

District council meeting of 19 May 2021

Convened and announced on 12 May 2021

Present: ZOVILÉ-BRAQUET Marion (CSV), Mayor, SCHILTZ Fernand (LSAP), Deputy Mayor, JUNGBLUT Tom (CSV), Deputy Mayor, EIFES Eric (DP), ZHU Dali (DP), SCHMITZ Jean-Pierre (CSV), DI GENOVA Jean-Pierre (CSV), LAKAFF Laurent (CSV), ARRENSDORFF Jean-Jacques (Déi Gréng), WOLTER Laurence (Déi Gréng), WEYMERSKIRCH Patrick (LSAP), Councillors, TAZIAUX Tim, Acting Municipal Secretary, REIFFERS Cindy, Secretary.

1. Determination of venue for the district council meeting

The district council unanimously approved the Cultural Centre in Oetrange as the venue for this district council meeting.

2. Approval of provisional school arrangements 2021/2022

Lena Wangen, Deputy President of the School Committee, presented the provisional school arrangements for the academic year 2021/2022. 305 children were counted. The Council unanimously approved the provisional school arrangements.

3. Approval of the “PDS 2021/2024”

Lena Wangen, Deputy President of the School Committee, presented the school development plan (“Plan de développement scolaire”, PDS) for the years 2021-2024. A key emphasis is being placed on the good collaboration between the school and the day-care centre.

The Council unanimously approved the PDS.

4. HR matters

In closed session.

5. Approval of a second supplement to contract for the regional cooperation agreement on the “Regional Museksschoul Syrdall” of 1 July 2015

The second supplement to contract for the regional cooperation agreement on the “Regional Museksschoul Syrdall” of 1 July 2015, allowing the districts of Bous, Remich, Frisange, Waldbredimus and Stadtbredimus to join the regional music school, was presented to the Council and approved unanimously.

6. Tax rules concerning the registration fee for music courses

These tax rules envisage a harmonisation of the contributions for all nine member districts of the “Regional Museksschoul Syrdall” and were approved unanimously by the Council.

7. Temporary school arrangements 2020/21 for the Music School

It was possible to lower the per hour fees for the “Regional Museksschoul Syrdall” music school. The Council unanimously accepted the temporary school arrangements for the music school for 2020/2021.

It was possible to offer online registration last year, and online courses were also held successfully.

8. Tax rules for urban development and buildings – adjustment

The District Council approved the adjustment to the tax rules for urban development and buildings, with 7 votes in favour and 4 abstentions (Eric Eifes, Dali Zhu, Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff and Laurence Wolter). This concerns the setting of the participatory contribution to financing shared facilities.

9. Approval of several divisions of land in Contern and Moutfort

A division of land in Contern and one in Moutfort were unanimously approved by the District Council.

10. Approval of an agreement with Valorlux

The Council unanimously approved the agreement with Valorlux. Under this, additional recyclable materials may now be disposed of in the blue bag. These include plastic packagings, tin cans and drinks cartons.

11. List of arrears 2020

The District Council unanimously approved the list of arrears for 2020.

12. Approval of the management accounts (“compte de gestion”) and administrative accounts (“compte administratif”) for 2019 for Contern district

By 7 votes in favour and 4 votes against (Eric Eifes, Dali Zhu, Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff and Laurence Wolter), the Council voted to approve the “compte de gestion” and the “compte administratif” for 2019.

13. Supplementary loan regarding the establishment of a public toilet in Contern

The Council unanimously approved a supplementary loan of EUR 20,000.

14. Grants to clubs and associations

Grants to clubs and associations totalling EUR 60,245.50 were unanimously approved by the Council.

15. Naming of a public space in Oetrange

The District Council unanimously approved the naming of the park in Oetrange as the “Parc Prince Charles de Luxembourg”. Marking the birth of Prince Charles, a cherry tree was planted at the site.

16. Approval of income

Income totalling € 1,583,966.90 was accepted unanimously by the Council.

16a. Supplementary item: motion by the “Déi Gréng” party concerning the shortage of housing and potential remedies

On behalf of the District Council, the “Déi Gréng” party proposed a motion to Cabinet. Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff, councillor and member of the party “Déi Gréng”, proposed the motion. He called for second homes, vacant homes and sites capable of being built on immediately to be identified and a report with the findings to be presented to the District Council. He also called for a tax provision on vacant properties and requested the Cabinet to present the District Council with proposals on increasing the property tax on building lots and details of the associated provisions.

The Mayor explained that the Cabinet was fully engaged on this issue and was about to analyse its options for building at three different locations in the district and, where appropriate, also to take these up. However, it should not be forgotten that there are also obstacles to housing construction,

as buildings may be listed by the “Service des Sites et Monuments”, for instance. It should also be noted that eight districts have introduced levies on vacant properties, although only two of them are actually generating revenue via such levies.

So there are many aspects to be considered. Take the example of an older resident, for instance, living in an old people’s home and therefore not occupying their apartment. The Mayor asked whether such a property should be considered vacant.

Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff emphasized that such a levy did not affect ownership.

Patrick Weymerskirch noted that a national solution was taking a long time to come about, and that a property tax was already almost laughable. Many governments had come to grief over their housebuilding policy.

It was agreed that the District Council was to be informed by the Cabinet regarding second homes, vacant homes and developable sites. Working sessions of the District Council for the purpose of consulting on the introduction of levies on vacant properties and the increase in the property tax threshold (B6) are to be arranged as soon as possible.

16b. Supplementary item: motion by the “Déi Gréng” party concerning the reorganisation of public transport

On behalf of the District Council, the “Déi Gréng” party proposed a second motion to Cabinet. Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff, councillor and member of the party “Déi Gréng”, also proposed this motion. He advised that the 165 bus service was effectively being withdrawn, with far-reaching consequences for Contern district. In addition, long waiting times were sometimes experienced at the “Syrbréck” stop in Moutfort. All this was leading to a situation where residents would become massively reliant on the private car, and public transport would not fulfil the purpose being pursued by the state and by the district councils. Many residents have found alternative solutions, although residents in Medingen in particular are finding they are poorly served.

“Déi Gréng” called on Cabinet to send a letter to the Transport Ministry, with the support of the whole District Council. Cllr Arrensdorff asked how school pupils from Medingen attending a school outside that district were to get to school, and proposed that the Conti Bus (the Contern district dial-a-bus service) could act as support to cover the lack of public transport.

In addition, the Council should work with Medingen residents to seek a possible solution.

The Mayor emphasized that the Cabinet was very aware of the deterioration in public transport in the district, and was accordingly already highly active on that issue. This Cabinet, which was sworn in on 15 November 2017, had already sent an initial letter on 23 November of that same year to the Transport Ministry, in relation to the unsatisfactory organisation of the RGTR.

The Conti Bus was definitely not a solution, as this is paid for by residents in Contern district, and it was intended to be a dial-a-bus service, not to compensate for the decline in public transport.

Fernand Schiltz, Deputy Mayor for Mobility, welcomed the motion from “Déi Gréng” and emphasized that the Cabinet valued good collaboration. Regrettably, the collaboration with the RGTR service was functioning less well. He observed that the Cabinet was informed via the press that the bus station in Moutfort was not being built. The Cabinet had even altered the location of the multi-sports area to accommodate this project. The “Verkéiersverbond” public transport operator, which was seen as a benefit, had been dissolved. Letters sent to Mr Serge Prado and Mr Alex Kies went unanswered, with not even an acknowledgement being received. Since 2017, the

Cabinet has made intensive efforts to find solutions in this area, involving letters and meetings with those responsible. He similarly emphasized that the Conti Bus was not an alternative to school transport.

Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff recognized the work of the Cabinet, but called for this issue to be elevated to full council level, to lend greater weight to the arguments.

Deputy Mayor Tom Jungblut advised that the manner of the reception from the Transport Minister, François Bausch, did not give good grounds for optimism.

It was then agreed that the dissatisfaction of residents in Contern district should be communicated again to the Transport Ministry, with the support of the District Council. Residents should then be invited to submit suggestions for improvements to the District Council.

The Mayor also emphasized that she was already in contact with affected residents who are now having to use their private car again in order to get to work on time. Naturally, the Cabinet will continue to listen to feedback from all residents in Contern district, in order to identify possible solutions, particularly for the link between Moutfort and Medingen.

17. Information concerning grants in relation to “Extension Cycle 1” and “Transformation et extension de la mairie”

Tom Jungblut, Deputy Mayor for Finance, explained that the Council had received EUR 1,008,504 in state grants in 2014 for the Cycle 1 extension on the “Um Ewent” school campus and, in 2016, EUR 159,528 for the extension to the council building in Contern. These grants were posted in the district administration accounts under the authority of Cabinet at the time, when Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff was serving as Deputy Mayor for Finance.

It was discovered that, due to various circumstances, the sum received in grants for the Cycle 1 extension had not been deducted from the grants yet to be received, and that in the following years there had similarly been an omission in not updating the total amount of the grants deemed yet to be received in the district’s budget.

It was also found that the EUR 159,528 intended for the extension to the council building had been posted against the budget item for the Cycle 1 extension on the school campus.

Tom Jungblut, Deputy Mayor for Finance, thanked the Finance Department of Contern District Council and the Acting Secretary for their investigative work.

Jean-Jacques Arrensdorff, councillor, did not wish to reply to these accusations and stated that he had not acted with intent at any point.

18. Announcements and councillor questions

The Mayor announced that the “Déi Gréng” party had submitted a written request to the Cabinet to add a supplementary item to the District Council’s agenda. This supplementary item was aimed at answering questions concerning the new communications concept.

The Mayor advised that the new communications concept had respected the budgetary stipulations and emphasized that, in principle, the Cabinet only makes matters public when issues are ready for decision.

The Mayor also announced that Contern District Council was offering its residents free rapid tests for coronavirus, certified by the Health Ministry. The CGDIS (Corps grand-ducal d’incendie et de secours) fire and rescue service had collected the tests for the district from the distribution centre. A waiting room has been set up in the Council building and the election booths are currently serving as test

stations. The personnel involved has volunteered without prompting for this service to residents. Any resident wanting to be tested requires an appointment for this; appointments can be booked for Fridays from 16:30 - 19:00. Currently, the Council does not know whether further tests are being purchased.

The Mayor announced that every district in the country has the opportunity of advising the Interior Ministry of its position on the National Emergency Response Plan (Plan national d'organisation de secours, PNOS) by 1 June 2021. In relation to this, the Cabinet has already arranged a meeting with Mr Bram Krieps (Head of the Fire and Rescue Centre at CIS Moutfort), and Syvicol (Syndicat des villes et communes luxembourgeoises – the Association of Luxembourg Cities and Municipalities) has also already adopted a position on this issue. The Mayor advised that a session of the District Council to address this item was being convened on 31 May 2021 at 17:00.

Fernand Schiltz, Deputy Mayor for Climate Matters, reported on the work of the Climate Alliance (Klimabündnis) in 2020. This included the pilot project "Cargo Bikes" for local councils and companies, the "Tour du Duerf" and "Klimapakt 2.0", which is a continuation of the initial "Klimapakt" project.

With regard to slow transport, the "Semaine européenne de mobilité", the "Vëlosdag" and the "Vëlosummer" all took place. Fernand Schiltz also wanted to encourage people to take part in the "Mam Vëlo op d'Schaff / an d'Schoul" cycling initiative.

The climate team, in collaboration with Enovos, is currently gifting each resident in Contern district ten free LED bulbs, which can be collected from the Council office on presentation of a voucher.

Of the 150 consultations conducted by "Myenergy", 32 were in Contern district.

Fernand Schiltz also recommended the film "Eng Äerd", showing how environmental protection is being implemented in Luxembourg.

It was advised that SIAS (Syndicat intercommunal pour l'assainissement du bassin hydrographique de la Syre, the inter-communal association for nature conservation in the Syre drainage basin) is refunding a sum of EUR 51,000 to Contern District Council, because various activities were not able to take place due to the coronavirus crisis.

Several new house-martin nests and 100 nesting boxes were installed, spread around the district, by SIAS and by the Luxembourg nature conservation group LNVL (Lëtzebuurger Natur- a Vulleschutzliga).

A letter was sent to companies located in the Contern industrial zone, calling on them to design their sites to be greener.