

## **Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 26 September 2019 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon**

**Chair** Councillor Kearney

**Members Present** Councillors Bell, Black, Brown, Buchanan, Burton, Clarke, Colvin, Corry, Cuthbertson, Doris, Elattar, Gildernew, Graham, Hughes, Kerr, Mallaghan, McAleer, McFlynn (7.15pm), McGinley, B McGuigan, S McGuigan, McKinney, McLean, D McPeake, S McPeake, Milne, Molloy, Monteith, Mullen, Quinn, Robinson, Totten and Wilson

**Officers in Attendance** Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive  
Dr Boomer, Planning Manager  
Ms Canavan, Director of Organisational Development  
Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure  
Mr McCreesh, Director of Business & Communities  
Ms Mezza, Head of Marketing & Communications  
Mr Moffett, Head of Democratic Services  
Ms Kerr, Head of Finance  
Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer

**Others** **Northern Ireland Housing Executive**

Ms S McCauley	Director of Regional Services
Mr C McQuillan	Director of Housing Services
Mr M Dallat	Senior Principal Officer Housing Services/South Region
Ms A Hickey	Head of South Place Shaping

The meeting commenced at 7 pm

### **C163/19 Apologies**

Councillors Ashton, Cuddy, Glasgow, McNamee and O'Neill  
Councillors McFlynn and McGinley to arrive late.

### **C164/19 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair Councillor Kearney reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declarations of interest.

### **C165/19 Chair's Business**

The Chair, Councillor Kearney spoke of the tragic death at Railway Park, Dungannon and acknowledged that all Members were filled with a great sense of sadness at the loss of a young life. He extended heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends in suffering such sudden trauma and emphasised that thoughts and prayers were with them both now and in the difficult days ahead.

Councillor Monteith concurred stating that it was close to his home and spoke of the deep sense of shock, how the young person had been well known in the area and advised that he had been speaking to relatives. He acknowledged that later in the meeting mental health and its impact in communities would be discussed. In closing Councillor Monteith stated that everyone was at a loss to understand why but emphasised that the community would step up to support the family at this horrendous time.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney spoke of the collapse of Wright Bus, Ballymena and the economic impact it would have mentioning especially those being made redundant who live in the district and the many young apprentices losing employment.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney acknowledged the district's success, as undernoted, in the Ulster in Bloom Awards 2019.

- Donaghmore was the winner in the Village category, with Castlecaulfield named as runner-up.
- Both villages also received awards for other aspects of their work, with Castlecaulfield recognised for its Eco Buddies programme and Donaghmore recognised for its youth and community team.
- Bernie McKenna of Castlecaulfield received the Ulsterbus Tours Community Champion award for her dedicated work over 15 years.
- Stewartstown received the Most Improved Village award, and runner-up in the Large Village category; and
- Magherafelt was runner-up in the Town Category.

The Chair stated Council should be proud of its settlements' achievements, which have grown year on year and he paid tribute to all of those who are involved at a whole range of levels from council staff to the communities who are an inspiration to others. The Chair, Councillor Kearney advised that the 'Heartland' poetry book created by local school children as part of a project developed through the education programmes at Seamus Heaney HomePlace and the Hill of The O'Neill has been shortlisted for a prestigious 'Heritage Angel' award which recognises the achievements, dedication and expertise in the conservation, preservation and appreciation of heritage. He stated that all the shortlisted projects are now open to a public vote until 11 October and encouraged all Members to take the time to vote for Heartland. He also requested that the link to the website voting page is forwarded to staff.

Councillor Hughes requested that the Burnavon be illuminated (blue and pink) to highlight Baby Loss Awareness week 9-15 October 2019 Burnavon.

Proposed by Councillor Hughes  
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

**Resolved** That the Burnavon be illuminated (Blue & Pink) on 15 October to acknowledge Baby Loss Awareness week 9-15 October 2019

Councillor S McPeake advised that at the Peace IV Partnership meeting the previous evening he had been requested to bring to the attention of Council the difficulties

groups were experiencing with the process of funding allocation. He stated that £272k was outstanding and whilst Council had 'buffers' in place to sustain such waiting times some rural groups were out of up to £50k and it was becoming unsustainable and may have to leave the programme. Councillor S McPeake advised that staff were working diligently but the level of bureaucracy was astounding. He proposed that Council write to local MEPs and MLAs to highlight the aforementioned and to endeavour to shape the new programme PEACE PLUS.

Councillor Wilson seconded the proposal stating that there were a number of delivery agents and if they did not receive payment they would be pulling out of the programme. He stated that Council was doing all it could and in speaking to the SEUPB they had stated there was a contingency fund but again the 'red tape' was making the process impossible. Councillor Wilson added to the proposal that together with contacting MEPs and MLAs that the Chair of the SEUPB be invited to meeting with Council to discuss the issues.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake  
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

**Resolved** That Council

- (i) request a meeting with Chairperson of SEUPB to discuss access to contingency fund for groups who are in process of drawing down funding and out monies in the interim due to the bureaucracy in the process; and
- (ii) write to MLAs and MEPs to highlight same (Group Leaders and Peace Partnership Members to attend)

### **C166/19 Deputation – Northern Ireland Housing Executive**

The Chair, Councillor Kearney welcomed representatives of the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and invited them to deliver a presentation.

The Director of Regional Services, Ms McCauley introduced the team and highlighted that Mr McQuillan was due to retire and this would be his last meeting with Mid Ulster.

*Councillor McFlynn entered the meeting at 7.15pm*

Ms McCauley delivered the presentation which provided an overview of the Housing Investment Plan for Mid Ulster and the key issues identified. She stated that the Housing Investment Plan, the Community Plan and the new Local Development Plan should all align and fit together and that the NIHE continue to work with Council as partner to provide evidence and agree outcomes of the Housing Investment Plan.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney thanked the NIHE team for the presentation and invited Members questions.

Councillor McLean drew attention to the statistics for homelessness stating that year on year there appeared to be no movement and whilst reports were on paper work on the ground was required.

In response Mr McQuillan drew attention to page 49 of the report which showed the applicants and allocations, he stated that the main thrust was allocating homes but stated that whilst 343 allocations were made in Magherafelt area last year, the NIHE had also enable housing associations to build new properties and daily they strived to identify suitable sites. He advised that the main area of housing stress was in Dungannon and drew attention to the need of 316 units which would rise, 42 new units provided, a further 50 planned, four sites being explored with housing associations and a further six sites being supported. He also spoke of sustaining tenancies, the sale of housing stock, private rental, the impact Brexit may have on housing applications and the underlying need for more social housing.

In response to Councillor McLean's questions regarding tackling homelessness and accommodation for senior citizens Ms McCauley advised that there were two levels of redress that is supply and intervention. She advised that often people deemed homeless due to their current housing being unsuitable, family breakdown or inability to handle a tenancy. With reference to accommodation for senior citizens Ms McCauley advised that issues were often quite complex and initially the housing model was being looked at and they were endeavouring to work with the health service to have a triage of support to look at the suitability of the housing stock and innovative methods to address current issues.

*Councillor McGinley entered the meeting at 7.24pm*

Councillor McKinney asked if the 137 units of housing highlighted in the social housing development programme were to be actual and also voiced concerns regarding emergency homeless accommodation and the lack of it in Magherafelt.

In response Mr McQuillan drew attention to the social development programme and advised that the detail provided was for the first three years and stated they were proposals but that it was hoped they would come to fruition. He highlighted the need for more housing stating that in order of stress the areas were Dungannon, Coalisland then Magherafelt. He emphasised that the NIHE were working tirelessly to bring the proposed schemes to fruition and confirmed there was a number of schemes on the launch pad.

*Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 7.28 pm*

Ms McCauley emphasised that working collaboratively was helpful especially in land identification, design and build and the swifter housing associations plans went through the planning system the better.

Councillor Monteith extended good wishes to Mr McQuillan on his retirement commenting that although they had many 'run-ins' he would always commend his professionalism although he may not have always liked the answer!

Councillor Monteith stated that in meeting every year it was always the same Dungannon was in an emergency situation with housing stress. He was emphatic that a task force was needed to drill down into the issues, look for local opportunities and whilst he would acknowledge the NIHE were trying the system was failing disgracefully as figures such as 61 allocations with 400 people on a waiting list reflected. Councillor Monteith shared that he spoke to people on a daily basis that were in a home and would like to stay but simply could not afford the private rent, he said that housing association homes were not affordable for those on low incomes and thus provision of such housing did not mean a pat on the back.

Councillor Monteith proposed a taskforce anchored by the NIHE with Council and other parties on board to seek solutions to what is an emergency situation.

*Councillor Wilson entered the meeting at 7.32 pm*

In response, Mr McQuillan stated that those who could not afford rents would be included in the future of 14% highlighted on page 21 of the report. He highlighted the ongoing developments such as the Apex scheme at Killymeal road which had a further 50 homes planned and confirmed that Housing associations had been requested to target Dungannon and six further sites had been given support. Mr McQuillan spoke of the need for single housing units as one third of people on the list were single and thus town centre locations were a target area. He advised that the NIHE were continually monitoring sites and identifying surplus public sector sites and seeking first refusal on same. Mr McQuillan concluded that he fully understood the Councillors point but assured they were working hard to tackle the issues.

*Councillor Quinn left the meeting at 7.35 pm*

Councillor McAleer spoke of aging population statistics and proposals for new housing units then asked if where possible houses could be built to an annotation to incorporate for example wheel chair access as opposed to the adoption of properties which did not happen quickly and often let to people being cared for in the living room or kitchen.

Mr McQuillan agreed with the comments stating that all new build schemes had 8% of properties built to wheelchair standard with the remaining 92% designed for easy adoption. He spoke of conversations with for example Marie Curie which highlighted issues and whilst the NIHE understood much of their stock was on average 50 years old plus. Mr McQuillan also advised that when they receive requests for accessible housing they first look at stock as adoptions can take up to 18 months and acknowledged that up to 20% of people die before the properties are adopted. He also stated that often if there is accessible housing available people are resistant to move.

Councillor McAleer stated that it was not always older people who required accessible housing as often in her work she worked with people with for example motor neurone and strokes.

Councillor Molloy spoke of the reduction of spend in grounds maintenance and stated whilst some areas the responsibility may be DfI Roads there were many pathways mossed and grown over and a distinct lack of care. He stated that dereliction breeds dereliction and if areas described could be targeted it would help.

In response, Mr McQuillan stated he was surprised as there was a robust maintenance programme in place and he often received letters commending this. He asked that the areas in question be brought to his attention as there may be confusion surrounding ownership.

Ms McCauley stated that tonight's presentation was looking at the top level and they could facilitate a working group to explain how programmes would be rolled out.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith  
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

**Resolved** That Council and NIHE hold a meeting to discuss NIHE Programme delivery

The Chair councillor Kearney thanked the NIHE delegation and they withdrew from the meeting at 7.45pm

### **Matters for Decision**

**C167/19 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in "Open Business" at the Council Meeting held on Thursday 25 July 2019**

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor Totten and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 25 July 2019 (C134/19 – C154/19 and C162/19) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

**C168/19 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in "Open Business" at the Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 6 August 2019**

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan  
Seconded by Councillor Bell and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 6 August 2019 (P083 – P091/19 and P097/19) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

**C169/19 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in "Open Business" at the Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 3 September 2019**

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan  
Seconded by Councillor Clarke

Councillor Kerr drew attention to P101/19 - *Receive Notification of Drilling from Shackleton Resources* stating that he welcomed the decision and supported its

outcome. He made mention of Cllr Colvin's comments and spoke of a concerned resident who had contacted him to express dismay at the application which they had learnt of through social media which is extremely concerning. He stated that he thought Council officers should be vigilant in case the application was overturned, as happened in the neighbouring area of Derry and Strabane District Council and thus all options should be available. Councillor Kerr stated that if granted such applications will have a long-term detrimental effect on local communities, tourism, jobs and the environment and highlighted that multinational companies did not care about local communities. He proposed that should officers become aware of any overturning of Council's decisions they should have the authority to seek legal advice immediately.

Councillor Mallaghan stated that the aforementioned was an objection not an application.

Councillor Monteith stated that the idea allows officers and Chief Executive to act quickly should the need arise. He emphasised that there is much suspicion surrounding such matters and a lack of transparency.

The Chief Executive sought clarity as to whether officers were being asked to keep a watching brief or to seek legal opinion.

Councillor Monteith emphasised the requirement to engage legal opinion swiftly should the need arise but said final decisions should be brought to Council.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

**Resolved** That Council seek immediate legal opinion should Planning Decision in relation to drilling applications be overturned

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan  
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 3 September 2019 (P098/19 – P107/19 and P115/19) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

**C170/19 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in "Open Business" at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 5 September 2019**

Proposed by Councillor Molloy  
Seconded by Councillor Gildernew and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 5 September 2019 (PR141/19 – 151/19 and P165/19) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

**C171/19      Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Environment Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 10 September 2019**

Councillor McAleer spoke of a recent deputation from the Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT) and the issues people are experiencing in delays to adjustments to their homes which are necessary for medical conditions. Councillor McAleer proposed that they be invited to participate in the community plan emphasising that they are trained in dealing with issues both mental and physical in people of all ages and it would be important to have them on board in the community plan.

Councillor Burton concurred stating that many people were being cared for in their living rooms or kitchens and if this would help in any way it should be pursued.

Proposed by Councillor McAleer  
Seconded by Councillor Burton and

**Resolved**      That Council through the Community Planning – Health & Wellbeing Thematic Group work with the RCOT.

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

**Resolved**      That the Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 10 September 2019 (E177/19 – E204/19 and E216/19) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, subject to the foregoing were considered and adopted.

**C172/19      Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Development Committee Meeting held on Thursday 12 September 2019**

Councillor Kerr referred to *D140/19 Economic Development Report: Mid Ulster Town & Village Business Spruce Up Scheme*. Councillor Kerr advised that in relation to the boundary changes, that whilst the minute stated boundaries could be reviewed in the future he had actually proposed that it would be reviewed.

Councillor Monteith concurred. Comments were noted.

Councillor Monteith drew attention to *D143/19 Forest Service NI Consultation Forestry Planning in the East Fermanagh/East Tyrone Area*: Amendment to minute:

Proposal to read

That it be recommended

- (i)      That Altmore Forest be included in the consultation as per Appendix 1 and to confirm that the Council will continue partnership working arrangements to expand opportunities for the development of Forest Recreation in East



Fermanagh and East Tyrone. This continued development will be managed under the scope of the current Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Mid Ulster District Council and Forest Service NI and delivered through the creation of new Licence and Lease Agreements for identified properties within the catchment of scoping area;

- (ii) That Cappagh Village Regeneration Group be invited to make a presentation to Council

Councillor Monteith drew attention to D149/19 Corporate Events 2019: and stated that he had declared an interest in the item and thus did not propose:

The Chief Executive asked if it was not proposed did the date change.

Amendment to minutes - That Proposer be amended from Councillor Monteith to Councillor Clarke

Proposed by Councillor Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Development Committee held on Thursday 12 September 2019 (D136/19 – D153/19 and D158/19) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

### **C173/19 Conferences, Seminars & Training Report**

Approval was sought for the undernoted for attendance of Councillors and Council Officers as outlined in the report, the payment of attendance fees and associated costs as incurred.

- (i) Member Approvals

- **NILGA - Code of Conduct Training**

Ranfurly House, Dungannon - Wednesday 2 October 2019 – 6.30 pm – 8.30 pm  
Travel and subsistence

- **NILGA – Changing Places: Planning, Place-shaping and Place-making in Northern Ireland**

Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen – Tuesday 8 October 2019 – 9.30 am – 4.00 pm  
Travel and subsistence

Cllrs to attend

- **NILGA – Code of Conduct Training**

Town Hall, Bangor – Monday 25 November 2019 – 6.30pm – 8.30pm  
Travel and subsistence

- **National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region (Conference AGM)**

Glenavon House Hotel, Cookstown – Friday 4 October 2019 at 11 am  
Travel and subsistence

Cllr Colvin to attend

- **Chartered Institute of Housing: Delivering Affordable Homes in NI**  
Skainos Centre, Belfast – Monday 14 October 2019  
Cost: Fee £150, travel and subsistence

- **Play Matters Because Play Builds Children**

Crowne Plaza, Belfast – Wednesday 20 November 2019  
Cost: Fee £95, travel and subsistence

(ii) Officer Approvals

Conference & Seminar	Date	No. of Attendees	Location
RTPI Annual Conference	17/09/19	1	Belfast
Chartered Institute of Waste Management Conference	24/09/19	2	Belfast
Royal Vernacular Conference	26/09/2019 27/09/2019	2	Oxford Island
Game Changer Conference	30/09/19	1	Belfast
Protect & Prepare Conference	02/10/19	1	Stafford, England
Royal Institute Chartered Surveyors NI Conference	12/11/19	1	Belfast
Northern Economic Growth Conference	21/11/19	1	Manchester

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor S McPeake and

**Resolved** That the attendance of Members and Officers, the payment of attendance fees and associated costs as incurred be approved, as required for attendees.

## **C174/19      Civic Recognition Requests**

The Head of Democratic Services sought approval for the previously circulated report on civic recognition requests from Members, in line with the stated Council Policy, as detailed within the report.

Councillor Wilson drew attention to the members of Closkelt Pipe Band and Inverary Pipe Band who were recommended to receive a letter. He stated that although the bands were outside the district the members listed resided within the district and that in 2017 when Ms Hamilton had previously been nominated it had been upgraded to a civic award status thus the precedent set.

In response the Chair, Councillor Kearney stated that although he recognised the achievements made he felt that Council should adhere to its Policy.

Councillor Wilson reiterated that a precedent had been set.

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Proposed by Councillor McKinney

That Members of Inverary Pipe Band and Closkelt Pipe Band be upgraded to Civic Award status

The Head of Democratic Services stated that whilst people make up a band it was the bands that had achieved the success. He referred to the previous circumstances and emphasised that the person had been recommended for a letter at that point but the award had been upgraded at the Council meeting and as the policy had not been amended the same ruling had thus been applied.

In response to Member queries, the Head of Democratic Services advised that the policy was approved in 2018 and thus due for review in 2020.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney stated that the review date was soon and perhaps consideration be given to treating this in the spirit of a unique circumstance and accept the recommendation.

**Resolved**      That Members of Inverary Pipe Band and Closkelt Pipe Band be upgraded to Civic Award status

Proposed by Councillor Wilson  
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

**Resolved**      That subject to the foregoing, approval be given to submitted requests for civic recognition as outlined in the report

**C175/19      Consultation from Department for Communities – Consultation on ‘Definition of Affordable Housing’**

Approval was sought on the previously circulated report to provide members with details of a consultation from the Department for Communities (DfC) Consultation Paper on ‘Definition of Affordable Housing’, and a response to the consultation. The consultation commenced on 24<sup>th</sup> June 2019 for 12 weeks and officially closed on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith  
Seconded by Councillor Colvin and

**Resolved**      That it be recommended to the Council to approve the previously circulated response at Appendix 1, can be confirmed to DfC as the response of this Council and to the note the contents of the report

**C176/19      Amendment of Part 2 of the Council’s Constitution – Responsibility for Functions**

Approval was The Council Solicitor presented previously circulated report and sought approval in relation to amending the Terms of Reference for the Planning Committee.

Proposed by Councillor B McGuigan  
Seconded by Councillor S McPeake and

**Resolved**      That it be recommended to the Council to approve the amendment to the Terms of Reference of the Planning Committee as previously detailed in Section 3.1 of this report

**Matters for Information**

**C177/19      Correspondence**

Members noted previously circulated report providing correspondence received for the attention of Council as outlined:

- Carolyn Harris MP (Swansea East)
- Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, NI Fire and Rescue Service
- Northern Ireland Housing Executive – Traveller Working Group
- Secretary to the NI Housing Council
- Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
- Legal & Civic Services Department, Belfast City Council
- Permanent Secretary, Department for Health
- Chief Executive, NI Housing Executive
- Northern Ireland Office, DAERA and Irish Government

**C178/19      Consultations Notified to Mid Ulster District Council**

Members noted the previously circulated report on Consultation notified to Mid Ulster District Council.

## **C179/19      Notification of Changes to Committee Membership and Position of Responsibility**

Members noted the previously circulated report providing notification of changes made by the Nominating Officer of the Social Democratic & Labour Party (SDLP), Cllr Malachy Quinn.

*Dr Boomer left the meeting at 8.05 pm*

## **C180/19      Notice of Motion**

Councillor Mallaghan spoke of the 'dormant account fund' which is monies unused in bank accounts for over 15 years which after the bank has made every effort to identify rightful owners they give it over to charity and referred to Great Britain where the Big Lottery fund administer the funding. He stated that in speaking to Martin Ó Muilleoir when he was still Minister the first trench of this funding had been £16m but that due to a number of political difficulties it still had to be spent. He highlighted that the Department was moving to release the funding and advised they had engaged with organisations such as Social Enterprise NI, Age NI and NICVA but had not consulted local government either individual Councils who had an excellent track record in many areas of funding distribution or indeed through NILGA. He advised he had spoken to the Department for Finance directly and their response was there would be greater consultation with the public. Councillor Mallaghan stated this was not satisfactory and encouraged officers to investigate also.

Councillor Mallaghan moved motion as undernoted:

*“This Council acknowledges the dormant account fund released by Permanent Secretary for Finance Sue Gray. This Council is disappointed that they have not been consulted on the setting up of a key stakeholder group moreover that local government is not included in that group. Local Government have an excellent track record on identifying need, experience in working with the community and credibility in getting money spent on time and in budget.*

*That this Council writes to the Permanent Secretary requesting that local government has a role to play in this process rather than be a consultee when proposals have already been put in place”*

Councillor Bell seconded the motion.

All were in agreement.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney declared the motion carried unanimously.

*Declaration of Interest: Councillor McGinley declared an interest as an employee of Start360*

## **C181/19      Notice of Motion**

The Chair, Councillor Kearney invited Councillor McGinley to move the motion stating that all should *take account of the sensitivities*.

Councillor McGinley moved the motion stating

“Sinn Féin welcomes the Department of Health’s publication of the Protect Life 2 suicide prevention Strategy.

This strategy will hopefully help focus collaborative working and maximise interventions to help reduce the growing rates of suicide across our society.

For those who haven’t had the chance to read the document yet, it aims to reduce the rates of suicide by 10% over the next ten years and sets out to proactively target areas of deprivation.

I’m sure everyone around this chamber is aware of the devastating impact that Suicide has on families and communities so I hope all will agree that every effort to minimise this should be welcomed.

However, I firmly believe that 1 person who takes their own life is 1 to many. So when we talk about reducing suicide by 10%, I can’t help that feel we are selling ourselves short. But this is a personal comment. I know the complexities of this issue and I do commend the efforts of those who want to bring about change. If the efforts we make protect the life of one person then it is worth doing. 10% will do as a starting block, I honestly dream of a day where we have a zero suicide society.

Some people may know that I work in the voluntary and community sector for an organisation called Start360 and I declare an interest. We work with a wide variety of people, including those who are affected by poor mental health issues.

I have worked with many people over the last 15 years who have presented with suicidal ideation and self-harming behaviours, thankfully many who have been able to find hope and a way through what some people call the darkness, but unfortunately I have worked with some who felt that life offered them no further alternative and have decided the only way to ease the pain they feel was to end their life. When I try to empathise with the feelings and thoughts they must have been experiencing, all I can come up with is hopelessness and despair, and in both a professional and personal context, I feel a deep sense of sadness.

The focus of all stakeholders should be on the full implementation of the strategy and the delivery of services in partnership with communities and support organisations.

I would like to commend all the community and voluntary groups, the practitioners and Health Care professionals, and all those who work tirelessly to protect and save lives in our local communities.

For anyone feeling down or those who need to speak to someone please reach out.”

Councillor McGinley moved motion as undernoted:

*“This Council recognises the north of Ireland has the highest rate of suicide anywhere in these islands. In the 17 years between 2000 and 2017 4,476 deaths were registered as suicide.*

*In the last half that timeline it is 300 per year and not falling.*

*This Council welcomes the department’s publication of Protect Life 2 Suicide.*

*That this Council sets up a meeting with the Department of Health and our partners in the community and voluntary sector to explore how we can work together to achieve the targets set out by the Chief Medical Officer Michael McBride”.*

Councillor Doris seconded the motion stating that the impact of suicide in Coalisland was devastating and today’s news in Dungannon highlights the devastation further. Speaking of the strategy launched by Michelle O’Neill MLA, Councillor Doris stressed the need of a ‘joint up approach’ in delivery of services to make a tangible impact.

Councillor Hughes stated that the SDLP would welcome the motion and the strategy and emphasised the importance of its implementation especially given the tragic events in Dungannon.

Councillor McLean said that suicide cuts across every element of society and said that the DUP would support the motion.

Councillor Kerr stated that he supported the motion and was passionate in the quest to promote mental health awareness. He spoke of organisations operating within his district electoral area such as Mid Ulster Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy and Friends to Talk. He spoke of those who feel alone and isolated and the great need to signpost people to information and resources in the local community which is underlined by the North of Ireland having the highest suicide rate across all the islands. Councillor Kerr in closing stated whilst mental health did not discriminate in whom it affected there was a strong correlation between it and deprivation and given that such issues had reached a ‘state of emergency’ stage he hoped that the motion along with other proactive initiatives would begin to tackle the problem.

Councillor Wilson stated that suicide not only takes lives but makes a dreadful impact on those left behind. He stated that poor mental health had a dreadful impact on so many and the problem was particularly pronounced in Northern Ireland which had appalling rates. Councillor Wilson made reference to the barbaric history which left many suffering post-traumatic stress disorder but also highlighted other issues faced by both young and old. He commended both voluntary and statutory sectors in their daily work but stressed that if the Assembly was up and running so too would the Strategy being discussed.

Councillor Wilson stated he was shocked that the report spoke of 10% reduction by 2024 and stated he would propose an amendment as undernoted:

*“This Council recognises that Northern Ireland has the highest rate of suicide anywhere in these islands. In the 17 years between 2000 and 2017 4,476 deaths were registered as Suicide. In the last half of that timeline it is 300 per year and not falling. This Council welcomes the Department’s publication of Protect Life 2 Suicide, but expresses deep anger that it has taken so long. Also expresses its shock that more ambitious target of reducing Suicides by 10% by 2024 was not included. That this council sets up a meeting with the Department of Health and our partners in the community and voluntary sector to explore how we can work together to achieve the targets set out by the Chief Medical Officer, Michael McBride.”*

Councillor Graham seconded the amendment.

Councillor Corry welcomed the initial motion and spoke of the engagement within the community and voluntary sectors and indeed the need within rural communities who need to be heard.

Councillor Monteith speaking on the original motion stated that mental health problems impacts people of all creeds and sectors and the devastation it leaves is palpable in Dungannon today. He stated that people don’t know how to move forward but communities rally around and hold people close but really there needs to be ‘tools to help’. Councillor Monteith commended the two young men who came on the scene in Dungannon today and spoke of the family left devastated. He highlighted that the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) would soon be presenting to Council and that he had raised mental health issues continually and there was a statutory responsibility. He shared issues regarding the 10% mentioned drawing comparisons with other countries where the percentage they work towards is zero. Councillor Monteith emphasised that the issue must be raised with the Southern Health and Social Care Trust as it appears that the onus is put onto the community yet there is no consultation regarding physical health with communities. He stated whilst the community has a part to play the resources are not put in place and the situation has reached a crisis stage destroying lives and families. Councillor Monteith commended Councillor McGinley in bringing the motion and stated he would support.

Councillor McGinley stated whilst he understood the reason for the suggested amendment he had made reference in speaking to a zero rate. He stated that he would not accept the amendment as extensive work had been carried out to bring this strategy forward and there must be a reason for the figures presented. He said of course everyone would want to reach zero but the issue was complex.

Councillor Wilson stated he heard what was being said and stressed it was not about point scoring and Council must be united in its stance but he had felt the statement of zero rate should be within the strategy and thus wanted to express disappointment.

Councillor McGinley stated that whilst he understood what Councillor Wilson was saying expressing disappointment was already bringing negativity as emphasis should be on protecting life. He said that the strategy itself would not save lives it would be the work on the ground thus Council should work with the department.



Councillor Mallaghan stated that if Council was reaching out it must be seen to be working together and thus it would not be helpful to create an atmosphere.

Councillor Kearney stated that at a recent event hosted by NILGA it had been highlighted that on the island of Ireland the north has three times the level of suicide of the south.

Councillor Brian McGuigan mentioned the health and wellbeing element of the community plan through which Council should further develop its endeavours.

Councillor Burton stating that she had raised the issue previously that once a person is over 18 their parents are not allowed to speak on their behalf. Yet the young person may not be communicating their problems and be for example suffering a bad depression and if left for five minutes there can be devastating consequences. Councillor Burton stated that the Council should take the issue on board.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney stating that in summarising the debate he could clearly see no one was trying to score points and the Council were speaking with one voice.

Councillors Wilson and Graham withdrew the amendment.

Councillor McKinney asked that it be noted on record that the aim is total eradication of suicide as in reducing it to 10% there was still families left devastated.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney stated that all sentiments would be raised at the requested meeting.

Councillor McGinley thanked Members for their support and thanked Councillor Wilson for withdrawing the amendment. He stated that he had referred to zero rate and spoke of working in the field dealing with young people and adults with suicidal tendencies. He drew the similarity of aiming for 30% in smoking cessation but the reality of liking it eradicated. Councillor McGinley stated he looked forward to the conversation with the Department.

The Chair, Councillor Kearney declared the motion carried unanimously.

*The press and public left the meeting at 8.32 pm*

*Councillor McGinley left the meeting at 8.32 pm*

#### **Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business**

Proposed by Councillor B McGuigan  
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan

**Resolved** That items C182/19 - C189/19 be taken as confidential business

## **Matters for Decision**

- (i) Council Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 25 July 2019
- (ii) Planning Committee Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 6 August 2019
- (iii) Planning Committee Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 3 September 2019
- (iv) Policy & Resources Committee Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 5 September 2019
- (v) Audit Committee Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 9 September 2019
- (vi) Environment Committee Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 10 September 2019
- (vii) Development Committee Confidential Minutes of Meeting held on 12 September 2019
- (viii) Approval of Annual Financial Statements
- (ix) Document for Sealing: Deed of Grant of Easement with Mr Desmond Ryan, in relation to foul sewer infrastructure adjacent to Council owned lands situated at Ballyronan Marina, Shore Road, Ballyronan
- (x) Document for Sealing: Article 161 Adoption Agreement with Mr Desmond Ryan and NI Water in relation to foul sewer infrastructure adjacent to Council owned lands situated at Ballyronan Marina, Shore Road, Ballyronan
- (xi) Document for Sealing: Application of Seal of Agreement regarding Lands at Ann Street, Dungannon

## **C193/19      Duration of Meeting**

The meeting was called for 7 pm and ended at 8.44 pm

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_