

Minutes of Meeting of Policy & Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Tuesday 3 March 2015 in Magherafelt District Council Offices

Members Present: In the Chair, Councillor McPeake (Chair)

Councillors Ashton, Bateson, Buchanan, Forde, Glasgow, McFlynn, McGinley, McLean, S McGuigan, Molloy, M Quinn, Reid and Totten

Officers in Attendance: Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive
Mrs Campbell, Director of Policy and Development (MD)
Mrs Canavan, Lead HR Officer
Mrs Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager
Mr Moffett, Change Management Officer
Mrs McKernan, Committee Services/Senior Admin Officer (D&STBC)
Mr O'Hagan, ICT Manager
Mrs Smith, Council Business Manager (D&STBC)

In Attendance: **Ulster Scots Agency**
Mr Ian Crozier, Chief Executive

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

PR34/15 Apologies

Councillors Elattar and Mallaghan
Mr JJ Tohill, Lead Finance Officer

PR35/15 Declarations of Interest

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

PR36/15 Deputation – Ulster-Scots Agency

Councillors Glasgow and M Quinn arrived at 7.08 pm

The Chair welcomed Mr Crozier from the Ulster-Scots Agency and invited him to make his presentation.

Mr Crozier thanked the Council for the opportunity to make a presentation and with the use of a power point stated that the Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture was around all of us in Mid Ulster.

He stated that the language is in the speech of the people, in the writing of the poets and in the name of places. The heritage is rich stretching back over 400 years and there are strong connections to the USA through the Ulster-Scots (Scots-Irish) migration. There is a vibrant Ulster-Scots cultural community with 60 registered member groups. In the last 3 years, in the Mid Ulster area, the Ulster-Scots Agency

has funded music and dance tuition programmes in 28 groups, summer schools in 5 groups, 3 schools are on the Ulster-Scots flagship school programme, funding is currently being provided for piping and drumming tuition in 4 schools and 60 per cent of the Ulster-Scots Agency Juvenile Pipe Band comes from the Mid Ulster area.

Mr Crozier stated that in the short term to promote and develop Ulster-Scots in the area the Council could:

- commission research to identify the true extent of Ulster-Scots in the area
- organise programmes to raise awareness of Ulster-Scots language, heritage and culture
- redevelop the Grant Homestead
- include Ulster-Scots content at Bellaghy Bawn
- public art reflecting Ulster-Scots heritage

Councillor Forde thanked Mr Crozier for the presentation and stated that she had participated in summer schools in the past and hopefully the Council would continue to promote Ulster-Scots in the future.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, thanked Mr Crozier for the detailed presentation following which he left the meeting at 7.20 pm.

PR37/15 Receive and confirm minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 3 February 2015

Resolved That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 3 February 2015 (PR18/15 – PR30/15 & PR33/15) were considered and were signed as accurate and correct.

Matters for Decision

PR38/15 Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Mrs Campbell presented a report seeking approval for the Mid Ulster District Council Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

Outlining the background Mrs Campbell stated that everybody had a responsibility for the safety of children in accordance with relevant legislation. Everybody also had a responsibility for the safeguarding of vulnerable adults. She stated that Mid Ulster District Council as an organisation which has significant contacts with children and vulnerable adults across its services has both a moral and legal obligation to ensure abuse and exploitation does not occur and that its duty of care is fully exercised.

The purpose of the Child Protection Policy is to help protect the children who use our services and to ensure that Mid Ulster District Council staff, elected members and volunteers are aware of issues that can cause children harm.

The purpose of the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy is to help safeguard vulnerable adults and to ensure that Mid Ulster District Council staff, elected

members and volunteers are aware of issues that can cause vulnerable adults harm.

Mrs Campbell referred to the key issues:

Child Protection Policy

Children have the right to live their lives to the fullest potential, to be protected, to be able to participate in and enjoy activities and to be treated with dignity and respect. There is a considerable body of legislation, government guidance and standards designed to ensure that children are protected from harm.

A Code of Conduct had been developed that all Councillors, employees and groups or individuals acting on behalf of the Council, must adhere to. In order to comply with our legal responsibilities, procedural and reporting arrangements have been put in place to deal with reports of abuse.

The Council will apply safe recruitment and selection practices to comply with the Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults (NI) Order 2003 and the guidelines issued by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety. Once appointed, those individuals with access to children will undertake extensive child protection training, supervision standards and health and safety training specific to the needs of children.

The Council has a duty of care to children in order to protect them from harm. This policy also outlines the Council's expectations of groups who use or hire council premises.

Vulnerable Adults Policy

Vulnerable adults have the right to live their lives to the fullest potential, to be safeguarded, to be able to participate in and enjoy activities and to be treated with dignity and respect. Whilst there is no specific legislation relating to the abuse of vulnerable adults, the following range of legislation is directly applicable to the protection of vulnerable adults

- Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups (Northern Ireland) Order 2007 (2007 Order)
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Health and Personal Social Services (N.I.) Order 1972
- Sexual Offences (N.I.) Order 2008
- Mental Health (N.I.) Order 1986
- Police and Criminal Evidence (N.I.) Order 1989

The Council will protect vulnerable adults by implementing a code of behaviour for staff and volunteers and will have in place clear reporting procedures to report concerns to the relevant statutory agencies while involving vulnerable adults and carers appropriately. It will also have in place clear procedures for dealing with complaints and grievances.

The Council will raise the awareness of the need to safeguard vulnerable adults throughout the Council and will actively encourage good practice amongst all staff, elected members and volunteers by promoting wider awareness wherever possible, i.e. partnership organisations and user groups.

In response to queries from Councillors McLean and Ashton in relation to 'policing' these issues and obtaining parental consent forms particularly at public events Mrs Campbell stated that there will be two lead officers in the new Council, Head of HR and the Health & Safety Officer and safeguarding officers will be identified within each centre. She added that the Council will have its own photographer at events and literature promoting events will highlight the need for completion of parental consent forms. An extensive programme of training will be provided to staff and all reasonable steps taken to safeguard and promote the well-being of children and protection of vulnerable adults.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council to adopt the Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy.

PR39/15 Policy for Recruitment Advertising

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report which provided further information in relation to the element of the advertising policy relating to the placement of recruitment advertisements.

Outlining the background the Officer stated that in February, the Policy & Resources Committee considered the introduction of a policy to guide the placement of public notices in newspapers circulating in its district, as well as the placement of tender and recruitment advertisements.

The policy proposed the use of the Belfast Telegraph for recruitment advertising for posts at SO1 and above, and specialist publications where appropriate, and the Committee wished to understand the cost implications of broadening the policy to include both the Irish News and the News Letter.

Drawing attention to the key issues the Marketing Communications Manager stated that the proposed approach to recruitment advertising reflects the policy of one of the three existing councils, and acknowledges that the Belfast Telegraph is considered to have a balanced readership.

The Officer further stated that using the example of the most recently advertised external post, which would be representative of a typical recruitment advertisement for a single post in terms of size the costs were:

Belfast Telegraph: £1,366.62
News Letter: £677.57
Irish News: £573.70

The report referred that while the cost will always depend on the size of an advertisement, based on the example, advertising in all 3 regional newspapers would increase the cost per advertisement by approximately 90%.

Councillor McLean was alarmed at the costs, asked how often recruitment at this level be taking place, he noted that it had been previously agreed that situation would be monitored and reviewed and stated that the Newsletter and Irish News were the papers which reached the rural community.

Councillor S McGuigan concurred with comments made.

The Chief Executive stated that the Belfast Telegraph would be the main publication in relation to public sector jobs and in order to attract the best possible candidate he would be concerned if the Belfast Telegraph was left out completely. Due to local government reform it was unlikely that there would be significant recruitment advertising in the short term.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that the advertising policy relating to the placement of recruitment advertisements, for posts at SO1 and above, should reflect that adverts be placed in all three regional papers, the Belfast Telegraph, Irish News and Newsletter.

PR40/15 Social Media Policy

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report on the introduction of a policy to establish procedures and guidance on the use of social media by Council employees and recommended adoption.

The Officer referred to the extensive use of social media by council employees personally and the opportunities provided by social media for the Council to communicate and engage with a variety of stakeholders at a range of levels. She added that the use of social media does, however, have risks and a policy is required to assist in the management of those risks and provide clear information, guidance and support to ensure all employees are aware of their responsibilities in their use of social media personally and professionally.

Drawing attention to key issues the Marketing Communications Manager stated that the policy outlines key areas of risk, including to the Council's reputation, to the retention of confidential and proprietary information and to compliance with legal obligations, as well as highlighting the implications for lost productivity and the appropriate use of the Council's ICT resources and systems.

Guidelines for the use of social media as part of a job role emphasise the need for any employee in this position to be aware of the responsibilities associated with representing the Council. Further guidelines centre on the need for employees who use social media in a private capacity to make clear distinctions between the personal and professional; to avoid any social media communications which could

damage or potentially damage the Council's reputation; and to ensure that no confidential or proprietary information or intellectual property is communicated using social media channels.

Training in the social media policy will be provided as part of the Council's training and development programme.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan and

Resolved That it is recommended to the Council to adopt the Social Media Policy

PR41/15 Uniform Policy

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report regarding the introduction of a uniform policy for Mid Ulster District Council.

Outlining the background the Officer stated that the three existing councils each have different approaches to the provision of uniforms to employees, the type of uniform worn and the employees who are designated as 'uniform wearing'. There is also a tax implication for employees, as clothing supplied as a corporate uniform or as protective clothing (not Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)) is considered a benefit in kind and must be prominently and permanently labelled to identify the wearer as an employee of the organisation.

Drawing attention to the key issues the Marketing Communications Manager stated that the draft uniform policy seeks to provide a consistent approach to the procurement, provision and wearing of uniforms throughout the organisation and to ensure branding is applied in line with the branding guidelines which are under development.

Work is on-going to identify those primarily front-facing employee posts which will be designated as 'uniform wearing', as well as to specify the nature of the uniforms to be worn. When complete, these designations will be appended to the policy and reviewed to take account of any relevant service changes.

The Marketing Communications Manager further stated that on the establishment and agreement of full uniform requirements, a procurement process to appoint a suitable provider(s) will be undertaken which may result in economies of scale. However, uniforms will continue to be purchased via existing departmental and service budgets.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Bateson and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the uniform policy is adopted

PR42/15 Good Relations Working Group

The Chief Executive presented a report seeking Members agreement to the establishment of a Good Relations Working Group.

Outlining the background the Chief Executive stated that Members would be aware that Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (Act) requires Council to comply with two statutory duties on equality of opportunity and good relations.

In carrying out its functions, Council is required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity:

- a. Between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- b. Between men and women generally;
- c. Between persons with a disability and those without; and
- d. Between persons with dependents and persons without.

Without prejudice to a - d Council is also required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

While the Act contains detail on the equality duty it is essentially silent in relation to defining and creating a framework around the good relations duty.

Council resolved to decouple Good Relations from its Equality Scheme and submitted its scheme to the Equality Commission for approval undertaking to revert in respect of the good relations duty.

Drawing attention to the key issues the Chief Executive stated that the Council was required to come up with an alternative methodology for Good Relations. The Councils Equality Scheme will not be approved until a suitable methodology for addressing Good Relations issues is developed.

The Chief Executive made a proposal to establish a Good Relations Working Group which would agree a definition for Good Relations, assist policy development and monitor the implementation of Councils arrangements for Good Relations. A draft Terms of Reference for the Group was provided and subject to Member approval the Terms of Reference of the Good Relations Working Group will be submitted to the Equality Commission for consideration.

Councillor McGinley asked how the 10 elected members will be appointed to the working group.

The Chief Executive stated that it would be a matter for the Council to determine how those members would be appointed.

Councillor McLean stated that he would have a problem with the working group as he did not see the benefit to any unionist on it if it is only going to pay lip service, then it would be a waste of time. Decisions in relation to flags, language and emblems have already been covered with no benefit to the unionist community. The

Member stated that he would be minded to let it run, monitor and see what comes from group.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, stated that Councillor McLean was entitled to make comments and would be disappointed if he did not contribute to good relations.

Councillor McLean stated that as a minority party it appears that nothing is being taken on board and there is a challenge for SF as the largest group on the Council to demonstrate that they are serious about good relations.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, stated that members needed to give things a chance and there were challenges in this for all parties, some of which have been implemented such as power sharing.

Councillor Reid stated that his party will be taking a look at this but there was a need for good working relationships with equality and respect to all cultures. The Member further stated that he would monitor forum but there was no point in wasting time if it wasn't going to work.

Councillor McFlynn stated that in Cookstown good relations worked well and with many sensitive issues coming up it is important to be involved to put views across.

Proposed by Councillor McGinley
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to establish a Good Relations Working Group and to adopt the terms of reference for the group

PR43/15 Prudential Code for Capital Finance Indicators and Operational Borrowing Limits

The Chief Executive, on behalf of the Lead Finance Officer presented a report which was to provide Members with sufficient information to enable them to discharge their duties under Regulation 7 of the Local Government (Capital and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, which requires councils to have regard to the "Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities" published by CIPFA when complying with their duty under Section 13(1) of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (duty to determine affordable borrowing).

Outlining the background the Chief Executive stated the Prudential Code set out a clear governance procedure for the setting and revising of Prudential Indicators, the key objective of which is to ensure, within a clear framework, that the capital investment plans of councils are affordable, prudent and sustainable and that treasury management decisions are taken in accordance with good practice.

Councils are required to set and monitor indicators under the following headings:

- Capital expenditure
- Affordability
- Prudence

- External debt
- Treasury management

The Prudential indicator in respect of treasury management is that the council has adopted the CIPFA “Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice and Cross-Sectoral Guidance Notes”. Mid Ulster District Council is required to adopt this Code.

Drawing attention to key issues the Chief Executive stated that although the Council must determine affordable and operational borrowing limits to enable it to draw down loan finance, the calculation of these limits will be kept under review throughout 2015/16 to ensure that they continue to be appropriate and are not breached.

The calculation of the Prudential Indicators is based on the best available information at this time. However, officers would draw Members’ attention to the fact that the proposed Indicators in the first year of calculation may be subject to slightly more uncertainty than they might normally be, given the degree of uncertainty there is in relation to certain figures, e.g. the extent to which the Department will make funds available to honour the Minister’s commitment in relation to ICT systems convergence.

The Chief Executive stated that the capital finance may look high for 2015/16 but it included £7.5 million for the Earls Project, costs for shadow Council and the Heaney Centre.

Councillor Reid referred to letter dated 24 February 2015 from the Minister of Finance and Personnel, addressed to him as Deputy Presiding Councillor. The letter expressed concern that the Environment Minister had misled the Council on the DoE’s budgets. Councillor Reid asked if the Chief Executive was aware of this and what affect this would have on the estimates previously agreed.

The Chief Executive stated he was aware of the content of the letter and it was up to the Minister for the Environment to answer to what has been said in the letter. In terms of the budget setting process officers made the only decision that we could and used figures provided by DoE officials.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, stated that, he also got the same letter and it would appear that the DoE Minister had written ahead of the Executive’s agreement of its final budget for 2015-16.

Proposed by Councillor Bateson
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to accept the officers’ recommendations in relation to the Prudential Indicators and adopts the proposed Prudential Indicators and the associated Treasury Management Policy and Annual Strategy (2015/16).

PR44/15 Councillors Allowances and Support

The Chief Executive presented a report, on behalf of the lead Finance Officer, updating Members in relation to correspondence recently received from the Department in relation to Members' Allowances.

Outlining the background the Chief Executive stated that the Council previously adopted a Scheme of Allowances which has been published on the Council's website in accordance with the legislative requirements. Periodically the Department will issue an update in relation to Members' Allowances, the most recent having been issued on Tuesday, 24 February 2015. The Council's Scheme of Allowance already makes provision for the amounts paid to Members to be uplifted to the maximum permitted by the Department (where appropriate) such as increased travel and subsistence or Basic Allowance rates.

Drawing attention to the key issues the Chief Executive stated that the correspondence indicates that legislation to be consulted upon later this year may remove the restriction on Members being paid for attending site meetings. However, the Scheme of Allowance will not be adjusted in this regard until the legislation is operative and Council has decided to change its practice in this regard.

Apart from the proposed increases actually notified in the correspondence it is not proposed to vary the Scheme of Allowances in relation to amounts paid.

However, although the correspondence refers to some discretion on the part of Councils in relation to what it considers to be consumables (as relevant to the purpose of the Basic Allowance), it is still unclear what local government audit will deem as acceptable to treat as consumables.

The correspondence is clear that the cost of mobile telephone calls is to be covered by the Basic Allowance which means Members must continue to pay for their telephone calls. However, it is significant that the correspondence does appear to permit Councils to provide Members with mobile devices and Members' views were sought.

The Chief Executive stated that some Members have queried whether it is possible for broadband connections to be paid for or reimbursed by the Council. It was stated that initial discussions with the local government auditor suggested that this could not be done.

As a final point, attention was drawn to a section in correspondence which stated that a Chair in receipt of a Chairman's Allowance (as would be the case in Mid Ulster District Council) is not (except in exceptional circumstances) entitled to a Special Responsibility Allowance. Officers are in discussion with the Department on this matter and believe that, when the Department realise that the Chairman's Allowance is a receipt based allowance for the purpose of defraying the costs of office and not a form of remuneration, it will confirm that the Mid Ulster situation qualifies as an 'exceptional circumstance'.

It was recommended that the Council:

- (1) Notes the correspondence and authorises the officers to update the Scheme of Allowances as appropriate;
- (2) Authorises the officers to continue discussions with the local government auditor in relation to the definition of 'consumables'; and
- (3) Gives consideration to what it considers to be 'consumables' and whether it considers it appropriate to provide Members with mobile devices

In relation to queries by members with regard to mobile phones and broadband it was confirmed that the Council can provide a standard mobile phone device and that broadband would not be provided. Those Members getting mobile phone tariff and broadband paid in the legacy councils would cease to receive this come 1 April.

In response to further queries the ICT Manager stated that Members may be able to avail of group benefit for sim cards, although there may be reception/ coverage issues in different parts of the new District, but there would be no economic benefit with regard to group Broadband.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the recommendations are adopted and that each member is contacted to see if they wish to avail of mobile phone handset and group tariff

PR45/15 2015-2019 Corporate Plan for Mid Ulster

The Change Management Officer presented a report which provided an update on the development and completion of a corporate plan specific to Mid Ulster District Council, for the period 2015-2019 and recommended the consideration and approval of the draft plan.

Outlining the background, the officer stated that to inform and act as a framework within which Mid Ulster Council's services and functions will be delivered a draft corporate plan had been developed to take effect from 1 April 2015. The duration of the plan would coincide with the term of the council with a formal mid-term review in 2017. The report outlined that the plan was not an all-embracing document detailing everything the council does within and across the district but rather, a means of communication with council ratepayers and customers on what the Council does and confirmation of key commitments around which service plans will be developed and implemented, ensuring a culture of performance and continuous improvement is embedded within the organisation.

The report added that a corporate plan is deemed a requirement by the DoE Programme Office to be in place for 1 April 2015.

Drawing attention to the key issues the Change Management Officer stated that drawing upon various strands of work and forms of engagement undertaken throughout the transitional period, the Corporate Plan, as circulated, has been devised as a high level plan around which all council's services/ functions will be

delivered. The plan does not detail everything the Council will be do throughout its first term, 2015-2019, but provides a blue print around which all services/ functions will be delivered. The corporate plan is written to be a concise document written to provide our ratepayers and customers information on who the council is, what it does and how it's going to do it. It's structured around;

- (i) Overview of the district
- (ii) Council's New Focus
- (iii) Vision for Mid Ulster Council
- (iv) Values at the core of council's business for employees and members
- (v) Our Themes
- (vi) Corporate Objectives
- (vii) Delivering our Services
- (viii) A focus on performance
- (ix) Representation

The report added that council is bound by the Local Government (NI) Act 2014 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the undertaking of its functions. 2015-16 will be the first year within which the Council must set Performance Improvement Objectives within the context of the corporate plan and a performance improvement framework designed into the structure and business of the new council. This activity will commence following consideration of the corporate plan.

Councillor Ashton stated that the only capital scheme listed under Creating Growth, priorities was the Seamus Heaney Centre and asked why other schemes were not included and felt it would be important to show in the plan other schemes across the district. She added that under Building Unity the Member stated that the promotion of Irish Language was not a priority from her Party's perspective.

Councillors McPeake and McFlynn stated that it would be important that the promotion of minority languages within the district remains as a priority in the plan.

The Change Management Officer stated that would take comments on board.

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the draft Mid Ulster Corporate Plan is adopted

PR46/15 Occupational Health Provision

The Lead HR Officer presented a report which provided a rationale to consider temporarily extending the existing occupational healthcare utilised by Dungannon and Cookstown to include Magherafelt and planning employees.

Outlining the legal requirement in relation to the matter the Officer stated that health surveillance is the regular review of the health of employees exposed to various forms of health risk as a result of working on specific work processes, eg hazardous

substances including dust and fumes, noise and vibration. Health Surveillance must be carried out by suitably qualified people with a specialist qualification in occupational health. Occupational Health also had a pivotal role in assisting council's in managing sickness absence. The Lead Human Resources Officer outlined other key issues as contained within the report:

Current Services Provided

The current occupational health provision within Dungannon and Cookstown Councils is provided on a shared arrangement utilising the same clinics to ensure best use of clinics provided and filling of slots allocated and paid for. Magherafelt make use of GP practice to fulfil any requirement for Occupational Health provision.

The joint services utilised by Dungannon and Cookstown are pre-employment screening, occupational health consultant clinic and nurse-led clinic, absence management, health surveillance, rehabilitation, fitness for work and ill health retirement assessment. They have also been used for Flu vaccinations and training. Additional services are available but not currently utilised by either Council.

Useage

In 2014 Cookstown made 45 referrals and Dungannon made 120 to be seen by an occupational health professional. These were made up of a mixture of nurse-led clinics, consultant appointments, pre-employment screening and occupational health surveillance.

Facilities

To keep costs at a minimum the shared nurse-led clinic is operated from Council premises and the Consultant appointments are held at South Tyrone Hospital.

Existing Costs

In 2014 Dungannon costs were £4223.97 and Cookstown's were £3,300.98.

Strategic Context

This scheme for Mid Ulster aligns with two of the corporate priorities: Resources in place to deliver services, and systems to underpin and deliver services.

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Bateson and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the existing occupational healthcare provision currently shared between Dungannon and Cookstown is temporarily extended to include Magherafelt-based employees.

PR47/15 RPA Staff Severance Scheme

The Lead HR Officer presented a report asking Council to consider and approve RPA Severance Scheme for Local Government LGRJF/11.

Outlining the background the Officer stated that the RPA Severance Scheme for Local Government had been agreed between the Employers' and Trade Union side of the LGRJF in April 2013 (LGRJF/05). This scheme was adopted at Council on 25 September 2014.

A revised RPA Severance Scheme for Local Government has been agreed between the Employers' and Trade Union Side of the Local Government Reform Joint Forum (Joint Forum) and is recommended for adoption by councils (LGRJF/11). This revised Circular replaces Circular LGRJF/05 issued in April 2013.

The Lead HR Officer outlined the revisions which take account of:
The provisions contained within Section 123 of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014
The provisions of the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (NI) 2015 which will take effect from April 2015

Other general revisions include:

- Deletion of the tapering provision and related reference to a 'Default Retirement Age'
- Deletion of reference to Transition Committees/Statutory Transition Committees
- Deletion of the requirement to use a Standard Approval Form
- Clarification that the calculation for the Statutory Redundancy Payment is based on a contractual week's pay

The Officer further stated that a robust business case has to be compiled before approval of each application identifying the costs associated with the severance package which must not exceed the individual's annual salary multiplied by 3.25.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the RPA Severance Scheme for Local Government LGRJF/11 is adopted

PR48/15 Domain Names Regulations Consultation

The ICT Manager presented a report which recommended to Council that it adopts the response to Draft Local Government (Domain Names) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 which had been circulated to members.

The Officer stated that The Department of the Environment was seeking comment on its proposal to make the Local Government (Domain Names) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (the 2015 Regulations). The proposed Regulations specify the range of domain names that councils may use which are used to establish an organisation's unique identity, in terms of websites and email. The report added that organisations usually choose a domain name which corresponds with their business name, helping internet users to easily find their website.

He confirmed that a domain name consists of one or more parts, technically called labels which are conventionally joined up and separated by dots, such as -

example.com. The top level domains listed for suggested format for local government are

- .gov.uk; .org; .com; and .net.

The report added that the regulations allow the decisions taken by Mid Ulster Statutory Transition Committee in December 2013 and carried on by Mid Ulster Council to be maintained.

Proposed by Councillor McGinley
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to adopt the officer's draft response to the consultation exercise

Matters for Information

PR49/15 Draft Information Security and ICT Governance Policy

A report was circulated on the draft Information security and ICT Governance policy for Mid Ulster District Council as part of new policy development and adoption.

The council in line with HMG Information Security Framework guidelines 2014, industry standards and good practice will establish policies that govern and set the standards for the protection of the information it handles and processes, in particular how over 90% of that information is protected through its ICT systems.

The policy aims to;

Protect information from these threats and aims to preserve the confidentiality, integrity and availability of that information.

Confidentiality: ensure that information is accessible only to those authorised to have access;

Integrity: safeguard the accuracy and completeness of information and processing methods;

Availability: ensure that authorised users have access to information and associated assets when required.

As part of developing an Information Security Management system (ISMS) the policy presented is based on ISO 27001 Information Security Policy and COBIT (The COBIT 5 framework for the governance and management of enterprise IT is a leading business optimisation and growth roadmap that leverages proven practices).

Members were requested to note for information and forward any comment to the ICT Manager.

PR50/15 Business Continuity Plan

A report was circulated the purpose of which was to update committee members on the development of a Business Continuity Plan for Mid Ulster Council with it being operational from 1 April 2015. A business continuity plan is a functional plan of action to facilitate the continuation of critical services or allow them to be recovered in a timely manner following an unexpected disruption to their delivery.

The existing councils currently have Business Continuity Plans in place the tenure of which will come to an end on 31 March 2015 following their winding up to make way for Mid Ulster Council on 1 April.

It is accepted that an unavoidable disruption to the delivery of council services could occur which council will have little, if any, control over. It is therefore important that Council has a Business Continuity Plan (disaster recovery plan) in place to ensure critical services can continue, or be recovered in a timely manner following a disruption. Such a plan will promote council resilience to ensure:

- **Protection** of council staff at all times
- **Statutory** obligations continue to be met in line with Council's responsibilities
- **Customer** expectations and quality of services continue to be met, or managed, in a way that they are not adversely affected and relationships are maintained with our external agencies
- **Reputation** and image of the council is maintained and not affected as of result of, or following the disruption

The plan in itself is a powerful business tool to permit the Council to respond to any significant incident which may threaten to interrupt normal operations.

It is a comprehensive document which provides sufficient detail on practical steps to take in responding to incidents, no matter their severity. In this sense the plan is presented and works at the 'worst loss' level, with only relevant sections of the plan being followed for less severe incidents.

Due to the level of detail and sensitive nature of the information, which includes telephone number and points of contact for staff, contained within the plan it is held as a 'controlled document' in the possession of the Chief Executive, his senior management and others as deemed appropriate on his approval. Those designated as members of the Crisis Management Team have direct access to the plan.

The plan is however summarised as having (i) an Emergency Response Phase; (ii) a Crisis Management Phase; and (iii) a Business Recovery Phase. The three time phased categories are focused on helping the management team to deal with issues that may arise after an incident has occurred resulting in denial of access to any of its facilities within the district, irrespective of the nature of the incident.

The plan covers the entire response from the initial emergency through to the resumption of normal or near normal services. The following provides a high level overview of the plan:

- *The Emergency Response Phase:* covers the minutes and hours immediately following an incident and immediate actions which are likely to be required, dependent on the situation
- *The Crisis management Phase:* is only activated where the situation requires it, to make sure action is taken to minimise as much as possible the effects of a major incident
- *Plan activation:* The Chief Exec or his designated deputy on business continuity will only invoke the plan if there is potential for a loss of life or serious injury; dependent on the scale of the incident; or the need to protect the council reputation and meet its statutory obligations. In this case the crisis management team is convened and be chaired by the Chief Executive.
- *Business Recovery:* Plans have been developed to recover and deliver essential and statutory services by utilising the facilities at the disposal of Mid Ulster Council on a targeted recovery basis on a scale of 24 hours; within 1 week; within 2 weeks and within more than one week
- The coming together of the 3 councils to form Mid Ulster Council will increase the building estate and hence its organisational resilience to respond to a potential disruption, with a choice of buildings from which to deliver affected essential services

The plan will be underpinned with an ICT Business Recovery Plan

A business continuity plan is separate to the requirement of council to have an Emergency Plan. An Emergency Plan is one which deals with external incidents within or across districts which Council may or may not become involved in a response to same. Involvement will be dependent of the nature of the incident and its role in responding to the incident. The council's business continuity approach will however complement and inform/ integrate with its emergency plan.

The plan will be tested for its robustness by the senior management team (crisis management team, in the case of Mid Ulster Council) for its deployment, if required. A copy will be held by each member of the senior management team.

Members were asked to note the completion of a Business Continuity Plan for Mid Ulster Council, which will be effective from 1 April 2015.

PR51/15 Draft Guidance Local Government Performance Improvement

A report was circulated informing members of the Department of the Environment's consultation on draft Guidance for Local Government Performance Improvement and draft response on the guidance as being consulted on by the Department.

The Department for the Environment (DoE) has issued draft guidance for councils to refer to during the first year of its operation throughout 2015-16. The aim of the guidance is to provide statutory guidance to assist councils in complying with performance improvement duties under the Local Government Act 2014.

Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 puts in place a new duty on Mid Ulster Council to develop and implement a performance improvement framework which supports continuous improvement in the delivery of council services.

The Act specifies that the Council must make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the delivery of its functions and in so doing have regard to (a) strategic effectiveness; (b) service quality; (c) service availability; (d) fairness; (e) sustainability; (f) efficiency; and (g) innovation.

Council must now annually set improvement objectives to continually improve the exercise of its functions throughout the year, and consequently make arrangements to work towards and secure their achievement.

The Act also provides for the Local Government Auditor to:

- (i) carry out an annual audit to identify if the council meets its requirements on continuous improvement as part of its performance improvement regime in line with Section 92 of the Act - make available an assessment report on how the requirements have been met and published by 30 September each year;
- (ii) carry out forward looking and retrospective assessments of councils performance and its arrangements; and
- (iii) initiate special inspections

The DoE's draft guidance on the applicability of the Act is specific to 2015-16 only. A draft response has been prepared focusing on; (i) usefulness of aspects of the guidance around continuous improvement; (ii) the role of the auditor; and (iii) the timetable as proposed for 2015-16.

The DoE has issued draft performance indicators and accompanying standards for Economic Development, Planning and Waste Management. The Local Government (Performance Indicators and Standards) Order 2015 will specify these indicators and standards which council will be measured on for each of these functions.

Members were asked to review the consultation document, note and provide commentary on the draft response as presented and circulated to the Change Manager.

PR52/15 LGSC People and Organisation Development Strategic Framework

A report was presented informing members that the Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland (LGSC) had revised the initial framework which was launched in December 2011, and re-launched a revised framework in November 2014.

The People and Organisation Development Strategic Framework (the Strategic Framework) was developed as a partnership arrangement by a range of stakeholders in local government, with the aim to providing a common platform for workforce development across the local government sector and supporting individual councils in achieving the objectives as detailed in their Corporate Plans. It is a comprehensive approach to integrating all organisation development activity in supporting delivery of council objectives.

It has now been revised and re-launched to support the 11 new councils established.

The objective of the revised framework is *“to provide a route map to enable local government to develop its most valuable resource in a changing environment and ensure the ongoing provision of excellent services which are responsive to the needs of local communities”*

Since the initial launch, the six strategic pillars are now paired as follows;

Pillar 1: Leadership and Talent Management

Pillar 2: Performance culture and Learning Organisation

Pillar 3: Employee Relations and Pay & Reward.

Members were asked to review the consultation document, note and provide commentary on the draft response as presented and circulated.

Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor McGinley

Seconded by Councillor McGuigan and

Resolved Items PR53/15 and PR54/15 be taken as confidential business.

PR55/15 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7 pm and ended at 8.30 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____