

Minutes of Meeting of Policy & Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Tuesday 7 October 2014 in Cookstown District Council Offices

Members Present:	In the Chair, Councillor McPeake (Chair) Councillors Ashton, Buchanan (7.05pm), Elattar, Forde (7.07 pm), Glasgow, Mallaghan, McFlynn, McGinley, S McGuigan, McLean, Molloy, M Quinn and Totten
Members in Attendance:	Councillor Wilson
Officers in Attendance:	Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive Mrs Canavan, Lead HR Officer Mrs Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager Mr Moffett, Change Management Officer Mr O'Hagan, ICT Manager Mr JJ Tohill, Lead Finance Officer Mrs Smith, Council Business Manager (D&STBC)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

PR32/14 Apologies

Councillors Bateson and Reid

PR33/14 Declarations of Interest

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

PR34/14 Receive and confirm minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Wednesday 2 September 2014

Off Street Car Parking (PR20/14)

Councillor Ashton referred to paragraph four and the incorrect figure of £333k which should read £288k.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 2 September 2014 (PR17/14 - PR31/14) were considered, and subject to the foregoing correction, were signed as accurate and correct.

Matters for Decision

PR35/14 Introduction of Childcare Vouchers for employees and members of Mid Ulster District Council

The Lead HR Officer presented a report the purpose of which was for members to consider the introduction of a childcare vouchers scheme for employees and members. She added that all three Councils within the Mid Ulster cluster of councils facilitate a childcare voucher scheme through existing payroll systems. The Officer outlined the key issues of the scheme and requested Members to approve the introduction of a childcare voucher scheme using Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council's existing provider - Employers for Childcare.

Councillor Buchanan arrived at 7.05 pm.

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve the introduction of a childcare voucher scheme for employees and members of Mid Ulster District Council, using Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council's existing provider - Employers for Childcare.

PR36/14 Cycle to Work Scheme

Councillor Forde arrived at 7.07 pm.

The Lead HR Officer presented a report the purpose of which was for members to consider the introduction of a Cycle to Work Scheme for employees and members of the Council. The Officer outlined the key issues of the scheme and advised that currently Dungannon & South Tyrone and Cookstown Councils operate a scheme for staff and members. Members were requested to approve the introduction of a Cycle to Work Scheme.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve the introduction of a Cycle to Work Scheme for employees and members of Mid Ulster District Council in accessing the scheme and providers used by Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council.

PR37/14 Draft interim Communications Strategy for Mid Ulster District Council

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report on the Interim Communications Strategy for Mid Ulster District Council. The Officer stated that internal and external communications have been identified as a key element of the Council's overall strategy in preparation for the merger of the existing councils. She added that an interim communications plan had been developed to address

communications issues. The strategy deals with the importance of internal communications, as well as utilising existing channels, advocates the development of additional methods, recognises the importance of face to face communication and external activity is required. It includes key projects such as branding, website development and the significance of the media as a communications tool. Monitoring and evaluation arrangements were also proposed.

Councillor S McGuigan stated that as it was an interim document it will allow for change if anything comes through at a corporate level.

Councillor Mallaghan asked if social media was part of the strategy. The Marketing Communications Manager stated the document dealt with the development of a corporate digital media strategy as part of a Mid Ulster District Council communications Strategy for the period 2015-2019.

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the Council endorses the Interim Communications Strategy & Action Plan August 2014-2015

PR38/14 Introduction of a single, non-geographic telephone number for Mid Ulster District Council

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report on the introduction of a single non-geographic telephone number for the Council. This system would allow for the existing councils to be connected by a single internal telephony system while also presenting an opportunity to introduce a single contact telephone number. A number of options are open to the Council and the introduction of a 03 number from the gold category was recommended with estimated annual costs of £2,200.

Councillor McLean asked how long the current numbers would be retained and if the infrastructure was fit for purpose. The Marketing Communications Manager stated the unified communications system would support a non-geographic telephone number and it was recommended that old numbers be retained for one year but can be longer if think required.

Councillor Mallaghan stated that this was an excellent way of rebranding the Council.

The Chief Executive stated that with receptionists in each of the three main buildings they can take calls from any part of the district.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the Council introduces and promotes a single non-geographic external customer contact telephone number chosen from the 03 range to be effective from 1 April 2015, with the central telephone number for each of the existing Councils being phased out over a suitable period of time.

Matters for Information

PR39/14 Draft Model One Step Grievance Procedure

The Lead HR Officer presented a report setting out the response on behalf of the Council to the 'Draft Model One Step Grievance Procedure to Link with the RPA Independent Third Party Dispute Resolution' issued by the LGTRJF. The deadline for return of comments was 26 September 2014 and the response had been submitted.

PR40/14 Capacity Building Plan

The Lead HR Officer presented a report informing members on the arrangements put in place to ensure members and staff were ready to meet the challenges of change leading to a new organisation. The first phase of the capacity building programme had begun to be rolled out and dates and times were dependent on the availability of trainers. She added if any member wishes to attend a particular event but the date or time was not suitable further sessions could be arranged.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, stated that this is comprehensive list of events with the challenge being making time to attend.

Councillor McFlynn asked how the staff engagement sessions were being received.

The Chief Executive stated that he and other Mid Ulster District Council staff had spent 3 days the previous week meeting staff in Council Offices, depots and leisure centres with over 300 staff attending. Staff were given a detailed briefing on the high level organisational structure agreed by Council and feedback from the sessions were very much welcomed by staff. He added that staff attending were somehow assured and appreciated the time senior management had taken to meet with them, therefore indicating the engagements were worthwhile to see staff in their environment. Issues raised included pay differentials, privatisation and staff location. Staff were advised that management had an open door policy as we move through the process and that should not listen to rumour but to talk to management.

Councillor McGuigan asked if anything new or unexpected had been raised.

The Lead HR Officer stated they identified issues prior to the sessions which may have come up and had not been confronted with anything different.

The Chief Executive stated that all queries raised and responses given across all the sessions would be collated and provided to all staff and members across the cluster of councils.

PR41/14 Draft Location, Relocation and Expenses Policy

The Lead HR Officer presented a report for information setting out the response issued on behalf of the Council on the draft 'Location, Relocation and Expenses Policy' issued by the LGRJF. The Officer stated there were no major concerns with the policy with the issues raised as undernoted:

- the period of time for payment of excess mileage in relation to a change of place of employment should be 3 years rather than 4 years, in line with Central Government Policy and
- Additional mileage incurred should actually be paid at public transport rate rather than the normal NJC mileage rates as this would be a much more affordable option.

PR42/14 Data and System Convergence for Geographical Information Systems (GIS)

The ICT Manager presented a report on the convergence of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and outlined the current situation across Mid Ulster cluster of councils, with reference to planning service.

The ICT Manager recommended that the Council extend the existing ESRI ArcGis licensing to a 10 user concurrent licensing model to provide a flexible and cost effective solution for Geographical Information System provision in Mid Ulster District Council in line with the Councils existing expenditure of £10,100 per annum. He added there would be no purchase of additional licensing, rather the replacement of existing maintenance and support to a single provider at an increase of £492.50 pa.

Councillor Glasgow referred to the cost and asked what level of funding would be coming from the DOE in relation to this system.

The Chief Executive stated that this in one of the areas pointed out in correspondence to Planning Service to identify a budget allocation for GIS, and a reply was outstanding.

Councillor McGuigan asked if there was a reason why there was such a variation in the cost of existing licenses across the existing councils within the Mid Ulster cluster.

The ICT Manager stated that this was down to how the licences were managed, the versions and models used and the level of support provided.

Proposed by Councillor M Quinn
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the recommendation set out above is adopted.

PR43/14 Mid Ulster District Council Governance Framework

The Chief Executive presented a report seeking members' approval on the core aspects of an internal Governance Framework for Mid Ulster District Council as listed in appendix A of the previously circulated report. He further advised that under the Local Government Act 2014 councils are required to prepare a council constitution. He added the constitution would include the Council's standing orders, the Northern Ireland Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors, information as the Department may direct and information as the Council considers appropriate

and as there would be many similarities between the Constitution content and the Mid Ulster District Council Governance Framework it would be prudent to combine these two initiatives into a single suite of documents to avoid duplication.

Councillor McLean asked if there was any conflict or requirement in the process of having two documents and if not there was no sense in have two similar documents.

The Chief Executive stated that there was not and would therefore avoid duplication.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to adopt the draft internal Governance Framework and that this document and the Constitution be combined into one suite of documents for ease of access and to avoid duplication.

PR44/14 State Aid Update

The Lead Finance Officer presented a report, for information, updating Members in relation to the principles surrounding State Aid and stated that a policy on this issue would be required.

PR45/14 Amalgamation of Consilium Finance Systems

The Lead Finance Officer presented a report informing Members of progress made to date in relation to the amalgamation of the three predecessor councils' finance systems. He said each council utilises the Consilium TOTAL finance application but to different extents. The Lead Finance Officer indicated that key deliverables and milestones had been identified with a new budget modelling module having been adopted for preparation of the 2015/16 rate estimates, a single monthly payroll having been established and recognition that significant organisational design changes are likely to be implemented over the early stages of the new Council it has been decided to continue with existing weekly payroll systems for an initial period post 1 April 2015.

Councillor McGuigan referred to the completion of some items and not others and asked if this would have financial implications going forward. He also asked who was guiding the work.

The Lead Finance Officer advised that the Finance working group had been working with Consilium representatives to ensure appropriate design, implementation and testing of all aspect of the combined application is delivered in advance of 31 March 2015. He indicated that the only thing not amalgamating by this date would be weekly payroll.

In response to a question from Councillor McLean relating to the number of staff of being paid weekly the Lead Finance Officer stated that within Magherafelt it is approximately two thirds. He said part of the development moving forward would be the implementation of a HR system which may dictate how weekly payroll advances.

Councillor McFlynn asked for details on the type of HR system being considered.

The Lead Finance Officer stated there had been initial discussions on systems but due to other priorities consideration of the potential benefits of the various systems had not been fully explored.

PR46/14 Finance and Procurement Risk Assessment

The Lead Finance Officer presented a report informing members of risks identified as set out in the Finance Risk Register. He stated that the identification and management of all relevant risks was essential for transition to the new Mid Ulster District Council and effective operation thereafter.

IN COMMITTEE

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That items P47/14 and PR48/14 be taken in Committee.

PR49/14 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.50 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____