

Minutes of Meeting of Planning Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Monday 12 January 2015 in Magherafelt District Council Offices

Members Present:	In the Chair, Councillor Kearney (Chair) Councillors Bateson, Bell (7.02 pm), Clarke, Cuthbertson, Gildernew, McEldowney, McKinney, McPeake (7.25 pm) Mallaghan, T Quinn, Reid, Robinson and J Shiels
Officers in Attendance:	Mr Tohill, Chief Executive Mr Boomer, Area Planning Manager Mr Melvin Bowman, Senior Planning Officer Mr Phelim Marrion, Senior Planning Officer Ms Sinead McEvoy, Principal Planning Officer Ms Karen Doyle, Planning Officer Mrs Grogan, Committee Services/Senior Admin Officer (D&STBC)
Others in Attendance:	Mr Liam Ward, Ward Design

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

P1/15 Apologies

Councillors Glasgow and Mullen.

P2/15 Declarations of Interest

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

P3/15 Briefing from Mr Liam Ward, Ward Design providing an architectural perspective on planning

The Chair, Councillor Kearney, welcomed Mr Liam Ward, Ward Design who was in attendance to give an architectural perspective on planning.

Councillor Bateson left the meeting at 7.05 pm.

Mr Ward made a presentation on planning in Mid Ulster, an alternative perspective from the private sector. He outlined the aims of the Regional Development Strategy and the likely outcomes for the Mid Ulster area. He stated that it shows that by 2030 Mid-Ulster is projected to have 8.4% of NI population, but only 3.5% of new housing. If housing matched need, Mid Ulster would have 25,000 new homes by 2030. Planners intend to zone land for 17,000 with the yield likely to be half that, 8500.

The Area Planning Manager advised that points raised in the presentation were all very valid but would need to work in partnership with developers to find a balance.

Councillor Clarke stated the presentation was very useful but there is still a need to address zoned land. If land and property values were to increase people would hold out for the best price. He added that banks were a major problem because if they become involved in granting large mortgages or loans then there will be no control over property values and people will not part with land until they gain a maximum price.

Councillor Bell stated that with the rising population there is going to be a shortage of housing, this will result in house prices being driven up and people being priced out of the market. He added there needs to be flexibility.

Councillor Reid stated that there is a need to find a balance between urban and rural areas as they both need to be catered for. He agreed that house prices if forced to increase are depriving people of owning a home. A major problem for some is zero hours contracts, which is holding people off the property ladder, and this needs to be dealt with in order to move forward.

Councillor Gildernew enquired about land zoning as this is a major problem in the Dungannon area. He asked if there was a time limit on zoned land and if it can it be utilised again.

Mr Ward stated that donut towns should not be encouraged and that landowners should be given the option of use it or lose it. If there were regular reviews then it could see land de-zoned which would control land and house prices. If a landowner is aware that the price will increase then he will hold out and not sell until they gain the maximum price. The same should be applied to the rural community as a balance needs to be made between the rural and urban areas.

*Councillor Bateson returned to the meeting at 7.25 pm.
Councillor McPeake entered the meeting at 7.25 pm.*

Councillor Mallaghan enquired how a balance can be reached between urban and rural communities.

Mr Ward felt that it would be unlikely that major regeneration could be achieved in rural villages for such as sports facilities, but it would be just as important for villages to be able to sustain and regenerate themselves.

The Chair thanked Mr Ward for his informative presentation and stated that he and his colleagues looked forward to working with him in the future.

Mr Ward left the meeting at 7.42 pm.

Matters for Decision

**P4/15 Receive and Confirm Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting
held on Monday 1 December 2014**

Proposed by Councillor Cuthbertson

Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved That the minutes of the meeting of the Planning Committee held on Monday 1 December 2014, (P26/14 – P33/14) were considered and signed as accurate and correct.

P5/15 Scheme of Delegation for Officers on Planning

The Area Planning Manager presented a paper providing members with information relating to the principles and options for delegating authority on specified elements of the planning function and powers to planning officers within Mid Ulster Council from 1 April 2015.

The Officer stated that Section 31(1) of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires Council to produce and adopt a Scheme of Delegation for its district which must in turn be submitted to the Department for its consideration and consent.

A Scheme of Delegation, specific to planning, sets out decision making processes for an agreed list of application types which are delegated to an appointed Council Planning Officer, in this case the Chief Planner, and also those nominated by the said officer, rather than the Council. This form of delegation facilitates speedier decisions and approved efficiency of business.

The Area Planning Manager advised that best practice from other jurisdictions suggests that 90-95% of all planning applications should be dealt with under delegation arrangements to the respective Planning Manager. An integral driver for bringing a scheme forward is found within the draft Planning (Development Management) Regulations (NI) 2015 where it states that, “council must prepare a scheme of delegation at intervals of no greater than three years”.

A scheme brought forward will have the benefit of allowing the Committee the time and resources to determine applications therefore using its time more efficiently.

The paper set out three Options to inform the development of a Scheme of Delegation for Planning within Mid Ulster to authorised officers.

- Option 1: Remove refusals and permissions subject to objections from the scheme of delegation requiring determination by Committee
- Option 2: Allow members to refer any application to the Planning Committee for decision
- Option 3: Defer decision on refusals and approvals subject to an approval for a meeting between elected members and the Planning Manager or his nominee

The Area Planning Manager recommended:

- Members consider for agreement the Scheme of Delegation for Planning Applications as detailed in the paper.

- Members agree that on receipt of approval for the scheme from the Department council formally adopt the scheme and make it available for the public to view.
- Members agree that any planning applications received after 1 April 2015 coupled with any enforcement or other planning decisions be processed under the scheme.
- Members consider whether the Committee system should run on a monthly, bi-monthly or 3 week cycle and whether the scheme has implications for the size and quorum of the Committee.
- Members consider that as well as the planning functions covered by Section 31 of the 2011 Act, that Council also administer the enforcement of planning, Tree Preservation Orders, and the processing of other planning consents, advertising and conservation. Part 4 Section 7 (4) (b) Local Government Act (NI) 2014 allows a council committee to delegate these to an officer of the council. It is recommended that February Committee is presented with an explanation and proposals on delegation of these responsibilities.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor J Shiels and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve the above recommendations and to go with Option 1.

P6/15 Verbal update on Planning Seminar hosted by Leitrim County Council

The Area Planning Manager updated the Committee on visit to Leitrim County Council stating that he found the visit very useful, Leitrim has a low number of applications compared to Mid Ulster, where there would be five times the amount. They have a development plan in place and provide delegation to officers.

He continued by saying that Leitrim controlled housing in rural areas by setting a criteria for dwellings, such as; what people can bring to the area; teachers; and Scout Leaders. The Area Planning Manager said this could be an option for Mid Ulster Council to consider.

Councillor Clarke agreed that this could be a way forward as people from the urban areas building houses in countryside do not contribute to the rural way of living as they send their children to urban schools and shop in nearby towns.

Councillor McPeake agreed with the initiative and advised that this is commonly known as a social test which could prove really positive.

The Area Planning Manager felt it was a very easy notion as a person would have to demonstrate what their contribution would be to the rural way of living. He felt it would be worthwhile investigating the idea further.

P7/15 Workshop on Examples of Issues Associated with Planning Applications

Mr Melvin Bowman, Ms Karen Doyle, Mr Phelim Marrion and Ms Sinead McEvoy were in attendance. The officers discussed and reviewed examples of issues associated with planning applications with committee members.

P8/15 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 9.00 pm.

CHAIR _____

Date _____