

Parks and Leisure Committee

Thursday, 13th January, 2011

MEETING OF PARKS AND LEISURE COMMITTEE

Members present: Councillor O'Reilly (Chairman);
the Deputy Lord Mayor (Councillor Humphrey);
the High Sheriff (Councillor Stalford); and
Councillors Adamson, D. Browne, Corr, Ekin, Hartley,
Kyle, Mac Giolla Mhín, Mallon, Maskey, McCabe,
McVeigh, L. Patterson, G. Robinson and J. Rodgers.

In attendance: Mr. A. Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure;
Mrs. R. Crozier, Head of Parks and Leisure;
Miss L. Hillick, Democratic Services Officer; and
Mr. B. Flynn, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

Apologies for inability to attend were reported from Councillors McCarthy, McKenzie and Stoker.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 9th and 13th December were taken as read and signed as correct. It was reported that those minutes had been adopted by Council at its meeting on 5th January, subject to the omission of the minute of the meeting of 9th December under the heading "Gate Lodge at City Cemetery" which, at the request of Councillor G. Robinson, was taken back to the Committee for further consideration.

Gate Lodge at City Cemetery

The Committee considered further the minute of the meeting of 9th December. An extract of the minute in that regard is set out hereunder:

"The Committee considered the undernoted report:

'Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to establish a position regarding the future potential development of the Gate Lodge at the City Cemetery.

Relevant Background Information

Committee is being asked to consider the terms of a Development Brief for the rejuvenation of the Council's Gate Lodge which lies at the edge of the City Cemetery and fronts on to the Whiterock Road opposite Britton's Parade. The development of the building has been considered and discussed on several occasions. It had also been previously exposed to the market by way of a Development Brief. One of the key elements of the previous Brief was that the project should focus on the historical significance of the City Cemetery and the genealogy of the area.

The successful proposal at that time was from the Whiterock/Westrock Residents' Association. Unfortunately the Association was unable to finalise the arrangement and the former Head of Parks and Cemeteries Services reported this to the former Community and Recreation (Parks and Cemeteries Services) Sub-Committee on 28 November 2005. The Sub-Committee at that time also agreed the preparation of an amended Development Brief which would have as its principal objective the restoration of the Gate Lodge in a sensitive manner which respected the nature of the immediate surroundings. While this allowed submission of proposals focussing on the historical significance of the City Cemetery and the genealogy of the area, it allowed for consideration of a wider range of proposals and types of appropriate development.

Following a further interim report to Committee a revised Development Brief was brought to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee. Following representations from a Member the Committee determined to refer the matter back to the Parks and Leisure Committee for further consideration.

The attached revised draft Development Brief is now being presented to Members for consideration. This seeks to preserve the flexibility incorporated in the 2008 proposal but leaves the way open for interaction (if required) between the proposed development and the Cemetery. This could include uses which focus on historical and genealogical elements.

Key Issues

The issues for Committee to consider are:

- This issue has been under consideration for a significant period of time without significant progress;
- The revised Development Brief aims to address previous concerns regarding restoration of the Gate Lodge (Fox's Lodge) while preserving flexibility of potential use so as to attract maximum interest in the property;
- The current difficulties in the property market and a potential squeeze on grant aid make appropriate timing of release of the Development Brief to the market, difficult to judge.

Options

The Committee has several options:

Option 1 is to issue a revised development brief in line with appendix 3;

Option 2 is to amend the draft brief outlined;

Option 3 is to instruct Officers not to issue a brief at this time owing to market conditions; and

Option 4 is to instruct Officers to have the building de-listed and demolished which would have an associated cost.

Resource Implications

Financial

Disposal of the Gate Lodge, on lease, may raise an annual rent or a capital sum. This could generate possible income which would be set by Estates.

Human Resources

No need for additional human resources has been identified at this time.

Asset and Other Implications

This former dwelling and the immediately adjoining lands are unused by the Council and have fallen into extreme disrepair. The aim of the disposal is to enable the capital investment in the property by outside funders (private and/or public sector.) The investment should in turn have a positive social and economic impact upon the surrounding area.

Equality and Good Relations Implications

None.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee approve the contents of a revised Development Brief and reference to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 46 for further approval prior to future marketing of the property. Further reference to Parks and Leisure Committee and subsequently Strategic Policy and Resources Committee would follow receipt and evaluation of any proposals submitted in response to the Brief.

Decision Tracking

Director of Parks and Leisure to liaise with the Director of Property and Projects to ensure reference to Strategic Policy and Resources Committee within three months of this Committee.'

After discussion, the Committee adopted the recommendation."

Councillor G. Robinson referred to the fact that the former Community and Recreational (Parks and Cemeteries Services) Sub-Committee, at its meeting on 28th November, 2005, had agreed inter alia, that, whilst not an obligatory requirement, the Council would welcome proposals that would be cross-community in nature and develop activities which would address anti-social behaviour within the City Cemetery. He pointed out that that decision had not been incorporated within the current development brief and he requested the Committee to consider having that requirement included.

The Committee agreed to affirm its decision of 9th December and agreed also that, for any applications submitted regarding the future use of the Gate Lodge, appropriate weighting would be applied in the assessment process to viable projects which had a cross-community focus.

Revenue Estimates 2011/2012

(Mrs J. Thompson, Director of Finance and Resources, attended in connection to this item.)

The Committee considered a report, which had been prepared by the Director of Finance and Resources, in relation to the establishment of the District Rate and the compilation of the Estimates of Revenue Expenditure for the year 2011/2012. A copy of that section of the report, in so far as it applied specifically to the Parks and Leisure Committee, is set out hereunder: