

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 9 October 2014 in Cookstown District Council Offices

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| Members Present: | In the Chair, Councillor Burton (Chair) Councillors Dillon, Elattar, Mallaghan, McAleer, McEldowney, McNamee, Molloy, Monteith, C O'Neill, T Quinn, G Shiels, J Shiels and Wilson |
| Officers in Attendance: | Mr Tohill, Chief Executive Mr McCreesh, Acting Chief Executive (CDC) Mr Browne, Head of Development Services (MDC) Mr Cassells, Director of Operations (MDC) Ms Campbell, Director of Policy & Development (MDC) Mr Glavin, Head of Leisure Services (CDC) Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer (DSTBC) Ms O'Keefe, Business Support Officer (DSTBC) Mrs McGee, Flavour of Tyrone Officer (DSTBC) |

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

D20/14 Apologies

Councillors Forde and Reid.

D21/14 Declarations of Interest

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

Declaration of Interest

The Chair, Councillor Burton stated that she represented Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council on Flavour of Tyrone and as such declared an interest.

Councillor Mallaghan declared an interest having had association with Flavour of Tyrone in the past.

D22/14 Briefing on Flavour of Tyrone

The Chair, Councillor Burton welcomed Flavour of Tyrone representatives to the meeting. Mrs McGee drew attention to a power point showcasing photographs from events and promotions the company had worked on.

Mrs McGee tabled a report to informing the Council on the work of Flavour of Tyrone in delivering Tourism Enterprise 3 as part of the Invest NI/DETI Local Economic Development programme, is scheduled to run until April 2015. It also outlined the need for a strategic alliance between Council and Flavour of Tyrone as a vehicle to

develop the tourism industry and promote the region in line with the Mid Ulster District Council area community planning objectives. Mrs McGee gave the background of the company outlining its objectives and targets through business development, new media development events and showcasing, whilst drawing attention to the targets set. She detailed the budget for programme delivery as being £171k and confirmed that Flavour of Tyrone was 50% funded by Council and 50% through Invest NI/DETI, managed by a Board of Directors four of whom were elected Members and two part time staff. She stated that Flavour of Tyrone was an effective and trusted networking vehicle for the local tourism industry representing local needs at a regional level in terms of capacity building and support for existing and fledgling businesses. It was recommended for the future that Council review Flavour of Tyrone's terms of reference and programme in line with recommendations from the community planning process, funding streams available, Council's existing functions and align with Mid Ulster District Council's core tourism activity.

The Chair, Councillor Burton thanked Mrs McGee for the presentation and stated that the work of Flavour of Tyrone had been acknowledged in reports produced by DETI, drawing attention to the jobs both created and sustained.

Councillor G Shiels stated he had enjoyed the presentation and in response to his comments about the name Mrs McGee stated that the Flavour of Tyrone Board had discussed this and although the branding had strengths the name could be changed to for example 'Flavour of Mid Ulster' or 'Visit Mid Ulster'. She added that they had discussed branding with Mid Ulster District Council's Marketing Communications Manager. The Chair, Councillor Burton stated that the brand was a vehicle to attract people to the area.

In response to Councillor Mallaghan's questions Mrs McGee advised that the company had 140 members, 28 of whom are from Cookstown, a few from Omagh, and currently the company was beginning a recruitment drive focusing on Magherafelt and already one business had requested to join and that the remaining members were from Dungannon. In referring to prices Mrs O'Keefe advised that the fees were approximately £100 for hotels, attractions with over 1000 visitors £100, Good Food Circle which includes restaurants £50, Guest houses £45 and others £50. In terms of measurement Mrs McGee explained that the company was evaluated on conclusion of the programme and that statistics regarding visitor spend were being compiled by NISRA and would be launched in the near future. Mrs McGee also suggested that if the company moved forward with Mid Ulster District Council it would be an idea to capture base line statistics as a benchmark for future evaluation.

Councillor Molloy asked if the fact that Tyrone in the new Council structure would be covered by three new councils would create difficulties. In response Mrs McGee advised that this had been a topic of discussion and that businesses would remain or wish to join wherever the best showcasing/ promotion opportunities were, emphasising that the Flavour of Tyrone brand was well respected.

The Chief Executive stated there was a lot of work going on being delivered through a limited resource and that the brand was strong and understood. He added that

care should be taken before changing it and he would have conversations with his peers in other Councils covering Tyrone region in the future.

Mrs McGee and Mrs O'Keefe left the meeting at 7.20 pm.

D23/14 Receive and confirm minutes of the Development Committee meeting held on Thursday 4 September 2014

The Chair requested that the last sentence of paragraph 5 of item D11/14 be amended to read "...and that the thematic working groups be encouraged to work with women in rural areas."

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and

Resolved That the minutes of the meeting of the Development Committee held on Thursday 4 September (D7/14-D19/14), were considered and subject to the foregoing amendment, signed as accurate and correct.

FOR INFORMATION

D24/14 Update on DSD Transferring Functions

Mr McCreesh advised Members that the matter of DSD transferring functions was still being debated but based on most recent information he outlined prospective options for moving forward. McCreesh noted that the functions to be transferred included:

- Tackling Disadvantage – Neighbourhood Renewal;
- Community Development – Advice Service; and
- Physical Regeneration – Public Realm.

Due to the current political situation the legislative process may not be completed in time to allow for the transfer of functions in April 2015 so therefore the responsibility for aforementioned functions may remain with DSD for at least a further 12 months. In this circumstance Council would need to consider with DSD what activity can occur from now until 31 March 2015.

Mr McCreesh further advised that two applications were currently with DSD for Rainey Street, Magherafelt and a further shop front signage scheme in Cookstown. He indicated that although it may be questionable if they could be delivered in the remaining six months of the existing Councils options would be explored. He further suggested that further revitalisation projects could be developed to include for example shop front, signage, painting, marketing initiatives as part of Town Centre action plans which could then be brought forward when DSD position has been clarified, emphasising that the more schemes completed before transfer the better especially in regard to Public Realm schemes.

With regard to Neighbourhood Renewal Mr McCreesh stated that it would most likely continue in a similar fashion but that programmes may be subjected to ongoing

central government cuts. If functions remain for another 12-18 months with DSD the additional time would afford Mid Ulster District Council time to consider how deprivation in existing Neighbourhood Renewal areas and other deprived areas throughout Mid Ulster could be incorporated within community planning and addressed beyond 2016-17. He added that this time would also allow for negotiations of a realistic funding allocation to take place based upon historical imbalances.

Mr McCreesh advised that since the future was uncertain Council also had to consider its stance if functions do transfer in April 2015. He stated that Council would be tasked with tackling deprivation activity for 2015/16 and given the timescale it would be unlikely that Neighbourhood Renewal activities could be altered other than to reflect budget cuts from central government thus programmes would continue for 2015/16 similar to present.

With regard to Public Realm schemes Council would have to make major decisions on how best to progress the three main towns and Coalisland. Mr McCreesh stated considerations would include whether to progress all, some or prioritise on resources.

Mr McCreesh made reference to advice services reminding Members that currently they are being considered under the review of grant-aid provided by the existing councils. Advising that the piece of work had commenced Mr McCreesh indicated that David Williamson Consultants would be commencing discussions with Mid Ulster Council members.

He concluded by stating that the challenge is to reach an agreed Mid Ulster District Council policy approach and position towards financial assistance, grant allocation and advice service support in the coming months with a view to be ready for delivery in each of the aforementioned areas from 1 April 2015. He stated that due to the fluidity of the situation officers could not offer a definitive sense of direction in relation to DSD transferring functions but it was being observed closely and when a decision had been reached officers would advise, guide and recommend a way forward.

Councillor Wilson thanked Mr McCreesh for the update stating that at this stage of uncertainty it was important to get schemes 'shelf ready' that when and if funding became available Council was ready to go.

Councillor Dillon in concurring with the remarks emphasised that Council needed to plan to tackle pockets of deprivation across the district as the source of the money was irrelevant but a formula to address the needs was essential.

Stating that in some areas Neighbourhood Renewal had not been successful Councillor Monteith stated that DSD had been lobbied but had refused to address the failures. Reiterating the need to have projects ready to go Councillor Monteith emphasised that Councils were in a better position to address the needs of local communities as Neighbourhood Renewal is a line on a map which had dissected communities.

Drawing attention to the officers who deliver Neighbourhood Renewal currently contracted until March 2015, Councillor Molloy stated that Council needed to offer reassurance to them in regard to their employment status.

Stating that Neighbourhood Renewal had been a good yardstick for tackling disadvantage Councillor G Shiels emphasised that disadvantage spans generations.

The Chief Executive in response to comments on staff emphasised that assurances cannot be given until Council knows the way forward but staff members would have employment rights.

In response to questions raised Mr McCreesh stated that he concurred with communities being split by a 'line on a map' and that it would be a challenge to define disadvantaged areas and find the resources to meet the needs. He stated that he had every confidence that the Council would meet the challenge.

The Chief Executive stated that until the position was clear regarding the transferring of functions Council was restricted in moving forward but that population figures in urban centres such as Aughnacloy, Donaghmore and Tobermore were now over 1000 and this needed to be reflected in the budget allocation.

D25/14 Development and Regeneration Update

Ms Campbell provided Members with a progress update on the Development and Regeneration Forward Work Plan presented to a previous committee. Referring to the key activities; Local Economic Development Plan (2014-2016); Evaluation of Linkubator Negotiation Programme; Review of Financial Assistance Policy and Process for the community and voluntary sector; and Social Economic and Environmental Data Analysis Ms Campbell updated Members and requested that they note progress is being made.

Councillor Wilson stated the business workshops had been well organised but expressed disappointment that the voluntary sector had not been represented stating it was a sector within Mid Ulster which provided quite a few jobs and asked if this oversight could be addressed. Having attended one of the workshops Councillor Wilson stated that support for the High Street in all three towns had been a major issue.

In response Ms Campbell advised that the consultants had not completed the piece of work and that she would investigate if this could be addressed or alternatively that the voluntary sectors views would be captured at the community planning workshops.

D26/14 Events Budget and Events Support Audit

Mr Browne advised that the purpose of the report was threefold; to show the levels of expenditure committed to Council run events for 2014/15; to show levels of expenditure and support committed to strategic events with an attendance in excess of 1000; and to establish the objectives for the delivery of events in each of the Councils. Mr Browne advised that the report provided a snapshot of events hosted

by the three Councils which had significant economic and social benefit to the area the costs of which were £346,500 fully organised and supported by Councils and £125,321 where a level of support and financial assistance had been provided by Council. Highlighting Magherafelt's Christmas Food Fair Mr Browne advised in access of 16,500 people had attended, that the shopping centre recorded an additional 3,000 in their footfall and it had significant economic as well as social benefit in the area.

Councillor T Quinn left the meeting at 7.55pm

Councillor Wilson stated groups that hosted events for which Council supplied funding and support would need early clarification as to how funding was to be allocated in the near future as events took place in early April. Concurring with these comments the Chair, Councillor Burton, emphasised the importance of this for groups seeking support.

The Chief Executive advised that the appointed consultants would go through the analysis and advise if it was possible to have a system in place for April or whether there would be a transitional period. Stating that the report gave an overview of an events calendar the Chief Executive stated that it would be helpful to know the time periods for which outside groups needed a determination on funding availability.

The Chair, Councillor Burton, made reference to the small funding allocations which were often the difference between events happening or not. Councillor Burton emphasised the importance of funding and the need to support groups organising events and stated that Council needed to establish a way forward to reassure communities and groups as soon as possible, She referred to the Clogher Valley Show which Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council had sponsored the equestrian element of the Show.

Councillor Mallaghan stated that these events enhanced civic pride and were often the only connection some individuals and communities had with the Council and in order to build good relations the importance of this process could not be underestimated. He further emphasised that often a small grant of £200-£300 could be the difference in a group hosting an event or not. Councillor Wilson concurring with Councillor Mallaghan's comments also suggested that January 2015 would likely be the cut-off date for the organisers of the Cookstown 100.

The Chief Executive sought direction from Members as to whether they were content with events outlined in the report as previous years or whether they wanted to scale up and provide additional events. In response Councillor Wilson stated that Council should work on what they have for the initial year whilst Councillor McAleer said she would like more events for the Clogher Valley area. Councillor Mallaghan stated that through the Mid Ulster brand and budget other events could be attracted giving the example that Cookstown had in the past hosted a strong man competition but due to lack of resources had to decline the opportunity to host Ireland's strongest man.

Councillor G Shiels stated that this area of work would be a major public relations success for the new Council moving forward but it was not a seamless exercise merging three councils into one.

The Chair, Councillor Burton, in closing stated that events budget and support was a work in progress.

IN COMMITTEE

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That item D27/14-D31/14 be taken in committee.

D32/14 Duration of Meeting

The Chair thanked Officers for the comprehensive reports. The meeting was called for 7pm and ended at 9.10pm

CHAIR _____

DATE _____