

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 12 April 2018 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt

Members Present

Councillor Molloy, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Buchanan, Elattar, Forde, Gildernew, Kearney, S McGuigan, McKinney, McLean, Totten

Officers in Attendance

Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive
Mrs Canavan, Director of Organisational Development
Mrs Kerr, Head of Finance
Ms Mezza, Head of Marketing and Communications
Mr Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT
Mr JJ Tohill, Director of Finance
Mrs Grogan, Democratic Services Officer

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

PR071/18 Apologies

Councillors Bateson, Cuddy, Doris, McPeake, M Quinn and Council Solicitor.

PR072/18 Declaration of Interest

The Chair reminded members of their responsibility with regard to declarations of interest.

The Chair, Councillors Gildernew and McKinney declared an interest in the National Association of Councillors.

PR073/18 Chair's Business

Councillor McKinney advised that he had received a call today raising concern about the Doctor's surgeries in Dungannon being seriously under pressure and asked that a meeting be arranged with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to raise concerns.

Proposed by Councillor McKinney
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

That a meeting be arranged with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to raise concerns about Doctors Surgeries in Dungannon being under pressure.

The Chief Executive advised that he had been made aware of the extreme pressure Doctor's surgeries in Dungannon were experiencing due to staffing issues. He said that usually this would be brought to Council for approval but given the concern

raised by party representatives tonight, that he would seek approval from members present to proceed with arranging a meeting with representatives from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust as a matter of urgency.

Proposed by Councillor Gildernew
Seconded by Councillor Forde and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that a meeting be arranged between the delegation of Mid Ulster District Council and Southern Health and Social Care Trust to raise concerns regarding extreme pressure on Doctors Surgeries in Dungannon.

Councillor McLean referred to a meeting last year with representative from DfI Roads Service where they advised on an App for notifying issues such as Potholes in the area, and raised concern regarding the lack of correspondence since from the individual concerned and enquired if there has been any update as other Councils have come on board.

The Chief Executive advised that this would be under the remit of the Environment Committee like another App “Bin-Ovation” but would liaise with the department concerned and bring back an update to members.

Matters for Decision

PR074/18 Gas to the West – Option Agreement and Easement

The Chief Executive drew attention to the previously circulated report to seek Members’ approval for the Council to enter into an Option Agreement for an Easement in relation to the laying of a natural gas pipeline at lands at Moneymore RC Playing Fields/Moneymore HWRC, Moneyhaw Road, Moneymore (“the Site”).

In response to the Chair’s query regarding traffic disruption, the Chief Executive advised that there would be some traffic disruption but would be kept to a minimum.

Councillor Gildernew referred to the A29, Dungannon to Cookstown road and stated that the contractors were doing a magnificent job including the cutting of hedges and trees.

Proposed by Councillor Gildernew
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given for the Council to enter into an Option Agreement and subsequent Easement with SGN in relation to lands at Moneyhaw Road, Moneymore.

PR075/18 Audio Recording of Committee Meetings

The Chief Executive drew attention to the previously circulated report to inform Members of the various issues arising in consideration of the audio recording of Committee meetings.

He said that meetings can be contentious and sometimes things are said which can sometimes raise concern, but this can be amended for the next meeting through the dedicated work of the Democratic Services department.

Councillor McKinney proposed to let things stay the way they are and said that things are said in meetings through the heat of the moment and taken out of context which are forgot about or resolved within the first couple of minutes of the next meeting. He said that the prime example of this would be the Planning Committee where heated discussions do occur.

Councillor McGuigan said that he would be of a different opinion but would accept the arguments presented but said that audio recordings are taken of the Council meetings including decisions that come out of committee. He said that some other Councils already do this and asked why there should be a differential. He stated that he would agree that the costs are high and anticipated that if agreed would not be implemented this year but may be worthwhile considering this in the future. He also agreed that certain issues around certain committee meetings can sometimes be contentious i.e. planning but would be of the opinion that we shouldn't be any different to any other council as discussions should be open and transparent.

Councillor Kearney enquired if the audio recordings of the Council were amenable to the public if requested.

The Chief Executive advised that only the Open Business of the Council meeting was available to the public, which was also published on the MUDC website.

Councillor McLean stated that he would be of the same opinion as Councillor S McGuigan, if it shouldn't be said then don't say it as Councillors are elected by the public to be leaders and lead by example. He said that anything that he ever has said in a committee meeting he stood over or apologised. He did say however that he would have concerns about the costing of £30k for installation of audio equipment for Cookstown Chamber as it was very small and closed in compared to Dungannon and Magherafelt and would not be convinced that money should be spent on its current state and this would be his only issue.

He suggested that it would be better if parties had a chance to further explore this and defer the issue until the next meeting.

Councillor Gildernew agreed with Councillor McLean that more consideration would need to be given to this, especially around Planning meetings as a lot of things are said in anger.

The Chair agreed that committee meetings should be open and transparent, but would have concerns regarding costs involved with Cookstown Chamber as he felt that it was not up to the standard for the installation of the audio equipment and that consideration should be given to looking at upgrading it first before committing to spending £30k.

Proposed by Councillor McLean

Seconded by Councillor Gildernew and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council to defer the matter until the next committee meeting so further consideration can be given to the most favourable way forward.

PR076/18 Review of Policy on Receptions (civic recognition)

The Head of Democratic Services drew attention to the previously circulated report to provide Members with an updated policy in respect of the provisions of civic hospitality in the form of receptions.

Councillor Ashton advised that she was one of the members which sat on the Working Group which had taken a long time to do and welcomed the hard work which had been done. She referred to the amount of civic recognitions and said that the form for Councillors to complete would eliminate the amount of staff time wasted on chasing up addresses and further information.

She said that she would be happy to propose the recommendation as long as the remaining ones on the old system were honoured under current arrangements.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Councillor Kearney and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council to approve the Civic Honour and Receptions Policy and to honour remaining requests.

PR077/18 Dungannon Council Chamber: Branding

The Head of Marketing and Communications drew attention to the previously circulated report to ask the committee to consider amendments to the application of the Council's brand in the chamber in the Dungannon offices.

Councillor Gildernew said that he didn't mind asked if the technical difficulties meant that the brand could not be placed on the rear wall of the Chamber.

Proposed by Councillor McLean

To leave the branding in the chamber the way it is.

Councillor S McGuigan felt that option 1 was going to be too small and wouldn't be worthwhile and that Option 2 was his preferred option.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Gildernew

To proceed with Option 2.

Councillor Buchanan agreed with Councillor McLean and said that it was too costly and leave the Chamber the way it was.

Councillor Elattar said in her opinion there would be nothing wrong having the same as Magherafelt for Dungannon chamber.

Councillor S McGuigan felt that it shouldn't be much of an issue as it was 15mms and felt that it shouldn't impact much on people sitting at the top table.

The Head of Marketing and Communications advised that technically, because the rear wall was not flush, a replacement panel would need to be built out a little from the wall, but could still be achieved.

The two proposals were put to the vote:

Councillor McLean's proposal was put to the vote

For	5
Against	6

Councillor McGuigan's proposal was put to the vote:

For	6
Against	5

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given to be given to proceeding with Option 2.

Matters for Information

PR078/18 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 8 March 2018

Members noted minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 8 March 2018.

PR079/18 Marketing & Communications Activity Update

Members noted the previously circulated report which provided an update on key areas of recent marketing and communications activity.

Councillor Ashton left the meeting at 7.40 pm and returned at 7.45 pm.

PR080/18 National Association of Councillors and Local Government Staff Commission

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on correspondence received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) and the National Association for Councillors (NAC) on annual membership/contributions payable for 2018-19.

Councillor S McGuigan said that he would be of the opinion not to pay as this was an ongoing thing of trying to get rid of this body, but this is not the case because of the Assembly not being operational.

The Chief Executive said that as the Local Government Staff Commission was an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body established under the Local Government (NI) Act 1972 to oversee the recruitment, training and terms of conditions of employment to Officers, the Council were obliged to make an annual payment for services provided and the only way of dissolving this would be to bring it through the assembly which is not in operation. He said that unfortunately the Council had no choice but to pay their share and there was a legal obligation to do so, but moving forward that we can write to the Department of Communities and register our discontent.

Councillor S McGuigan said although he agreed with the Chief Executive, other Councils have opted out of the scheme and would propose writing to the Department of Communities advising of this Council's discontent.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council to pay fees as requested but write to the Department of Communities outlining this Council's discontent in having to make payment for the Local Government Staff Commission subscription.

PR081/18 Corporate Health Indicators: 2017-18 (Qtr 1-3)

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on the measurement of the Council's Corporate Health Indicators for Qtrs. 1 to 3 of the period 2017-18.

Councillor Gildernew said that by looking at the report, we are in a healthy state of affairs and would commend officers on their work, but would like to see a comparison with other Councils.

The Chief Executive advised that comparisons are done with other Councils against certain indicators and that officers would see how this could be included in future reports.

In response to Councillor S McGuigan's query regarding overtime, the Chief Executive advised that the Council are unlikely to ever be in a position where overtime could be totally phased out, but there is a strong focus on better management of overtime. He said where there was significant overtime being accumulated, it would be worthwhile considering employing another person but that there were considerable reductions in overtime compared to two years ago.

PR082/18 Nine Month Progress Update on the Council's Performance Improvement Plan (Q1, Q2 & Q3 2017-18)

Members noted previously circulated report to provide Members with monitoring information on review of performance against our seven statutory and three corporate performance improvement indicators and standards for the first nine months of 2017/18. The report also provides a progress summary against the Council's four corporate improvement projects. The indicators and standards as well as the 4 improvement projects are contained within the Performance Improvement Plan 2017/18 and 2018/19.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

Resolved: In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items PR083/18 to PR092/18.

Matters for Decision

PR083/18 Staffing Matters for Decision
PR084/18 Council Reserves

Matters for Information

PR085/18 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 8 March 2018
PR086/18 Contracts and DAC
PR087/18 Financial Report for 11 months ended 28 February 2018
PR088/18 Council Insurances
PR089/18 GDPR Compliance and Progress Update
PR090/18 Sickness Absence Update for the period 1 April 2017 to 28th February 2018
PR091/18 Staffing Matters for Information
PR092/18 Update on Financial Structure

PR093/18 Duration of Meeting

Meeting was called for 7pm and ended at 8.10 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____