

**Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council
held on Thursday 10 November 2022 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road,
Magherafelt and by Virtual Means**

Members Present

Councillor Clarke, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Black, Burton, Corry, Cuddy, Doris*
Elattar, Kerr*, McNamee*, Martin*, Milne*, Molloy*,
Monteith*, Quinn*, Wilson

**Officers in
Attendance**

Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities and Place
Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment
Mr Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and
Wellbeing
Ms Linney**, Assistant Director of Development
Ms McKeown**, Assistant Director of Economic
Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes
Mr Kennedy**, ICT Support
Mrs Grogan, Democratic Services Officer

**Others in
Attendance**

Councillors McKinney* and S McGuigan*

Deputation:

Mr Gerry Darby, Lough Neagh Partnership

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

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

D166/22 Notice of Recording

This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site.

D167/22 Apologies

None.

D168/22 Declarations of Interest

The Chair, Councillor Clarke reminded Members of their responsibility with regard to declaration of interest drawing attention in particular to agenda item on grants. He stated that if Members had already declared the interest it did not need reiterated.

Councillor Kerr declared an interest in Coalisland Community Foodbank.

D169/22 Chair's Business

The Chair advised that he had a few requests from members to raise issues under Chair's Business and invited Councillor Elattar to address the committee.

Councillor Elattar referred to the work carried out at the Plantin and Fair Hill Amenity Space in Draperstown and advised that there was still a lot more to do and when the process was started a long time ago and planning for that there was always going to be a second phase. She said that she was aware of no money being available this financial year, but more about getting a process of drawing up a design plan and having it in place to have something there if any funding become available at any time, just so it's ready to go. She said that there was still a lot to do around the paths regarding lighting, not so much around Fair Hill itself, but as part of the work has been done, it would be nice to have the rest of it completed.

Councillor Corry seconded the proposal as there were paths which were quite dangerous and falling into the river. In referring to Fair Hill advised that there was great potential at the Events Space and would agree that it wasn't too bad and more work was needed in the Plantin but would be beneficial to get a plan in place for that.

Proposed by Councillor Elattar

Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to look at drawing up a design and having it in place for the Plantin and Fair Hill, Draperstown in the event of funding becoming available at short notice.

The SD: Communities and Place said that he was aware of a recent site visit made by the Chief Executive and AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing and that this could certainly be added onto the list, but advised members the list is very long at the minute and there was a need to look at this in the context of capacity to take it forward and the resources. He said that Officers at this stage could only commit to adding it onto the list, but could not commit to a timescale in relation to when that work would commence.

Councillor Elattar said that she understood where the SD: Communities and Place was coming from and would be happy to have it on a list somewhere as it has been nearly 8 – 10 years from this was started and just wanted to make sure that the second part of this wasn't lost.

Councillor Elattar referred to the lights at Fair Hill, Draperstown and advised that they were not operational this past few weeks and was aware of work ongoing at the Plantin which possibly is the same connection, but would like to see the lights fixed again in the event of anti-social behaviour and public safety.

The AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing said that he echoed Councillor Elattar's comments and that officers had been linking in with colleagues in Property Services team over the last few weeks. The lights at the Fair Hill are indeed on the same link as the lights around the walkway at the Plantin and advised that there was work ongoing at the moment to try and isolate the supplies and hopefully get the lights operational again at Fair Hill whilst a longer term solution is being investigated for the lights around the walkway.

Councillor Kerr raised the issue regarding flooding which has happened along Kings Row/Ardnaskea in Coalisland this last few weeks with the heavy rainfall. He raised his concern regarding this being previously promised to be resolved with the recent Public Realm Scheme and input from the Roads Service, Water Service and all the Statutory bodies. He said that unfortunately this problem still lingers and that he along with residents were frustrated that after millions of pounds was spent in Coalisland that flooding is still very problematic to the residents living on this road.

Councillor Kerr proposed to invite all the statutory bodies around the table to try and get a long term solution for the residents of Kings Row and Ardnaskea.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Doris

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that invitation be issued to all the statutory bodies asking them to come together to try and establish a long term solution for the residents of Kings Row and Ardnaskea.

Councillor Doris advised that she had received a number of complaints from parents regarding the online booking system for swimming lessons at our Leisure Centres particularly Dungannon. She said that she really did not know a huge deal about it but there was a certain time in the morning where lessons had to be booked online which caused great disappointment to parents and children. She said that pre-Covid parents queued up at Leisure Centres to make their bookings, but since then parents are complaining that this new system was not working and said that it would be important for Officers to investigate this.

The AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing said that he would be happy to provide an update to members relating to this. He said that this was reflective across the three wet sites where a significant amount of demand for swimming lessons were far in excess in what we could provide, particularly at the lower levels and entry levels. He felt that this could be a build-up of things especially due to leisure closures last year and children which would ordinarily joined the scheme at that time would probably would have exited by now, so causing the build-up. Officers are looking at ways in which this can be more efficient, as the days of people queuing up are well gone along with different methods which have been tried and tested over many years in leisure. He assured members with the online element it is on a 'first come, first served' basis and whilst there is a time that lessons get released at, it does recognise the time that people have joined the queue at. The challenge within Dungannon specifically is that this month there was only approximately 50 available spaces at the beginner level and those spaces were snapped up in a matter of minutes once they went live. The AD: Health, Leisure &

Wellbeing advised that it was something that Officers were continuously looking at and were aware of the issues and would be looking at possible solutions for future use.

D170/22 Deputation: Lough Neagh Partnership

The Chair welcomed to the committee Mr Darby from Lough Neagh Partnership and invited them to address the committee. (Appendix 1)

Mr Darby outlined the basic needs of Lough Neagh:

- Major loss of habitats and species
- No navigation authority or dredger
- No links with Waterways Ireland and Cross Border Councils to access SEUPB and Shared Island Funding for Blackwater River
- Future Net Carbon Zero and Climate Needs – needs addressed
- No Interdepartmental body to manage Lough

How much additional money and assistance can the Lough Neagh Partnership bring into Lough Neagh and Mid Ulster District Council over the next 5 years (2023-2028):

- Estimated to attract new £17,380,575 of investment in Lough
- Help provide new market system and put dredger on Lough Neagh
- Lobby and co-ordinate for purchase of bed and soil of Lough Neagh
- Support new farming sector to adapt to new farm reforms and net carbon zero requirements
- Protect Lough and redress Habitat and Species loss via new SEUPB funds
- Help create new green economy business opportunities through new Shared Prosperity Fund
- Help develop Navigable rivers such as Blackwater through DFI, SEUPB and RDP
- Promote food development and food experience branding through artisans group
- Help draw up new climate change, biodiversity and carbon capture plans

The way forward: Additional Specific MUDC Services -

- Directly assist with development of MUDC Climate Change Strategy, Carbon Zero Strategy, Biodiversity Strategy and Farm Economic Strategic
- Help MUDC with running events and promoting artisan food and developing tourism experiences
- LNP Identify carbon reserves in MUDC and examine carbon trading opportunities
- Examine opportunities to develop other MUDC Heritage projects at Beaghmore Tentative List and NLHF proposal, place new employees in LNP Offices.

In conclusion, Mr Darby asked members to look at the strategy and was not asking for anything to be approved tonight, but advised that the strategy was written with a bit of thought for the Council to bring value to them whilst also addressing real needs and real future needs. He hoped that within the next five years those needs will hopefully be addressed and value brought to Mid Ulster District Council and more importantly the ratepayers of this Council.

The Chair thanked Mr Darby for his impressive presentation which was very well covered and delivered and asked for members comments.

Councillor Molloy thanked Mr Darby for his presentation and advised that that he had a quick read through the documents which were issued to members yesterday. He referred to the points we all know that the Lough is multifaceted and we can no longer look at in isolation as a body of water when we take into consideration the industry around it i.e. fishing, sand extraction, water extraction, aquaculture and agriculture. There is a need to look at tourism, leisure and how we harness the attraction of the Lough for bedstays in Mid Ulster and how that feeds into our wider tourism and industry offering when people come and use the Lough and go and stay in Beaghmore, Dark Skies and other attractions within our area. He felt that it was important to develop this as it would be paramount criminal not to invest to see the payback. He said that he was aware of interest rates increasing, but when you talk about £29 for every £1 invested, it is a sign of what work has been done by the Partnership. He was aware from different aspects that Councils were always criticised due to the bureaucracy around doing things as it can be seen to be slow and going through the processes and using somebody like the Partnership to deliver on some projects and events i.e. food which was an excellent vehicle to do that and felt that there was more to be done. There is a need to work in partnership with our bordering Councils also as he heard about the Blackwater Dredging and was already aware of our own Council saying that this is not in our area or may not be, he felt that there was an onus to look past this because this unlocks massive potential up and down the Blackwater, in and out of the Lough and what this brings up in terms of river usage also. He commended the work that LNP were doing and continue to do and felt that it was important to continue to work in partnership.

Councillor Doris thanked Mr Darby for this presentation and advised that she hadn't the opportunity to go through the document in detail, but had a quick scan through it today. She referred to the issues around the Peatlands and the restoration of that lands which has been severely damaged over the years and was great to see that it was included in the document and was also absolutely brilliant to see that the school lands were being transferred to LNP. She referred to the milling which was fine, but the devastation that it has caused for the local area and the natural habitat has just been terrible over the last 10 years or so. She referred to the ownership of those lands by the Royal School and felt that this was the biggest issue as it was hard to deal with another person's land that we don't own. She said that it was great to see that the conversation has advanced in terms of acquiring the land from Shaftesbury's Estate and also great to see applications submitted for funding to do that which was very heartening. She concurred with Councillor Molloy in terms of Councils and although she agreed that the bar-mouth of the river may be in Armagh, it was effectively affecting our constituents on that side of the Lough and the potential once that it sorted out would be fantastic. It was heartening to hear that the application was submitted for the dredger and would be great to get that approved as it would make a world of difference and resolve so many issues. She said that great work has been done to places like Ballyronan which was class, also the artisan market and the transfer of school lands too. She felt the only thing which may be missing at the minute and previously there was good momentum through Stormont a little while back with John O'Dowd the last DfI Minister, which is not the case with the new Minister, but there was previously a start of movement in terms of Mr O'Dowd writing to other Ministers to try and get these interdepartmental bodies set

up in terms of the Lough. She felt that in absence of Stormont the only thing that this Council could do at the minute would be to action that the Chief Executives of the Councils surrounding Lough Neagh are contacted to arrange a conference or meet up. She said that there have been many meetings but felt that there would be merit in approaching the Chief Executives and also include any Politicians and Councillors who may want to be involved, but definitely important that Chief Executives around the Lough and representatives of Lough Neagh Partnership due to motions being good and reenergised our efforts but asked if these have been reenergised strategically and felt that this may be the thing that was missing.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that all the Chief Executives surrounding Lough Neagh and Lough Neagh Partnership arrange a meet-up to try and progress a way forward.

Councillor Kerr agreed that it was a good presentation and would fully be supportive of the efforts in which the Partnership were trying to achieve as it as the largest Lough in Ireland. He said that there was great work carried out around the Washingbay Walkway and also great work carried out around the area. In regard to dredging, he advised that a report was brought back to Council a few weeks back and now it has been decided to opt out and asked if he could elaborate why this decision was made from Maghery cut over to the Blackwater mouth for dredging and enquired if there was an options appraisal study carried out to compare both. He asked if it would be possible for Councillors who sit on the Development committee or any member interest to receive a copy of the study. From talking to local fishermen and leisure users they indicated that the Blackwater mouth needs investigated as an option and enquired who decided not to do this. He felt that every area needs to be considered regarding the dredging of the Lough due to a point he raised on a regular basis regarding Lough Neagh Rescue and the debris on the Lough preventing volunteers going as fast to the scene and a few minutes could be life changing, very damaging to health or could even lead to fatalities. He wished to reiterate the fact that dredging of the Lough was hugely important to Mid Ulster and as a strategic point to try and get to the bottom of. He said that it would be appreciated if Mr Darby or Council officials could come back to answer these queries that it would be appreciated.

Mr Darby said that to be fair Council Officials organised the meeting with representatives of ABC Council, which was held in June and was agreed to look at coming back after the summer doing those very first studies. Before anything can be done, two things needs to be looked at: No. 1 – how much sand is actually at the cut of the mouth and also at the river and there is a need to investigate both of them by an engineer to get a topographical analysis. No. 2 - to investigate the chemical analysis. Once these two bits of information is sourced then can look together at putting together a spec for the actual dredging, but unless you know how much sand you have and what is in the sand you are stumped in terms of going forward. In terms of what is on each side of the Council, all he could emphasis is that if the conclusion was to do it at the cut, then that is in ABC Council, but there was a requirement to look at the thing as a whole of the Blackwater Strategy and if anyone asked him where there would be the biggest economic beneficiary of opening up the river, he would feel that this would be Moy village as they have berthing facilities which could be expanded which could be a real tourism economic hub as we would get all the boats on Lough Neagh and River Bann to go up the river and approximately 90% sailing boats going up that river. He felt there

was need to work together and possibly look at the bigger picture and advised that he had a meeting last week with Jonathan Hayes from ABC Council and felt that once legal issues are addressed, there is real opportunities to take this forward.

Councillor Kerr enquired if the study has been carried out yet and whether no decision has been made yet about cutting open the Blackwater mouth.

Mr Darby advised that no study has been carried out yet, but it was previously agreed that a proposal be looked at sharing funding between the two Councils for these studies which didn't involve a lot of money approximately £4,000 - £5,000 at the most compared to economic opportunities it would bring.

Councillor Cuddy said that it was great to see the progress and not a lot of money involved compared to other proposals like the Ulster Canal which could be twenty times the cost. He referred to the overhead map of Lough Neagh and enquired if the blue at the bottom related to the floodplains.

Mr Darby said that these were defined by NIEA as wetlands and that the yellow part represented Peatlands Park, Derrytresk and Derrylaughan with ABC being on the opposite side. He advised that NIEA had allocated a lot of funding towards carrying out a full carbon analysis of the area which was important for the carbon future.

Councillor Clarke agreed that it as a fantastic presentation with a lot of questions being asked. He said that Lough Neagh was a pure gem with a lot of work being carried out but there was still a lot of work to be done, but there was a need to start somewhere and keep it going for years to come as the benefits of this works will show at the returns which will be got from it.

The SD: Communities and Place thanked Mr Darby for his presentation and said that it was clear that Lough Neagh was a strategic asset for Northern Ireland and indeed Mid Ulster District Council in the work we do with Lough Neagh Partnership. He referred to the final slide and stated that there was a recommendation in terms of the committee considering an uplift in the funding which was available from the Council to Lough Neagh Partnership as well as the consideration around the five year's Service Level Agreement. He advised the committee that any consideration around increase in funding was outside the financial envelope, currently available to this committee, and indicated that if members were minded, his advice would be that the additional uplift is noted and then that this is considered as part of the ongoing estimates in rates discussions for 2023/24.

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to note the contents of the report and also any additional uplift to be considered as part of the ongoing rate estimates discussions for 2023/24.

Matters for Decision

D171/22 Sports Representative Grants

The AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing presented previously circulated report and sought approval for sports grant allocations.

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the sports grants allocations as listed in appendix A of the report.

D172/22 Walk NI Consortium Proposal 2022-23

The AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing presented previously circulated report and sought approval to commit to Walking NI Marketing Consortium Campaign for 2022-23.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve that Mid Ulster District Council participate as a Regional Partner with the Walking NI Marketing Consortium with a contribution of £3,617.00 towards the 2022-23 campaign.

D173/22 Mountain Bike NI Consortium Proposal 2022-23

The AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing presented previously circulated report and sought approval to commit to Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium Campaigns for 2022-23.

Councillor McNamee referred to Davagh Mountain Bike Trail and said that he recalled a contractor having issues and left the contract. He enquired whether the contract was completed yet or was it still left the same way from when contractor left the site.

The AD: Health, Leisure & Wellbeing said that as this project as reported through the Environment Committee, he was aware that a paper was due to go to that committee. He said that he was unsure if a paper has been brought to Environment Committee yet but would link in with the Capital team to get an update and come back to the member.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Burton and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve that Mid Ulster District Council participate as a Consortium Partner with the Mountain Bike NI Marketing Consortium and contribute £10,500 to 2022-23 campaign.

D174/22 Social Inclusion – Community Wealth Building

The AD: Development presented previously circulated report to:

- Provide an update on progress in respect to the development of a Community Wealth Building Framework for Mid Ulster District Council.
- Commence the development of a Community Wealth Building Plan.

- Consider and agree the proposed governance approach.
- Approve Council Officer attendance at the fifth annual Community Wealth Building Summit on Friday 18 November in Birmingham.

Councillor Molloy said that he would be happy to propose the recommendation and was aware of this issue being talked about numerous times down the years since the Council had been established in RPA. Our social responsibilities in terms of employment and all that goes along with it, contracts and sub-contracts that we engage in, we do have to have responsibility for how we manage Council projects. He felt that it as a good start but there was still work needed to be done to broaden it out but was a good beginning.

Councillor Corry said that she would be happy to second the proposal and said that she agreed with Councillor Molloy and the AD: Development and her team that this was a great start to this when you look at appendix 1 with the opportunities which this presents to our communities. She referred to the 4,000 people which went into jobs to get a living wage, reduction in unemployment of 6.5%, 10% rise in 16 – 24 year olds gaining NVQ qualifications and lifted 20% out of the most deprived local authority areas and commended officers on a great piece of work.

Councillor Monteith said that it was a good idea and good to see it going forward and would not propose to go against the recommendation, but wished to put on record once again that he finds it highly ironic that an issue about social inclusion is going to be facilitated by a continued use of this organisation by d'hondt process to exclude all political opinion. He reiterated his disappointment that he and other Councillors were being excluded from the process.

Councillor Kerr said that he totally agreed with Councillor Monteith's comments as the idea of a motion was to try and enhance people's lives. He said that it would be fair to say that the two of the biggest issues which he and Councillor Monteith had mentioned over this last terms was trying to combat poverty and enhance people's lives and also found ironic an idea to try and tackle poverty which excludes Councillors which has a mandate.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to:

- 1) Note the update on progress in respect to the development of a Community Wealth Building framework
- 2) Agree to commence the development of a Community Wealth Building Plan, with support as required.
- 3) Agree the proposed governance approach
- 4) Approve Council Officer attendance at the fifth annual Community Wealth Building Summit on Friday 18 November in Birmingham, with no financial cost to Council.

D175/22 Social Inclusion – Hardship Support

The AD: Development presented previously circulated report to confirm the continued commitment of Council to the ongoing support with the cost of living challenges, as well as channeling any potential funding from Department for Communities, and any other sources through our already established support network.

Councillor McNamee said that he was very disappointed not to see Halo Helping Hands being included on the list. This group is based outside Cookstown and do tremendous work throughout Mid Ulster and are a major player when it comes to supporting families in need. Recent figures show that they received over 100 requests from Social Services for Christmas alone. He said that he knew that the group were assessed and was unsure how this process works and was also aware of how disappointed they are not ending up on this list and enquired if there was any way that Halo Helping Hands could be included. He referred to groups having opportunities to access but asked how they can access this.

The AD: Development said that it was about maximising resources and have been working to date with the big foodbanks which can bring in more resources over and above on what Council would be giving and not solely relying on funding. She said that the big foodbanks would support the smaller foodbanks and they would link into them, providing parcels and food support. To bring in more outside of the main towns there may be a need to look at opening up a system that would take in every community group and foodbank that were working across the district, which would be diluting the funding and not maximising it in terms of sharing it out to everyone. She reassured members that the larger foodbanks do provide to the smaller ones and everyone is working to the same ethos and the same aim. The critical thing here is that the larger foodbanks aren't precious about who allocates the parcels and one of the things we are happy to do under the number of referrals is to link them in and make sure that there is adequate provision in place to still provide for the local people to make sure no-one goes without.

Councillor Molloy said that he was aware of this Council running this funding for a few years and asked if it would be possible to get a running total as to the amount in which has been distributed throughout the District and need be brought to confidential business due to confidentiality of the groups. He said that it would be useful to generate a report to see how much has been distributed among each group to get a feel of what this Council is putting out into the community.

He said that he was aware of the larger foodbanks having the buying power, but as a Council we have significant buying power and if we were to look at some of the purchasing for all the foodbanks and distribute that, asked if there would be merit in that kind of model where we can buy and let them distribute.

The AD: Development advised that it would be difficult for Council as it would be very heavily regulated in terms of the process that would be used and we wouldn't have the processes in place where the large foodbanks have. A lot of the larger foodbanks would be working closely with the Trussell Trust who have established procedures which allows some of the bigger supermarkets who give away foods. She said that

although we were a large Council and could be looked at, we definitely wouldn't have the procedures or processes in place at the moment.

Councillor Doris in referring to Halo Helping Hands said that she has works with a lot of charities through her job and they always stood out on the work in which they done in some cases which would bring tears to a stone. She said that Social Workers also refer people to Halo Helping Hands and felt that there were really good organisations which were falling through the cracks and this was going to be a really hard Christmas for some people and the last thing we ever want to do is delay the money going out to people who really need it. She felt that there will be a pretty difficult year next year also and referred to Councillor Molloy's comments in terms of having a look down at what the different groups have got and explore if there was a way to make this process a bit more efficient. With Councillors knowledge of local groups within their areas, there would definitely be merit in Council having a separate conversation or a report being brought back on looking what has been allocated to individual groups. Unfortunately this is going to be a tough Christmas and didn't hold a lot of optimism on what next years was going to be like either.

Councillor Monteith asked where the proposal was he had made on the hardship fund specifically to this Council as this was not the report which members received tonight.

The AD: Development advised that the proposal which was being put forward was in relation to hardship support via existing networks, and was up to members to decide. She said what was being proposed by Derry & Strabane District Council is a fund allocated through their advice services for anyone in need. What we were proposing was that we have an established structure with foodbanks and support which can bring in over and above what we would be giving out -£124k. The officers thinking is if £124K is given out then this can be maximised by partners in terms of fundraising, resources and the purchasing power which they have. She said that this was not just about food, it was food, items of need, support towards oil, fuel. The people in need may be able to get more than one allocation of support and there is no set amount, this is based on what is required. However this is only a proposal for members' consideration and advised that the Derry & Strabane model was still there.

The SD: Communities and Place in response to Councillor Monteith's query and following on from what the AD: Development alluded to advised that the direction which came from the committee last month was for Officers to go away and look at the hardship fund which was being introduced by Derry & Strabane and see what this Council could do to replicate that to deliver something similar within Mid Ulster. He said that Officers had engaged with Derry & Strabane and the difference is that Derry & Strabane have went through a process where they have appointed a preferred partner who will work with them to deliver that hardship fund in terms of individual support going out to individuals within the community. Given that there was also direction from the Council to look at providing support in the here and now and given that we are in the midst of a cost of living crisis, it was felt if this Council was to go through a similar process of Derry & Strabane, then this could delay the ability to get money out onto the ground because there would be a requirement to select a preferred partner. We looked at what Partnerships and mechanisms we currently have in place to be able to distribute this additional money and also keep an eye on the fact we want to deliver the same outcomes i.e. those individuals across our communities who need support this

winter, whether this be fuel support, support around white good or other financial support in relation to utilities, that there would be structures in place within our community to go out and obtain that.

Councillor Monteith enquired if a follow could be done. He said that it was worth pointing out that if the proposal which was put through Council in May had of been followed, we wouldn't be in this predicament and if the hardship fund proposal was put together last May when members were told it couldn't be done, now see that Derry & Strabane did do it. He enquired under this proposal, was it a case that people who seek help will be guaranteed £100 - £120 towards whatever support they need on top of what is already provided through these organisations. He asked if this was guaranteed for every applicant.

The AD: Development said that no it wasn't as this was basically based on needs, i.e. if someone came in and were in crisis with oil then there would be support given for that, something similar would happen for parents in crisis seeking toys for their family, then Council would link in with Save the Children. She said that Save the Children allocations was approximately within the region of £344 as it was for a family with children. If someone just requires food parcels, the standard is usually that a food parcel would be allocated for a number of weeks for whatever crisis they are in and may get food parcels up to a value of £150 – £200, alternatively it may be a person coming in to get a one off food parcel of £50, or oil support at £100 - £150. She advised that there was no exact target set for any one person coming in.

Councillor Monteith wanted to express his disappointment as twice now a proposal has went through this Council to set up a specific hardship fund in relation to the cost of living and twice Officers have brought forward proposals which are not adhering to what Councillors had asked for. He said that he was not going to oppose what was being done as it was now in the public domain and was not trying to undermine the work that any of these organisations we are going to fund were doing as each and every one of them were doing very worthwhile work which we rightly support. However, there was major discrepancies between the value amount and how many times a person can access help from all those various organisations and there are differences even within those organisations as to how often a person can secure support geographically, there are issues in amount of support and the idea of support. He stated that he had no issues with any of those organisations as they were all doing good work, but it wasn't accurate to say that the same provision was available throughout the Council area. He felt that the process was not clear for many people out there, that if they need help with the cost of living in relation to energy bills or fuel, most people or the vast majority of people who find themselves in this situation for possibly the first time or an unexpected time of their life and never in this situation before, they do not understand or do not have any comprehension that funding or help is available through foodbanks or that help is available for fuel or energy bills through those organisations. He said that the Council were working through Charities and some people do not feel comfortable approaching Charities as they feel they are taking money from someone else and this was the whole rationale for setting up a fund from the Council so people would feel a bit more comfortable rather than feeling they were taking money from someone else who they believed were in worse off need. He stated that he had said his piece and tried this twice and obviously Officers were not prepared to go down this road and was

happy to see the work Council were doing, but there were many people out there who were not aware and would not be aware of any specific help the Council were doing.

The AD: Development said that she was aware that she couldn't elevate all the concerns but referred to a few of the issues that possibly could be done in relation to funding. She advised that funding was coming from Council so stipulations can be put on it in relation to flexibility of what it could be used for, what level of support people can get in monetary terms, and then Officers can do PR work to let people know that this support is there. Officers have been working to ensure that all of the support services are centrally located in towns to ensure accessible for people to walk to and open to people without having to make appointments etc. to ensure there is as little stigma as possible for people in crisis who are seeking food etc.

Councillor Kerr said that he welcomed the significant amount of money being spent to try and tackle the cost of living crisis and for residents who find themselves on uncharted waters and for people on lower and social economical areas, but concurred with comments made by Councillor Monteith. He said what was originally suggested back in the summertime and last month was a model and as Derry & Strabane did not have any kind of mechanism, it was a wait and see approach from ourselves in Mid Ulster and then Derry & Strabane put together a scheme for people to apply. He personally felt that the model was probably something that Mid Ulster should have imitated as it provided people with a lot more discretion for applying and he also noted that people who were higher up the income scale could apply and who better to know how to spend a professional grant than the individual themselves. Whilst, he does welcome some of the areas of the report, he was just disappointed that this Council did not follow the Derry & Strabane model and although he was not going to oppose the report, felt that the money needed to get out as soon as possible and that Derry & Strabane model was the better path to follow.

Councillor Burton referred to the 11 crisis strategic support groups, with 5 main and Clogher Valley. She sought clarification regarding Clogher Valley on whether this was one main group as there were a number of groups set up during Covid and said that it would be useful to have this information forwarded to members after tonight's meeting so Councillors of the area know exactly where to refer people to. She felt that it was very important that this support was allocated in an equal playing field and as previously referenced, there were people who will not be aware of it and would be doubly sure that there will be rural people who will have no idea that there is that support for them. She said that it was usually the older people who will wait and think that somebody else is more in need than they are and quite often this isn't the case. She felt that this money at the end of the day basically was for people at crisis point or real need and was aware of times where people have went to foodbanks and almost chose out of the box what they take home with them and didn't think that this was a sensible way for this as it was a crisis trying to support people that need to eat that day. She felt that it was important to know exactly what the criteria is here and who will benefit and that there is no way that this can be exploited as there was an onus on Council to really help people who need it the most. She said that she would like clarification relating to Clogher Valley.

The AD: Development advised that she would follow up with everyone regarding the main foodbank groups. She confirmed that the groups in the Clogher valley as she

referenced early work in partnership and the main group takes the lead. She advised members that she would share all the details with them.

Councillor Burton in following up enquired if there would be criteria or who would benefit from it.

The AD: Development said that one thing that could be done would be having it very flexible to need and given the crisis at the moment, most of the agencies that have been supporting people have uplifted their contribution. In relation to this, one of the things Council could say would be allocations in the region of £100 - £150 to help people in crisis. In the past Council and DFC funding which was crisis support linked to the Trussell Trust which aims for support for a set period of for a period to allow the funding to go as far as possible, however Foodbanks/SVP's use their own funding to support those that may need help over a long period of time and are more reliant. She advised that Officers rely on foodbanks to set the criteria to allow for flexibility for someone in crisis and not to have them fill in too much detail or create a stigma where they feel they have to beg for food and support. One thing about the criteria set by Derry & Strabane is that it is so wide and flexible. If members are hearing any issues of people being turned away or any issues in which people are experiencing, definitely feed them into Council.

Councillor McNamee referred to the issue of Halo Helping Hands and advised that the AD: Development had indicated that if a group was coming under pressure with the number of referrals that the larger groups would step in and help them out and asked if she was confident that this would happen.

The AD: Development advised that Council has a network set up where all the foodbanks help each other so there would be no problem if there was a number of referrals who they wish to do themselves or refer the other person in, you will find that the foodbanks just want that person supported. She said that there were a number of foodbanks set up across the District that link and Council seeks to support this networking and will link with Halo regarding their referrals. She stated it was not just Cookstown support but Magherafelt and Dungannon also, for example The Vineyard in Dungannon issues over 500 food parcels at Christmas but they deliver them through a range of partners and charities, it is found to be very open and inclusive. If members feel that there is something happening to the contrary to let Officers know.

Councillor Wilson said that no matter what was going to be produced, it wasn't going to be perfect and by listening to some comments made tonight, he felt it was a fair and a good attempt to try and get money out to those people most in need and would be happy to support the proposal. He said the only concern he would have would be under the Community Halls funding where it mentions Sports Hall and felt that this was not necessary. He felt that Sports Halls and sports people can apply for grants under the Sports Grant Awards and would like to see the word 'Sports' removed.

The AD: Development said that the only difficulty would be is that Council were going to try and uplift the grant allocation that we allocate next year and it was proposed to do a Venues and Facilities Grant amalgamated so it would be difficult to pull the sports facilities and venues out of this support. All groups would receive support either community, arts, heritage, sporting.

Councillor Wilson said he understood where the AD: Development was coming from but when a hardship funding grant is being proposed and the word 'Sports Hall' is mentioned it didn't look appropriate, Community Hall most certainly as it's utilised by people who need it.

The AD: Development said that this could be aligned to the decision on the grants as it would be hard to have one fund for Venues and Facilities across a range of community needs and then identify one grouping not to receive when they are all facing the same overhead community pressures. She said that she was conscious of selecting one group over another indicating that one group where in need and the other where not; it would be very difficult for officers to separate them.

Councillor Wilson said that he appreciated where the AD: Development was coming from but when you are doing a hardship fund and funding proposed it may not look good to mention a Sports Hall. He felt that the money has to be allocated and was not raising any objections but more about the optics of it, but agreed that it was a great attempt and congratulated everyone involved.

The SD: Communities and Place wished to clarify on concern raised regarding Sports facilities, as previously stated by the AD: Development, Council provide grants to a range of community facilities as well as a range of sporting facilities to support their programmes, but also with costs associated with running the building. In recognising across the District there may be some sports facilities which may be utilised for community activity throughout the winter months to support individuals who may be impacted by the cost of living crisis and this was why sports facilities were included in this stage, it's not an additional cost for their programming, it's an additional support around some of the pressures they are facing around cost of living relating to energy and utilities.

Councillor Ashton said that there was a comment referred to regarding Derry & Strabane option that went through their Council and the line that our Officers had taken. She said that too be fair to the Officers and she referred back to June Development Committee minutes, she felt that what the AD: Development had actually presented here tonight is what the members had requested her to present. At that meeting members noted the very in-depth report which was brought forward regarding Derry & Strabane, we agreed that Council provide ongoing support through already strategic networks which she believed what has been proposed here tonight and that any funding allocation in the Department continues to be channeled through the Strategic Network Partners. She felt that it was important to give Officers their dues what they presented was what Councillors asked them to do.

Councillor Corry said that she was aware of some foodbanks providing vouchers which allowed people to go in and get what they want rather than being handed a food parcel. She referred to some foodbanks who are doing these vouchers and asked what would happen if a partner had an addiction and spending the vouchers on alcohol or whatever it was and leaving a family without food and enquired if there was anything that could be done to investigate that.

The AD: Development said that this was always a difficult one and if people in the foodbanks who may not be aware of the background and so forth, it's like the overall

80/20 rule, where most people have genuine need. She said that this was hard to monitor and if you start to over monitor the process, it could then impact on others, who may then not access support. If having to provide too much specific detail may leave people feeling they have to beg for food or support. It is appreciated that this is a very difficult issue, however the foodbanks/SVP seek to manage as far as possible.

Councillor Corry said that she welcomed this as there could be situations where there is domestic abuse within a household and families left without any food.

Councillor McKinney would like to thank Officers for all their hard work. He said that he had an opportunity to visit a lot of these foodbanks from Clogher to Dungannon, right up to his own area. He referred to Christians Against Poverty (CAP) who were involved with Council and came and done a presentation and asked if there was an opportunity to include a support person within the area for a lot of people in the event of money disappearing resulting in a shortage of food. He said that when speaking to these foodbanks they are indicating that they are under extreme pressure at the minute and wished to thank the AD: Development and her team for their efforts. He enquired if there was anything that members could do to offer support i.e. support worker to help people to try and manage better on perceived circumstances. He referred to the excellent presentation which CAP provided but felt that there was only so many places they could be at the one time whilst facing these difficult times.

The AD: Development advised that Council works closely with CAP and they link to the foodbanks. She concurred with Councillor McKinney's comment regarding the importance of CAP, as some people just need general debt management guidance which is available through the Mid Ulster Advice Service whilst others need the actual debt managed on their behalf which is the CAP programme. She agreed this was something Council needed to promote more along with the advice service debt management, one providing advice and one to manage the debt where required. She stated that the CAP programme whilst they did have a strong backing in relation to the wider CAP UK programme, they did have limited people resources re managing referrals on the ground. She said that Officers would speak to them again to see where support can be offered and to maximise their services as best as possible.

Proposed by Councillor Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the following allocations for the additional **£157,195** to support individuals and groups with the ongoing cost of living pressures:

- (i) **£7,195** to Save the Children, with match funding from both Health Trusts and Save the Children with a total investment of £28,780, to allow for continued delivery of the 'Families in Crisis' programme until end of March 2023.
- (ii) **£90,000** to Councils current model of crisis intervention, via the 11 strategic crisis support groups of foodbanks and SVP partners operating across 5 main towns and Clogher Valley. Funding will be allocated as per

the 3 main towns (Magherafelt, Cookstown & Dungannon) £20,000 each and 2 small towns (Maghera & Coalisland) and Clogher Valley area of £10,000 each.

- (iii) **£60,000** to provide up to a £500 uplift to the Community (and Sports) venues and facilities to help alleviate the unprecedented financial burdens placed on them as a result of the current energy and cost of living crisis

D176/22 Development Report

The AD: Development presented previously circulated report which provided update and sought approval on the following:

- **Rolling Community Grants Programme 2022 - 2023**
- **Community Grants Review and Policy 2023 - 2024**
- **Development Department Update**

It was

Proposed by Corry
Seconded by Clarke and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the following:

- **Rolling Community Grants 2022-23**

Councillor Ashton sought clarification point 7 of report regarding the strategic grants 2 year rolling, referred to strategic events and i.e. a person applies this year for next year's event, what happens if the strategic event then comes in year, is this rolling or is only going to be open for 2 years now and can't apply next year or how was it actually going to roll out.

The AD: Development advised that any new events could still apply each year. The strategic events whilst they mostly remain the same each year, still have the opportunity to resubmit an application or new groups can apply. She said that each year if there is pressures in one area of grants and less pressures on another, Officers would propose to Committee to offset this and this is further supported by some being rolling grants. For example if there was a pressure on the strategic events side in year 2, members would have the proviso to offset that with the community festival funding.

Councillor Ashton referred to Grant Allocations particularly the ineligible application enquired what was the reasoning and downfall on this application.

The AD: Development advised that she was unable to provide an explanation as she did not have the exact details in front of her tonight but would provide member with an update.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the assessment panel recommendations under the Community Festival & Good Relations grants as outlined in appendix 1 of the Officers report.

- **Community Grants Review and Policy 2023 – 2024**

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the Community Grants Review and Policy 2023 – 2024.

- **Development Department Update**

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to note update from the Development Department.

Matters for Information

D177/22 Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 October 2022

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 October 2022.

Councillor Kerr referred to D157/22 and enquired if there was any further update on Cappagh Initiative.

The SD: Communities and Place advised that there was no further update from the last meeting i.e. Altmore/Cappagh Project, with Officers working towards the 31st March 2023.

Councillor Kerr referred Gortgonis Leisure Project and asked if there was any update.

The SD: Communities and Place advised that a report was brought to Policy & Resources Committee meeting last Thursday.

D178/22 The Regulation of Cosmetic Treatments in Northern Ireland

Members noted update to inform of the Health Minister's response to Council's request for better regulation of cosmetic treatments in Northern Ireland.

D179/22 Leisure Participation

Members noted update on the progress and the continuation of the Active Recreation Plan which encompasses the Active Leisure Programme and Summer Programmes:

- Active Leisure Programmes September 2022 – March 2023
- Summer Programme July – August 2022

D180/22 Economic Development Report – OBFI

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on the following:

- Christmas 2022 Town Activities
- ICBAN Service Level Agreement (SLA) Progress Update (April – Sept 2022)
- Mid Ulster Enterprise Week (14 -18 Nov 2022)
- Tourism Autumn Campaign 2022
- Hidden Heritage
- Sperrins Hillwalking Programme
- Outline Business Case: Future Proposals for Council-led Entrepreneurship Support Services

Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 8.40 pm.

Live broadcast ended at 8.41 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Burton
Seconded by Councillor Ashton and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst members consider items D162/22 to D164/22.

Matters for Decision

D181/22 The Registration of a Society Under the Betting, Gaming, Lotteries and Amusements (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Matters for Information

D182/22 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 13 October 2022

D183/22 Economic Development Report – November 2022 - CBF

D184/22 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7pm and concluded at 8.45 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening please raise your hand in the normal way and keep raised until advised to lower it
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda.