be brought to the Land and Property Sub-Committee in June 2024.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Sub-Committee notes the quarterly update presented on the renewal/review of commercial leases.

At the request of Alderman Fielding the Assistant Land and Property Officer advised that Coleraine Yacht Club building was being used by the Harbour Master for storage at this time.

At the request of Alderman Knight-McQuillan the Assistant Land and Property Officer advised of the current status of two other current leases.

AGREED – to recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the quarterly update presented on the renewal/review of commercial leases.

8. LEGAL ISSUES

8.1 Council Title and First Registration – Quarterly Update

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Director of Corporate Services.

Confidential report, by virtue of paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Purpose of Report

To provide the Land and Property Sub-Committee with Council Title and First Registration update following the initial report presented to Committee on 5th May 2021, quarterly updates thereafter, and the up-to-date position as of 28th March 2024. Summary attached at Appendix 1 for reference.

The confidential report provided further information on

- Background – Title and First Registration
- Quarterly Progress Report as at 28th March 2024

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council note the Quarterly Progress Report as at 28th March 2024 and associated Appendix, previously circulated.

AGREED – to recommend that Corporate Policy and Resources Committee note the Quarterly Progress Report as at 28th March 2024 and associated Appendix, previously circulated.

MOTION TO PROCEED ‘IN PUBLIC’

Proposed by Councillor Archibald
Seconded by Alderman Fielding and

AGREED – to recommend that the Land and Property Sub Committee move ‘*In Public*’.

There being no further business, the Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting closed at 8.55 pm.

Chair