

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Monday 1 June 2020 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means

Chair	Councillor Kearney (Outgoing) Councillor Mallaghan (Incoming)
Members Present	Councillors Ashton, Black*, Brown, Buchanan*, Burton*, Colvin*, Corry*, Cuthbertson, Forde*, Glasgow*, Graham, Hughes*, Kerr, N McAleer*, S McAleer*, McFlynn*, B McGuigan*, S McGuigan, McKinney*, McLean*, McNamee, D McPeake*, S McPeake, Molloy, Monteith, Quinn, Robinson* and Wilson
Officers in Attendance	Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive Mr Moffett, Head of Democratic Services Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer Ms Campbell, Director of Culture and Leisure** Ms Mezza, Head of Marketing and Communications** Mr Cassells, Head of Environment and Property** Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure** Mr McCreesh, Director of Business & Communities** Mr JJ Tohill, Director of Finance**

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. The Chair in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the meeting in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

AC1/20 Apologies

None

AC2/20 Declarations of Interest

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

AC3/20 Chair's Business

The outgoing Chair, Councillor Kearney reflected on his year as Council Chairperson as undernoted:

“Good evening and welcome everyone, both Council members and general public, whether you are joining us here in Dungannon, or joining us by use of technology. I hope you and your families are all keeping well in these trying times. We continue to face into unprecedented and fundamental challenges as to how we live our daily lives, including how we work, shop, come together, take leisure and of course how we all stay safe.

Let me say from the outset that it has been an absolute privilege to serve as Chair of this Council for the past 12 months. It is unquestionably a very demanding role but also a very rewarding one. As I said last year I got into politics to make a difference, having enjoyed being a teacher and Principal for 35 years. Those life experiences have had a very positive effect, allowing me to live and work with both traditions in this Country. I cherished that co-operation, community spirit and quest for reconciliation as I undertook my day-to-day duties. My aims were very simple and continue to be so – to listen, to learn, to protect and to promote.

My year began with the absence of government and decision-making at Stormont as well as the imminent calamity of Brexit. There is so much uncertainty still surrounding Brexit but thankfully government has been re-established. At that time we had reached crisis point particularly with issues affecting education, the health service and welfare reform.

My main focus for the Year centred on children and young people, and in particular the plight facing our schools and colleges, but especially our primary schools. The issue then was that many if not all of our schools were continuing to experience increased enrolments but with declining budgets. Of course we are all aware that Councils don't control educational budgets but these are the future generations of our society. I was fortunate to be able to visit 32 schools during the Year to affirm the great work going on but being so badly missed for the present. However, fast forward to 2020 with COVID19 and getting our schools up and running at all is giving great cause for concern.

Acting on our Community Plan Mid Ulster Council continues to play its part supporting schools, by establishing a Skills Forum and other initiatives this Council is performing a dynamic role providing information on career pathways including apprenticeships for second level students.

Our lives have all been affected since mid-March with the spread of COVID 19 but in the worst of circumstances we are seeing the best of people. It is a great concern to us all to see health services stretched, people uncertain about their jobs and futures, businesses closing, and many losing their nearest and dearest to this terrible scourge. Every death is a human story of tragedy and loss. COVID 19 has changed our society overnight and it is distressing to witness it unfold and impact on our lives, our communities and our businesses.

On a happier note there were many highlights worth recording during the Year. The approval of the 'Final Draft' regional economic strategy by the Governance Steering Group of the MSW Growth Deal, with the total Growth Deal funding now standing at 252 million pounds: the visit of US Consul, the Chinese Consul, Tara Ghandi, granddaughter of Indian leader Ghandi and Princess Anne to Mid-Ulster, all four witnessing our wealth of literacy, education, community cohesion, culture and

businesses: the many Civic Awards, the sheer number of awards testament to the wealth of talent, featuring those who will contribute and influence the future shape of this District: the Chair's Receptions, giving me the opportunity to acknowledge those community groups and organisations whose volunteers give so freely of their time and energy: the Launch of the Connecting Pomeroy Project which promises so much to that community: the refurbishment of Dungannon Leisure Centre: the European Course Angling Festival at Portglenone, which generated 1 million pounds to the local economy: the horticultural successes at UK level of Castlecaulfield, Stewartstown and Donaghmore, and Donaghmore becoming 'Irish Village of the Year 2019.': the Special Evening held in Christ Church Cathedral Dublin, where internationally acclaimed stars of stage and screen gathered to celebrate the continued global interest in Ireland's most celebrated Poet Laureate Seamus Heaney. This performance sought to highlight the literary connections between Seamus Heaney Homeplace which has reached its 130,000 visitor milestone and the highly successful 'Listen Now Again' exhibition held in Dublin which has welcomed 162,000 visitors in one year. Thus creating a network across the entire Irish landscape where we and our visitors can embrace a 'Giant Literacy Spirit.'

It was my intention to organise a Gala Event on 2nd April as a fundraiser for the Air Ambulance Service, and plans were at an advanced stage with great interest being expressed. We make huge demands on this vital service, especially being such a rural Council. For obvious reasons this has been shelved but maybe it can be resurrected at a more opportune time.

I would like to particularly recognise the great achievements this Year spearheaded by our Economic Development Team and Officers: Mid Ulster hosted the Invest NI International Week: the first ever Mid Ulster Apprenticeship Employer Event sought to increase the number and quality of apprenticeships, to help address the skills gap in local businesses: the first ever Mid Ulster Enterprise Week, in conjunction with the Mid Ulster Skills Forum and the MEGA networks, staging 25 different free seminars, welcoming people at all stages of their business journey, whether start-up, scale up or growth: a successful Jobs Fair and a Business Support and Funding Event, a programme aimed at delivering one-to-one support to 690 businesses over three years. All this good work and expertise is going to be badly needed in the weeks and months ahead as we re-build and re-boot our economy. We are fortunate to have such a dedicated team in place to cope with all the demands for help and advice that will be so badly needed as we go forward.

The replacement of the RDP Programme is also currently being devised. The overall level of investment generated from the 8.3 million application to the RDP will be in the region of 19 million pounds. This investment assisted 95 rural businesses, projecting 200 jobs, grant aided 18 community/voluntary groups and invested in 50 rural towns and villages. Tremendous outcomes reaping huge benefits! We need to keep this momentum going into the next Programme.

COVID 19 has decimated local and global economies. The predicted drop in GVA for Mid Ulster is stark and as a result we are calling for a bespoke intervention by the Department for the Economy and InvestNI, to bring a package of immediate, substantial and sustained support.

The roles of councils are – and will continue to be – completely refocused as a result of COVID 19. The importance of local place shaping, resilience, data gathering, community planning and much more is in sharp focus right now. As we begin to plan ahead for recovery we have clearly shown in the 9/10 recent weeks that Mid Ulster Council has risen to the challenge in terms of constituent, corporate, local and regional work. By establishing a £400,000 funding package to meet immediate need we have taken on significant re-generational powers ourselves as a matter of urgency for the well-being of our people. Hopefully this extra responsibility will herald greater powers and resources coming to communities via local government. In the meantime we need to plan for recovery, by re-opening our facilities and services with the safety of staff, customers and community in mind, by reviewing our business models, by exploring other income generation streams, by exploring greater use of technology etc.

The impact of COVID 19 has now obviously changed the landscape and has the potential to unravel a lot of good work done by our Council. This virus doesn't ask your politics, nationality or faith, but in a strange way it has united our Communities. As Chair I have witnessed at first hand all the remarkable work and unparalleled community spirit that continues to prevail even in the midst of this uncertainty, fear and negativity. In recent days I have visited 5 community foodbanks across Mid Ulster manned by eager volunteers, reaching out weekly, and sometimes daily, to those who are most vulnerable. All frontline staff, including our own Council Staff have been outstanding – they have risked so much to look after us and allowing us to stay safe at home. Again, I wish to take this opportunity to commend the invaluable work so many of you, our Councillors, have been able to do both for your own Communities and the wider Mid Ulster Communities. As a Council we were delighted to offer the facilities of Meadowbank Sports Arena to allow Bloc Blinds to produce face shields for the NHS.

In conclusion, I wish to thank my SDLP Councillors and District Executive for nominating me for this Post. It has been truly an honour. I congratulate and thank Councillor. Cuthbertson on his successful year as Vice-Chair. We have worked well together fulfilling our duties as and when required. I thank each and every one of you for the respect shown to me and the odd word of advice from time to time. I thank the Chief Executive, Directors and Officer Team and Staff for their direction and assistance, especially Jennifer, Ursula, Colleen, Shirley, Eileen, Kate and the team at Communications. I wish Director Andrew Cassells a well-deserved retirement. He has given tremendous service both to Magherafelt District Council and Mid-Ulster Council. I also pay tribute to Councillor. Frances Burton who has completed her term of office as President of NILGA.

I thank my wife Grace and family for their patience and forbearance. I have been informed by my family a further period of lockdown is imminent after this Meeting.

I wish the incoming Chair and Vice-Chair all the best – it is certainly not an easy time to take on this role but I know with the support from Council you will face all the challenges ahead.

I finish with an ancient Irish saying. In English it reads: There is no strength without unity, meaning in life and hard times it is the most truthful of all statements. In Irish it reads: Ni ceart go cur le cheile!

Thanks again and best wishes to you all.”

The outgoing deputy Chair Councillor Cuthbertson spoke of his year stating,

“The past year has been a great year and flown in despite being cut short with engagements cancelled from the end of February due to the COVID-19 pandemic, while disappointed that I didn’t get carrying out everything that I had planned, it was fantastic to attend so many events, support and host various groups from the community which have never been recognised or supported by Council before. I will always be thankful to the 1833 people who voted for me to represent them on Council, without their support I would never had this opportunity. On stepping down from this role I want to pay tribute to all the critical workers involved in fighting COVID19, also the amazing community response that is still ongoing. We have many heroes in the mid ulster council area.”

Councillor Ashton on behalf of the DUP commended both Members on great year of which the concluding months had entailed difficult circumstances. She commended Councillor Kearney on his willingness to support the Air Ambulance and emphasised that she hoped the support would continue in the future. Councillor Ashton wished the incoming Chair and Deputy Chair success for the coming year.

Councillor Kerr paid tribute to the outgoing Chair stating that he had been very supportive of new Members, had been friendly and approachable and stated he was a true gentleman.

Councillor Quinn stated it was difficult for him not to be biased and commended his party colleague on the fantastic year in which he had set out to build bridges and had done so every day. He stated the entire party had wanted him for Chair and he had excelled in office especially during the recent crisis.

Councillor Molloy concurred with previous speakers and commended Councillor Kearney for his year in office and in particular the many community engagements he had undertaken and how during COVID 19 he had exhibited what Mid Ulster as a Council could do.

Councillor Wilson also concurred with previous speakers and stated that Councillor Kearney had been fair to all he also conveyed that the Deputy Chair too had done a good job throughout the year.

Councillor Wilson stated that many Members connecting via the meeting link where not receiving good sound quality.

Councillor Kearney thanked all for their comments and said he had enjoyed his term in office and concluded that the council was formidable and in the words of the poet Seamus Heaney, “Keeping going is a challenge in itself”.

**AC4/20 Nominations of Councillors to hold Positions of responsibility for
2020-21 as confirmed at the AGN of May 2019**

The outgoing Chair Councillor Kearney referred members to the meeting pack containing the previously agreed Positions of Responsibility for period 2019-2023, filled using the d'hondt method.

Councillor C Molloy nominating officer for SF nominated Councillor Mallaghan to take the Chair.

Councillor Kearney stood down from his position

The newly nominated Chair Councillor Mallaghan Councillor took position at 7.25pm.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan said he was honoured to be appointed as Chair, and stated that as Councillor Kerr had said the outgoing Chair was a gentleman and he would have liked to have shook his hand but due to COVID 19 restrictions this was not possible. He thanked his party for the nomination acknowledging that he had previously served as the Presiding Chair and filled in as interim Chair for a short time but this time would be very different context in which he would be undertaking his role due to the pandemic. He reflected on the 524 people who had lost their lives due to the virus to date. The Chair said that the virus impacts on the 'how' we do what we do – given the restrictions on how we all currently work, meet and interact – but not on the 'why' we do what we do. He said that the level of commitment with which Council delivers to its community is undiminished and acknowledged his personal commitment to supporting the people of Mid Ulster in the year ahead is absolute. No-one can fail to be impressed and inspired by the dedication of thousands of people across hundreds of groups, clubs and associations who have been working tirelessly to ensure not just practical support, but also the moral support is there for those who are isolated, whether by geography, economics or health. The Chair spoke of the economic impact and how Council was already lobbying for bespoke intervention for the district. He spoke of the date of the AGM falling on the first day of Volunteers' Week 2020 and indicated that he planned to highlight the work of the voluntary and community sector not just in the incoming week but throughout his year in office mentioning in particular Mid Ulster Women's Aid and concluded with a round of applause for Council front line staff.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan sought a nomination from the UUP for Deputy Chair.

Councillor Wilson nominated Councillor Graham.

Councillor Graham assumed the role as Deputy Chair.

The Deputy Chair acknowledged that she was the first female Ulster Unionist to hold the position in Mid Ulster and spoke of the privilege she felt in being appointed. She spoke of the steep learning curve she had experienced since being elected to represent the Clogher Valley area last year and how she had enjoyed working with the local community and looked forward with anticipation to the incoming year. Councillor Graham extended sympathy to all who had lost loved ones and acknowledges the NHS staff, care workers, Council staff and many key workers throughout the pandemic stating that she hoped the virus would be beaten and all

would emerge out the other side. In conclusion Councillor Graham thanked her family for all their support.

The Chair invited party nominating offices to nominate Members to hold the following positions of Responsibility, as listed for 2020-2021 in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Positions of Responsibility	Party	Councillor
Council Chair	SF	Councillor Mallaghan
Council, Deputy Chair	UUP	Councillor Graham
Audit Committee, Chair	SF	Councillor B McGuigan
Audit Committee, Deputy Chair	SF	Councillor N McAleer
Development, Chair	SF	Councillor McNamee
Development, Deputy Chair	DUP	Councillor Black
Environment Committee, Chair	SF	Councillor S McGuigan
Environment Committee Deputy Chair	SDLP	Councillor S McAleer
Planning Committee, Chair	SF	Councillor S McPeake
Planning Committee, Deputy Chair	UUP	Councillor Glasgow
Policy & Resources, Chair	SDLP	Councillor Quinn
Policy & Resources, Deputy Chair	UUP	Councillor McKinney
Housing Council for NI	SF	Councillor Elattar
Partnership Panel for NI (term of Council)	SDLP	Councillor Hughes
Reserve & Cadets Association for NI	DUP	Councillor Brown
Policing & Community Safety Partnership (term of Council)	SF	Councillor Mallaghan
	SF	Councillor B McGuigan
	SF	Councillor McNamee
	SF	Councillor S McPeake
	SF	Councillor D Molloy
	DUP	Councillor Burton
	DUP	Councillor Cuthbertson
	DUP	Councillor Forde
	SDLP	Councillor McFlynn
	UUP	Councillor Graham

	Year 1 2019/2020	Year 2 2020/2021	Year 3 2021/2022	Year 4 2022/2023
Council				
Chair	SDLP	SF	DUP	SF
Deputy-Chair	DUP	UUP	SDLP	DUP
Audit Committee				
Chair	SF	SF	UUP	SF
Deputy-Chair	UUP	SF	SF	SF
Development Committee				
Chair	UUP	SF	SF	SF
Deputy-Chair	IND (Monteith)	DUP	IND (Kerr)	DUP
Environment Committee				
Chair	DUP	SF	DUP	SF
Deputy-Chair	SF	SDLP	SF	UUP
Planning Committee				
Chair	SF	SF	DUP	SF
Deputy-Chair	DUP	UUP	SF	DUP
Policy & Resources Committee				
Chair	SF	SDLP	UUP	SDLP
Deputy-Chair	SDLP	UUP	SDLP	DUP
Housing Council for NI				
1 Representative	SF	SF	SF	SF
Partnership Panel for NI				
1 Representative 4 year term	SDLP			
Reserve Forces & Cadets Association for NI				
1 Representative	UUP	DUP	DUP	UUP
Policing & Community Safety Partnership - Mid Ulster (Note 3)				
10 Representatives 4 year term	SF SF SF SF SF	DUP DUP DUP SDLP UUP		

A5/20 Appoint of Councillors to Committees

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan invited Nominating Officers from parties to nominate Members to allocate Members to serve on committees. Nominations and changes made as notified by Nominating Officers.

Audit Committee		
Position	Party	Membership 2020-2021
1. Chair	SF	Councillor B McGuigan
2. Deputy-Chair	SF	Councillor N McAleer
3. Member	DUP	Councillor Ashton
4. Member	SDLP	Councillor S McAleer
5. Member	SF	Councillor Mallaghan
6. Member	UUP	Councillor Colvin
7. Member	IND	Councillor Kerr
8. Member	IND	Councillor Monteith

Development Committee		
Position	Party	Membership 2020-2021
1. Chair	SF	Councillor McNamee
2. Deputy-Chair	DUP	Councillor Black
3. Member	SF	Councillor Clarke
4. Member	SF	Councillor Corry
5. Member	SF	Councillor Elattar
6. Member	SF	Councillor Doris
7. Member	SF	Councillor Milne
8. Member	SF	Councillor Molloy
9. Member	DUP	Councillor Ashton
10. Member	DUP	Councillor Burton

11. Member	SDLP	Councillor Hughes
12. Member	SDLP	Councillor Kearney
13. Member	UUP	Councillor Cuddy
14. Member	UUP	Wilson
15. Member	IND	Councillor Kerr
16. Member	IND	Councillor Monteith

Environment Committee		
Position	Party	2019-2020 Membership
1. Chair	SF	Councillor S McGuigan
2. Deputy-Chair	SDLP	Councillor S McAleer
3. Member	SF	Councillor N McAleer
4. Member	SF	Councillor B McGuigan
5. Member	SF	Councillor McNamee
6. Member	SF	Councillor Milne
7. Member	SF	Councillor Oneill
8. Member	SF	Councillor Totten
9. Member	DUP	Councillor Brown
10. Member	DUP	Councillor Buchanan
11. Member	DUP	Councillor Burton
12. Member	DUP	Councillor Cuthbertson
13. Member	SDLP	Councillor McFlynn
14. Member	UUP	Councillor Glasgow
15. Member	UUP	Councillor Graham
16. Member	UUP	Councillor Wilson

Planning Committee		
Position	Party	2019-2020 Membership
1. Chair	SF	Councillor S McPeake
2. Deputy-Chair	UUP	Councillor Glasgow
3. Member	SF	Councillor Bell
4. Member	SF	Councillor Clarke
5. Member	SF	Councillor Gildernew
6. Member	SF	Councillor Mallaghan
7. Member	SF	Councillor D McPeake
8. Member	DUP	Councillor Black
9. Member	DUP	Councillor Brown
10. Member	DUP	Councillor Cuthbertson
11. Member	DUP	Councillor Robinson
12. Member	SDLP	Councillor Kearney
13. Member	SDLP	Councillor McFlynn
14. Member	SDLP	Councillor Quinn
15. Member	UUP	Councillor Colvin
16. Member	UUP	Councillor McKinney

Policy & Resources Committee		
1. Chair	SDLP	Councillor Quinn
2. Deputy-Chair	UUP	Councillor McKinney
3. Member	SF	Councillor Doris
4. Member	SF	Councillor Elattar
5. Member	SF	Councillor Gildernew
6. Member	SF	Councillor S McGuigan
7. Member	SF	Councillor S McPeake
8. Member	SF	Councillor Molloy
9. Member	SF	Councillor Totten
10. Member	DUP	Councillor Ashton
11. Member	DUP	Councillor Buchanan
12. Member	DUP	Councillor Forde
13. Member	DUP	Councillor McLean
14. Member	SDLP	Councillor Hughes
15. Member	SDLP	Councillor McFlynn
16. Member	UUP	Councillor Cuddy

A6/20 Chair of Mid Ulster Policing & Community Safety Partnership (PCSP)

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan invited the nominating officer for the SDLP to nominate the Chair of the Policing and Community Safety Partnership for year 2020-2021.

Councillor Quinn nominated Councillor McFlynn.

A7/20 Nominations for representation on Outside Bodies

The Chair Councillor Mallaghan drawing attention to the previously circulated report and giving no amendments to the membership notified the report was noted.

Matters for Information

A8/20 Council and Committee Meeting Schedule 2020-2021

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan drew attention to the previously circulated 2020-21 Schedule of Meetings for Council and Committee meetings

In response to Councillor Monteith's query the Chief Executive stated he would review the scheduling of the audit committee in November 2020.

Councillor Molloy proposed that a full council meeting be held in August given the current crisis with COVID 19.

Councillor Monteith seconded the proposal stating that rapid decisions were made in response to COVID 19 due to delegated authority but in moving consideration should be given to how decisions could be made to reflect pace of change.

The Chief Executive stated that a date would be set.

Resolved That Council review the scheduling of a meeting in August 2020.

AC9/20 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7pm and ended at 7.40pm

CHAIR _____

DATE _____