

A

Minutes of Meeting of Policy & Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Tuesday 4 November 2014 in Magherafelt District Council Offices

Members Present: In the Chair, Councillor McPeake (Chair)

Councillors Ashton, Bateson, Buchanan, Elattar, Forde, Glasgow, Mallaghan, McFlynn, S McGuigan, McLean, Molloy, M Quinn (7.07 pm), Reid (7.07 pm) and Totten

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

PR50/14 Apologies

Councillor McGinley

PR51/14 Declarations of Interest

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

PR52/14 Receive and confirm minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 7 October 2014

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 7 October 2014 (PR32/14 – PR46/14 & PR49/14) were considered and were signed as accurate and correct.

Matters for Decision

PR53/14 Media Protocol

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report seeking Members' approval for the adoption of a Media Protocol. The Protocol provides guidance on the release of information about the work and decisions of the Council, it recognises councillors' rights to express their own views and engage in their own communications' activity and acknowledges that the Council will also wish to be proactive in its communications' activities. The Protocol provides clarity around the Council's decision-making processes, when information should be treated as confidential and the timing of Council communications, as well as identifying

spokesperson(s) in different communications' situations. The Protocol would apply during the transition period and post April 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it is recommended to the Council that the Media Protocol is adopted.

PR54/14 Email Migration Provision

The ICT Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to inform members on the email provision and migration for the new council and implications for members and staff. Emails currently used will become obsolete and will no longer be maintained as a Clouded Email solution on Office 365 for Mid Ulster District Council in quarter 4 of this financial year will be implemented. Email will be provided in the format "firstname.lastname@midulstercouncil.org" or similar. The ICT Manager said the withdrawal of email for the old domains will mean members and staff will no longer have access to the current email provision.

Assistance will be given to members of existing councils not continuing on in the new Council to migrate existing information to a new email.

Many of the continuing Mid Ulster District Council members affected by the withdrawal of current emails may require an alternative new email service. Members have a choice to use a council provided email midulstercouncil.org or to use a self-provided address.

The business analysis carried out by Kelway identified the retention and access to existing email and file archival solution within Cookstown be extended to all users migrated to the new infrastructure. The email solution provides a core solution that captures every mail sent or received regardless of deletion at a local user level. This facility currently costs £5,085 and there will be increased cost of £12,000 per annum.

The ICT Manager sought approval for email provision and migration and the extension of a file and email archival system for all future Mid Ulster District Council staff.

Councillors M Quinn and Reid arrived at 7.07 pm

In response to a question from Councillor Mallaghan the ICT Manager confirmed that from 1 April 2015 all email information will be retained in archive and there will be no loss of data.

Councillor Ashton asked, if members accepted the change will information sent to old email address be automatically directed to new address and also if member used personal email would it have reduced security.

The ICT Manager stated that during transition in quarter four it is hoped that email users will use this opportunity to promote change of address and after 30 April it would be recommended not to keep relays open and that anything received by old email would receive a failure notification. The ICT Manager further stated that

personal email addresses can be protected with password and security pin and it was recommended that both are used.

Councillor McLean stated that for migration system to work would need clear cut off date and thought a better image would be portrayed if all members went with new email address and that a decision should be taken around this.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, asked if a dual email could be operated with email received via the Mid Ulster address being automatically forwarded to personal email.

The ICT Manager stated that auto emails can be arranged but responses will go back from personal email address unless the user uses the default option each time when responding.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to proceed as outlined above.

PR55/14 Occupational Health Services

The Lead HR Officer presented a report seeking approval to procure Occupational Health Services for Mid Ulster District Council. This service is currently provided by the 3 Councils within Mid Ulster Cluster. As an employer Mid Ulster District Council has an obligation to provide Occupational Health which includes services such as pre-employment medicals, absence management, health surveillance, health & wellbeing, drug and alcohol testing etc. The three Councils currently have a combined spend of approximately £10,000 per annum on this service. Members are requested to approve the procurement of Occupational Health Services for Mid Ulster District Council.

Councillor McGuigan questioned the value of such a service as a recent presentation to Dungannon Council by a provider had shown that it was hard to quantify the benefits and asked if an audit of the current systems could be carried out.

The Lead HR Officer stated absence rates in the three councils are quite low in current league tables, Cookstown and Dungannon provide a nurse led unit and employees are able to self referral. One of the objectives is absence management and service provides a degree of independence.

Councillor McLean asked for explanation in relation to the procurement of the process and stated that important that mechanism that would promote health and wellbeing be incorporated in the process.

The Lead HR Officer stated that Terms of Reference on what the Council required would be agreed and include; pre-employment checks; health surveillance; and drug and alcohol checks as common parameters that would be included.

Councillor Reid stated that it would be important to consider mental health issues and that for members to make an informed decision more information on the number of referrals, benefits, value for money would be required.

Proposed by Councillor Reid
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that it agree in principle, to the procurement of Occupational Health Services, subject to receiving a report on the audit of the current three systems to give a better understanding of benefits and value for money.

The Lead HR Officer agreed to collate information and bring back to a future meeting of the committee.

PR56/14 Administration of Burial and Cemeteries in Mid Ulster

The Change Management Officer presented a report on the administration of burials and cemeteries within Cookstown, Dungannon and South Tyrone and Magherafelt Councils. The report analysed the current situation and identified the provision of burial plots within respective cemeteries as a priority service requiring convergence and harmonisation of existing administrative arrangements, inclusive of fees charged, becoming effective from 1 April 2015.

The recommended cemeteries and burial fees for application from 1 April 2015 were presented as:

Fee Category	Proposed
1. Purchase of grave plot	£130
2. Interment Charge	£160
3. Burial of Ashes	£60
4. Exhumation	£310
5. Approval Fee: Erection of Headstone or Memorial	£40
6. Administration fee: search/ re-issue/ transfer of certificate	£25

In respect of items 1 to 3 it was proposed that in cases of non-residents the fees be doubled.

Councillor Molloy stated that exhumation occurs under very trying circumstances and proposed that the charge for exhumation be waived.

Councillor Reid agreed that the fee for exhumation should be waived and asked if all issues were taken into account when recommending charges as interment charge appeared high.

The Change Management Officer stated that fees were not set on cost recovery basis. Proposed fees have been identified following consideration of those currently in place, when each council last reviewed their fees and an inflationary increase has been applied. He added that the fees as presented would be effective from 1 April 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Forde and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the proposed fees are adopted subject to the fee for exhumation being waived and that the Council authorise the initiation of activity to standardise the administration of burials.

PR57/14 Area within Dungannon & South BC not transferring to Mid Ulster

The Change Management Officer presented a report giving update on the area within the current Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council area not transferring to Mid Ulster District Council and to seek input from members on the transfer process. The area is located at the south east boundary of Dungannon and South Tyrone Council and the report provided a profile of the area and detailed the current council activity and service delivery arrangements in the area. The area will become the responsibility of the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council on 1 April 2015. Based on the 2011 census data the identified area has a population of 1,213 and it has been calculated that £250k of rates income will be lost due to this boundary change. It was recommended that members give consideration to the approach to be taken and authorise that formal discussions commence between Mid Ulster and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Councils to make preparations.

Councillor McGuigan felt that option 3, Mid Ulster delivering all the services in the area for a period under a Service Level Agreement permitting sufficient time to transfer service arrangements, be implemented if necessary.

The Chief Executive indicated that it would be easy to say to residents in the identified area that they would not be part of Mid Ulster but it would be important that former ratepayers are catered for in service delivery, particularly in respect to refuse collection from 1 April 2015.

Councillor Molloy advised that residents in this area are receiving notification of consultations on community planning under the auspices of the new Mid Ulster District Council which is confusing and proposed a community meeting to address any concerns.

The Chief Executive stated that this could be considered in conjunction with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Reid the Chief Executive stated that this is the only area transferring out of Mid Ulster Council and there is no gain of any other geographical area.

Councillor Ashton stated that businesses in the area had also received consultation communication with regard to local engagement on the Mid Ulster Economic Development Plan.

Proposed by Councillor McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the approach as outlined in option 3 be explored and that formal discussion commence between Mid Ulster and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Councils to make the necessary preparations.

PR58/14 Corporate Plan

The Change Management Officer presented a report which provided an update on the preparations being made for the development and finalisation of a Corporate Plan for the period 2015-2019. He stated that the Council must have a corporate plan in place as a business tool to guide members and staff on delivering the suite of local government services it will assume responsibility for from 1 April 2015.

A timeline has been compiled for the development of the corporate with sufficient flexibility to ensure a plan is in place for April 2015. The development of the plan will involve a series of sequential work strands starting with a desktop review and analysis. This will draw upon existing council corporate plans, corporate plans held by transferring in functions and while a full blown consultation will not be undertaken, as currently doing that for various strands of work, the review information from council engagements to date, community planning, the economic development action plan and corporate branding exercises, will be considered. A performance framework will form part of the plan.

Members will be involved throughout the process with facilitated discussion and engagement taking place on the emerging findings coming from the desktop analysis.

External support to assist with elements of the process is required to bring a level of expertise and capacity currently not present. The Local Government Training Group (LGTG) regional support programme will be used to provide this support with no cost to Council.

A final corporate plan for the period 2014-2015 will be brought to Policy & Resources Committee in March 2015 following engagement within and across the three councils.

It was recommended that members consider and agree upon the approach being taken to develop the new Corporate Plan for Mid Ulster District Council.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to adopt the approach being taken to develop the new Corporate Plan for Mid Ulster District Council.

PR59/14 Rates Estimates Timetable 2015-1016

The Lead Finance Officer submitted a report informing Members of the Rate Estimates timetable and to seek agreement to dates scheduled therein for Member engagement. The Officer stated that each year the Council is required to strike a rate by 15 February a date prescribed by the Department. The Officer further stated that there continues to be great uncertainty surrounding the budget allocation in respect of transferring-in services. It was recommended that the proposed schedule for Member engagement is adopted.

Proposed Date and Time	Venue	Purpose	Suggested
------------------------	-------	---------	-----------

			Attendees
Monday 15 December 2014 – 6pm	Dungannon	Party Group Leaders' Meeting to discuss Rate proposals	Party Group Leaders and Chief Executive
Thursday 22 January 2015 – 7.00pm	Dungannon	"In Committee" full Council discussion re Rate proposals	All Members
Tuesday 3 February 2015 – 7.00pm	Cookstown	"In Committee" Policy and Resources Committee to discuss 'final' Rate proposals	All Members
Thursday 12 February 2015 – 7.00pm	Dungannon	Special Council meeting to strike Rate	All Members

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, referred to a meeting held regarding capital expenditure and asked if there were any plans to follow this up as decisions would need to be made to inform the rates setting process.

The Chief Executive stated that a date for a further meeting is being sought and all comments made at the earlier meeting will be fed into the process.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the proposed schedule for member engagement in the rates estimates is adopted.

Matters for Information

PR60/14 Risk Register for HR, Communications and ICT

The Chief Executive submitted a report advising that Risk Registers for each of the HR, Communications and ICT working groups for the transitional period to 31 March 2015 had been prepared which identified high level risks. Members were asked to note and reflect on the Registers.

PR61/14 Charters and Borough Status Consultation

The Change Management Officer submitted for information a report on the DoE consultation on Charters and Status. This consultation is seeking comment on its proposals relating to district, borough and city status of the eleven new councils. The consultation document sets out proposed Departmental Regulations to facilitate those councils wishing to seek the continuation of or granting of new borough charters in respect of new local government districts. The committee was asked to note the receipt of the consultation document with comments to be submitted by 12 December 2014.

Councillor Reid stated that this is something that the Council should consider. Dungannon currently has borough status which is important to the residents and should support the document that has been brought forward. The Councillor further stated that members should not be put off because it is a Royal Charter. He stated that Darren Clarke was awarded Freedom of the Borough and this is something that should be retained.

Councillor Mallaghan did not think there was any great benefit and could see no merit, advantages or strengths that come along with being a borough. Councillor S McGuigan agreed with the comments and stated that a strong business case would have to be made. Councillor Mallaghan added that comments were nothing to do with being a Royal Charter but to do with what the people in the area get from being a Borough.

Councillor McLean stated that to put this in context the Council has a lot to do over the next few months and considering the workloads of officers this was not something that would add value at the moment and should be set aside and maybe considered when Council was up and running.

Councillor Molloy stated that Council should be concentrating on getting policy and procedures up and running so as to have a smooth transition of services come April 2015.

Councillor Glasgow asked if those that have received the Freedom of the Borough, which is an acknowledgement of outstanding achievement, and if the Council does not take on the charter would that be lost. The Member stated that this would be something that party colleagues would find insulting.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, stated that award was given in different times.

The Change Management Officer stated that consultation document outlines that existing charters will be annulled on April 2016 if not enacted.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the consultation be noted and the matter be revisited at a later date

IN COMMITTEE

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor Bateson and

Resolved That item P62/14 is taken in committee.

PR63/14 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____

B

Subject	Procure Occupational Health Services
Reporting Officer	Lead HR Officer

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	Report was brought to Policy & Resources Meeting on 4 November 2014. Members requested further clarity and information in relation to the current use of Occupational Health Services in the three Councils.

2	Background
2.1	This service is currently provided by the 3 Councils within Mid Ulster Cluster. Dungannon and Cookstown use "Independent Occupational Health", and Magherafelt use "Occupational Health Consultants".

3	Key Issues																												
3.1	<div>Clarity & Breakdown of use and purpose of current Occupational Health Services,</div> <table><tr><th colspan="4">Occupational Health Services – 12 Month Period April 2013 – March 2014</th></tr><tr><th>Occupational Health Nurse appointments</th><th>Dungannon & STBC</th><th>Cookstown DC</th><th>Magherafelt DC</th></tr><tr><td>Pre-Employment Health Assessments Screening of forms</td><td>77</td><td></td><td>5</td></tr><tr><td>Absence Management /Fitness for Work/Health Surveillance /Audio Testing</td><td>29</td><td>37</td><td></td></tr><tr><th>Occupational Health Physician appointments</th><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr><tr><td>Absence Management /Fitness for Work</td><td>5</td><td>3</td><td>13</td></tr><tr><td>Total for 12 Month Period</td><td>£ 5137.59</td><td>£2218.00</td><td>£2500.00</td></tr></table>	Occupational Health Services – 12 Month Period April 2013 – March 2014				Occupational Health Nurse appointments	Dungannon & STBC	Cookstown DC	Magherafelt DC	Pre-Employment Health Assessments Screening of forms	77		5	Absence Management /Fitness for Work/Health Surveillance /Audio Testing	29	37		Occupational Health Physician appointments				Absence Management /Fitness for Work	5	3	13	Total for 12 Month Period	£ 5137.59	£2218.00	£2500.00
Occupational Health Services – 12 Month Period April 2013 – March 2014																													
Occupational Health Nurse appointments	Dungannon & STBC	Cookstown DC	Magherafelt DC																										
Pre-Employment Health Assessments Screening of forms	77		5																										
Absence Management /Fitness for Work/Health Surveillance /Audio Testing	29	37																											
Occupational Health Physician appointments																													
Absence Management /Fitness for Work	5	3	13																										
Total for 12 Month Period	£ 5137.59	£2218.00	£2500.00																										

4	Resource Implications
4.1	Financial – The 3 Councils currently have a combined spend of approximately £10,000 per annum on this service.
4.2	<u>Human resources</u> N/A

4.3	<u>Assets and other implications</u>
	N/A

5	Other Considerations
5.1	N/A

6	Recommendations
6.1	Members are requested to approve the procurement of Occupational Health Services for Mid Ulster Council.

7	List of Documents Attached
7.1	N/A

C

Subject	Procurement of an Integrated HR & Payroll Solution
Reporting Officer	M Canavan, Lead HR Officer

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek approval to carry out a procurement exercise to purchase a fully integrated Time & Attendance, HR & Payroll software solution.

2	Background
2.1	All three councils use several bespoke systems to deliver HR, Payroll, time and attendance and absence management .In order to deliver a HR and Payroll service within the Council in an effective and efficient manner in the long term the Shadow council has made provision to address the convergence of these systems into an integrated solution for Mid Ulster.

3	Key Issues
3.1	<p>In moving forward into a single organisation across multiple sites the need to realise improvements in processes and integrating solutions where possible is a key corporate priority of the interim corporate plan.</p> <p>The continual operation of 8 stand-alone systems will prove difficult to manage. Whilst the convergence of existing systems (to reduce this to three) is being explored as a short term option, the strategic longer term objective is to establish a single solution rather than 3 separate systems.</p> <p>The advantages of an integrated HR system for Mid Ulster District Council are :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead to less data input i.e. data entered once • Remove the requirement for manually calculating 500 timesheets for weekly payroll • Online recruitment facility • Better reporting facilities on attendance management • Comprehensive database of employee life cycle • Timely and accurate information on a company's workforce • Greater operational control with better reporting and a higher rate of on-time project delivery • Better rota facilities to enable more effective and efficient use of manpower • Provide End to End HR processes <p>The solutions currently researched can be deployed in a modular methodology providing the functionality through integrated components in order to meet the needs of organisation.</p>

4	Resource Implications
4.1	<p><u>Financial</u> -</p> <p>The initial software costs has been budgeted (£50,000) within the ICT convergence budget. Annual software and support fees are likely to be circa £15,000 per annum based on a 5 year agreement for the council going forward. The support costs for maintaining the existing software systems currently cost £25,000 per annum.</p> <p>As the system becomes established additional modules will be introduced as required and as budget permits. As part the procurement the essential modules costs will be established through the initial procurement and implemented within 24 months.</p>
4.2	<u>Human resources</u> – Within existing resources – appoint a Project Lead to co-ordinate
4.3	<p><u>Assets and other implications</u> –</p> <p>Potential new hardware requirements i.e. swipe clocks & cards</p>

5	Other Considerations
5.1	The installation and implementation of an integrated solution with modular expansion would be phased over the next 24months.

6	Recommendations
6.1	Committee agrees to procure an integrated Time & Attendance, Payroll and HR software system.

7	List of Documents Attached
7.1	None

D

Subject	Conference and Seminar Attendance Policy: Members and Officers (Draft)
Reporting Officer	Change Manager

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To consider the adoption of a policy for the attendance of members and officers of Council at conferences and seminars.

2	Background
2.1	Central to the delivery of the suite of local government services to be provided by Mid Ulster District Council is the building and retention of knowledge and capacity amongst those with responsibility for recommending, deliberating and making decisions on how services should be delivered to its citizens. It is recognised that benefits can be gained from the attendance and participation of members and officers at conferences and seminars
2.2	Predecessor councils have arrangements in place for handling and processing the attendance of members and officers at conferences and seminars. Arrangements are now also required to be initiated for Mid Ulster Council. The draft policy as set out in appendix 1 sets out proposed arrangements for Mid Ulster Council to become applicable for members and officers.
2.3	Attendance and participation at conference and seminar is also considered essential to meet the continued development needs of members and officers of Mid Ulster Council. This policy has been developed to facilitate the administration of invitations received by Mid Ulster Council for members and officers to attend the same.

3	Key Issues
3.1	<p>The Policy has been drafted with the overriding aim of confirming the process for administering the attendance of members and officers at conferences and seminars through Council. In this context it sets out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the process for dealing with invitations received for conferences and seminars; (ii) confirms representation from Council at conferences and seminars;

3.2	<p>(iii) confirms entitlements, financial thresholds and requirements; (iv) sets the arrangements for record keeping; and (v) the management of finances set aside for conferences and seminars.</p> <p>The draft policy sets out the process for administering invitations to conferences and seminars making reference to 3 stages; consideration; attendance; and follow up & record maintenance. Key points include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • invitations will be considered by the relevant committee • full council will consider invitations subject to timescales • numbers attending shall be determined by the committee or council meeting considering the business • members will be allocated up to £750 per annum • allocations will include the whole cost such as travel and subsistence • unused allocations shall not be transferred or rolled over to future financial periods • all conference and seminar delegates should be prepared to provide a written report on the event if requested
-----	--

4	Resources
4.1	<u>Financial</u> – N/A
4.2	<u>Human</u> – N/A
4.3	<u>Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support</u> – N/A
4.4	<u>Other</u> – N/A

5	Other Considerations
5.1	The policy has been developed for the use of Mid Ulster Council and not for the use of either of the predecessor councils. Mid Ulster Council will however commence the application of this policy with immediate effect in advance of April 2015, subject to its adoption by council.

6	Recommendations
6.1	That consideration is given to the adoption of the policy.

7	List of Documents Attached
7.1	Appendix 1: Conference and Seminar Policy: Members and Officers (Draft)



**Conference and Seminar Attendance Policy:
Members and Officers**

Document Control			
Policy Owner	Philip Moffett, Change Manager, Mid Ulster DC		
Policy Author	Philip Moffett, Change Manager, Mid Ulster DC		
Version	v1.0 (DRAFT)		
Consultation	Transition Management Team	Yes / No	
	Trade Unions	Yes / No	
Equality Screened by		Date	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes / No	Date	
Approved By	Policy & Resources Committee	Date	
Adopted By	Council	Date	
Review Date		By Whom	
Circulation	Mid Ulster DC staff, Mid Ulster DC elected members		
Document Linkages			

CONTENTS PAGE

Paragraph	Description	Page Number
1.0	Intoduction	4
2.0	Policy Aim & Objectives	4
3.0	Policy Scope	4
4.0	Linkage to Corporate Plan	5
5.0	Procedure & Implementation	5
	5.2 Considering Invitations	5
	5.3 Conference & Seminar Attendance	6
	5.4 Follow up & Record Maintenace	7
6.0	Roles & Responsibilities	8
7.0	Impact Assessment	8
	7.1 Equality Screening & Impact	8
	7.2 Staff & Financial Resources	8
8.0	Support & Advice	9
9.0	Communication	9
10.0	Monitoring & Review Arrangements	9

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Central to the delivery of the suite of local government services provided by Mid Ulster District Council is the building and retention of knowledge and capacity amongst those with responsibility for recommending, deliberating and making decisions on how services should be delivered to its citizens.
- 1.2 Mid Ulster District Council recognises the benefits which can be brought to the organisation from the attendance and participation of its members (councillors) and officers at conferences and seminars. Attendance and participation at conferences and seminars, with particular reference to the delivery of local government services, provides opportunities for members and officers to continually inform and improve their knowledge to fulfill their duties.
- 1.3 Attendance and participation at conference and seminar is also considered essential to meet the continued development needs of members and officers of Mid Ulster District Council. This policy has been developed to facilitate the administration of invitations received by Mid Ulster District Council for members and officers to attend the same.

2.0 POLICY AIM & OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Policy Aim – To confirm the principles and process to facilitate the attendance of members and officers at conferences and seminars relevant to the functions of Mid Ulster District Council.
- 2.2 Policy Objectives -
 - Detail the process for dealing with invitations received for conferences and seminars through Council
 - Confirms representation from Council at individual conferences and seminars
 - Confirm entitlements, financial thresholds and requirements
 - Set the arrangements for record keeping
 - To manage financial resources set aside for conferences and seminars

3.0 POLICY SCOPE

- 3.1 This policy relates specifically to the attendance of members and officers of Mid Ulster District Council at conferences and seminars. It refers to how invitations will be administratively processed and considered by council to

determine representation and the minimum standards that will be expected to adhered to by all parties.

- 3.2. This policy does not specifically set out a step by step detailed process of how bookings will be made and by whom. These procedural matters will be developed and implemented by Democratic Services with the involvement of Council Departments.

4.0 LINKAGE TO CORPORATE PLAN

- 4.1 Referring to Mid Ulster District Council's Corporate Plan 2014-2015 this policy contributes towards the delivery of its corporate priority theme *Systems to Underpin and Deliver Services*. This is defined as having policies, procedures, ICT, contracts, management and organisational structures in place to facilitate the delivery of Council business.

5.0 PROCEDURE & IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1 This section sets out the procedure for administering and considering invitations received for conferences and seminars, whilst making reference to the principals which should be adhered to in applying the policy. The following paragraphs refer to members and officers.

5.2 Considering Invitations

- 5.2.1 Invitations will be considered by the relevant committee of council and in some cases full council seeking consent for the attendance of members and officers at all conferences and seminars. Conferences and seminar invitations will only be considered by full council if they cannot be practicably brought before the relevant committee due to timing constraints. Democratic Services will prepare reports, for consideration by the relevant committee and Council at respective monthly meetings, as determined by members, detailing all invitations received requesting representation from Mid Ulster District Council relevant to the forum making the consideration.
- 5.2.2 Where an officer has identified a conference or seminar relevant to their duties, to which they have the approval of their Head of Service to attend, the relevant Director shall forward the necessary documentation to Democratic Services in the required report format for consideration at the next available committee or council meeting. In all cases, approval for attendance must only be granted where attendance will contribute towards officer development needs to fulfill their Council duties. This will be included in the report provided

by Democratic Services for consideration and placed on the relevant committee or council agenda with the agreement of the Chairperson.

- 5.2.3 Officer and member attendance at all conferences and seminars irrespective if no charge is levied to attend should be brought forward for consideration of approval. Other expenses, inclusive of mileage, subsistence and other associated costs, may arise from attendance therefore necessitating the express approval of the relevant committee or full council to attend.
- 5.2.4 In agreeing member attendance the number attending any one conference or seminar shall be determined by the committee or council meeting considering the business. Members shall be nominated and approved to attend any conference or seminar under consideration. Where more nominations are received than persons permitted consensus shall be reached through discussion and agreement. Should consensus not be reached the matter shall be referred to Political Party Group Leaders for resolution. In determining attendance consideration shall be given to balancing cost with representation from Council. Where appropriate an officer may be delegated to attend a conference or seminar where it is agreed to nominate members to attend the same conference.
- 5.2.5 Each member shall be allocated up to £750 per annum as contribution towards conference and seminar costs. This figure will be agreed annually as part of Council's budget setting process and all members will be set the same ceiling of expenditure. These costs will be inclusive of the whole cost associated with attendance and participation to include for example travel, subsistence and the registration fee. Once a member has reached the set amount for the period they shall not be eligible to attend any further conferences and seminars until the next financial period. The only exception shall be when attendance will be cost neutral to the council. Unused allocations shall not be rolled over to subsequent financial periods.
- 5.2.6 Costs associated with officer attendance shall be met from within relevant Department and Service budgets. Expenditure shall be monitored by Directors with the assistance of their respective Heads of Service to ensure equitable expenditure amongst officers and to ensure budget management efficiency.

5.3 Conference & Seminar Attendance

- 5.3.1 Following agreement on representation at conferences and seminars considered, Democratic Services shall register those agreed to attend and make other arrangements as required to facilitate the attendance of members. Other arrangements may include accommodation and travel arrangements

should attendance require travel outside Northern Ireland. Council will only meet the cost of accommodation for the time period of the conference or seminar, or for the period the delegate is scheduled to be present should this be shorter than the full conference or seminar timetable.

- 5.3.2 Requests considered and agreed for officer attendance shall be the responsibility of the respective Department to make the necessary booking and registration arrangements. This should be undertaken in line with established procedures.
- 5.3.3 Where delegates (members and officers) incur necessary expenditure arising from their attendance and participation at a conference or seminar Council will only make reimbursements for reasonable expenditure on the provision of receipts in line with advised subsistence rates set by the Department of the Environment.
- 5.3.4 Claims being made for any expenditure incurred arising from conference or seminar attendance should be submitted with monthly Travel and Subsistence Claims. Receipts must be provided to substantiate all expenditure being claimed.

5.4 Follow up & Record Maintenance

- 5.4.1 All delegates attending a conference or seminar should be prepared to provide a written report to the relevant committee and Council on the outcome of the event with particular reference to Mid Ulster District Council, should this be requested.
- 5.4.2 The Chief Executive's Office working with Democratic Services shall keep and maintain a record of members registered to attend conferences and seminars throughout each financial period. This will be undertaken in association with Council's Finance Department. This will be in the form of a register and include the whole cost associated with attendance, in line with information required to be reported to NI Audit Office, Local Government Auditor.
- 5.4.3 The register will record expenditure on each member and be reported to Policy & Resources Committee on a quarterly basis.
- 5.4.3 Departments shall keep and maintain a record of officers registered to attend conference for budgetary and service management purposes.

6.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 6.1 **Democratic Services** is responsible for; reporting conference and seminar invitations to committees/ council requesting representation; making bookings for members; receiving reports to be considered at committee/ council meetings from Department Directors recommending officer attendance at notified conference and seminars; and informing Directors on the outcome of recommendations put to committee/ council.
- 6.2 **Chief Executive's Office** is responsible for maintaining a register recording members registered to attend conferences and seminars and associated costs incurred by each member per annum.
- 6.3 **Members** are required to; consider and determine representation at conferences and seminars; be prepared to provide a written report on their attendance at a conference or seminar should this be requested; and annually set the maximum amount allocated to each member per annum for conferences and seminars as part of the council's budget setting process.
- 6.4 **Directors** are required to; provide reports as necessary recommending officer attendance at conference or seminars; ensure arrangements are in place to make officer bookings and registrations; ensure records are kept within Departments on officer attendance; and monitor expenditure on officer attendance at conferences and seminars.
- 6.5 **Heads of Service** are required to; consider requests made by staff within their service for attendance at conferences and seminars; and provide recommendations to their respective Director on the attendance of staff at conferences and seminars.

7.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

7.1 Equality Screening & Impact

7.1.1 *(To be commenced)*

7.2 Staff & Financial Resources

- 7.2.1 No issues have been identified which will impact on the delivery of council business as a result of this policy being implemented. Financial provision will be made annually as part of budget setting processes to facilitate the delivery of this policy

8.0 SUPPORT AND ADVICE

- 8.1 Advice and guidance on the implementation of this policy should be sought from the policy owner as detailed on page 1.

9.0 COMMUNICATION

- 9.1 Democratic Services under the direction of the Chief Executive shall be responsible for the communication and understanding of this policy amongst members and relevant staff.
- 9.2 All Members and Directors shall be provided with a copy of this policy. Directors to make arrangements to ensure it is communicated amongst relevant staff and Human Resources integrate it into employ inductions, where relevant.

10.0 MONITORING & REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS

- 10.1 Implementation of this policy will be routinely monitored and a formal review undertaken 24 months from its effective date.

E

Subject	Consultation response re draft Local Government (Transferred Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014
Reporting Officer	Lead Officer for Finance

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	The Department of Environment (the Department) is consulting on the proposed methodology and associated draft Regulations for the distribution to councils of funding to support the transfer of functions from central to local government as part of the Review of Public Administration (RPA) process.
1.2	This report seeks Members comments on the proposed response by Mid Ulster District Council to the consultation exercise.

2	Background
2.1	The RPA process will result in district councils receiving additional powers and assuming new responsibilities from central government departments for the delivery of a range of defined functions.
2.2	It has been previously agreed by the Transfer of Functions Working Group that the transfer should be rates neutral at the point of transfer. However, although this principle has been accepted by the Department, it is proving difficult to translate this principle into an agreed budget.
2.3	The new councils collectively commissioned the consultancy firm Deloitte to undertake a due diligence exercise to ensure that the funding proposed to be transferred from central to local government would be sufficient to ensure a rates neutral transfer. Deloitte, however, have been unable to give categorical assurance on the matter, stating instead that certain aspects of the funding transfer would appear to be based on the premise of budget neutrality (from a central government perspective) as opposed to rates neutrality.
2.4	Although discussions continue in relation to the quantification of the funds to be transferred, it is nonetheless necessary to also agree a funding mechanism.

3	Key Issues
3.1	A rates neutral budget has yet to be agreed and, although a figure will be determined by the Department, there will be no mechanism to review and/or rectify the adequacy of the funds to be transferred to local government, either as a sector or at an individual council level.
3.2	The proposed mechanism has been suggested on the basis that it will protect the funding from reduction by the Department in future years, as would be the

	<p>case if the funding were to be provided by a grant akin to the Rates Support Grant. Such a mechanism is used to deliver the present De-rating Grant, which is a compensatory payment for certain hereditaments that are exempt from rates. That said, the Minister for the Environment has recently written to council Chief Executives to advise them that, due to budget pressures, he may consider cutting the De-rating Grant in 2015/16.</p>
3.3	<p>The proposed methodology does offer some degree of stability to the funding process, in that, technically the NAV (Net Annual Value) attributed to each council should be incapable of amendment in the normal course of events. However, it should be noted that Section 28 of the Local Government Finance Act 2011 does make provision for reduction of both the Rates Support Grant and De-rating Grant, albeit this would be considered to be a fairly unusual event.</p>

4	Resources
4.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The funding to be transferred from central to local government and the apportionment between individual councils has yet to be finalised.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Human</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.3	<p><u>Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support</u></p> <p>Deloitte have been commissioned by the eleven district councils to undertake a due diligence review on the proposed transferring functions grant. This review is not yet complete but the Council has previously approved the commission of Deloitte.</p>
4.4	<p><u>Other</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

5	Other Considerations
5.1	N/A

6	Recommendations
6.1	<p>That Members recommend the attached response to the Department's consultation on the proposed Local Government (Transferring Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015</p>

7	List of Documents Attached
7.1	Draft Local Government (Transferring Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015
7.2	Draft letter of response



Department of the
Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk

The draft Local Government (Transferred Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Consultation Document

20 October 2014

THE DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (TRANSFERRED FUNCTIONS GRANT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2015

This Consultation Document seeks views on the draft regulations attached to the paper, including the amendments incorporated and the format of the consolidation.

Comments should be sent by 12 January 2015 to:

Local Government Policy Division 1

Department of the Environment

4th Floor, Causeway Exchange

1-7 Bedford Street

Town Parks

Belfast, BT2 7EG

or by email to:

piers.dalgarno@doeni.gov.uk

The following person will be able to answer queries in relation to the draft regulations:

Name	E-mail	Telephone
Piers Dalgarno	piers.dalgarno@doeni.gov.uk	028 9082 3377

Crown Copyright 2014

This material may be freely reproduced except for sale or advertising purposes.

CONTENTS

	Page
Purpose of the Consultation Document	1
Background	1
Details of the Proposals	2
Human Rights	4
Equality	4
Regulatory Impact Assessment	4
Rural Proofing	5
Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations	5
Alternative format	5
Consultation	5
Annex A - Functions transferring from central government departments to local government on 1 April 2015	7
Annex B – The Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations	9
Annex C – List of Consultees	11

THE DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT (TRANSFERRED FUNCTIONS GRANT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2015

PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1. The Department of the Environment is seeking views from consultees on its proposals in relation to the introduction of the Transferred Functions Grant. The Transferred Functions Grant is the mechanism by which those functions that are transferring from central to local government on 1 April 2015 will be financed post transfer.
2. The attached draft Local Government (Transferred Functions Grant) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 (“the Regulations”) will allow the Department of the Environment, in conjunction with the Department of Finance and Personnel, to make the necessary arrangements for the funding required to be transferred to district councils on an annual basis.

BACKGROUND

3. In April 2013, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed a package of functions to be transferred from central government departments to local government, as part of the reorganisation of local government in Northern Ireland. The functions that will be transferred from central government to local government on 1 April 2015 are set out in Annex A.

4. The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (the Act) received Royal Assent on 12 May 2014, introducing the legislative framework for Northern Ireland's 11 new councils.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSALS

5. Work has been carried out by those departments that are transferring functions and the Transfer of Functions Working Group to assess and verify the resources (budgets, staff, assets and liabilities) attached to those new functions and powers to transfer from central to local government.
6. Indicative figures were provided by each department at the end of July 2014 and will be followed up with actual and final allocations by the end of October 2014 to enable councils to strike a new district rate. These final figures will be based on further cost analyses by Departments.
7. Separately, the Finance Working Group was tasked with considering the mechanism for transferring the funding to local government. There was agreement that the mechanism should provide local government with as much financial independence and flexibility as possible. Funding the transferred functions by direct grants from individual departments would have introduced public expenditure issues around control bidding, monitoring and accounting. Councils would have had to bid to central government for the funding required to carry out the functions on a regular basis and departments would have remained accountable for the spend. This would have created an ongoing dependency and an unnecessary level of bureaucracy that would have been inefficient

and against one of the key reform objectives – to create strong local government.

The option selected involves creating a supplementary rating grant which will bolster the tax base in each of the new 11 council areas and provide a relatively settled and sustainable funding source.

8. Once the total sum due to each of the 11 new councils to cover the costs of transferring functions is determined, the Department of Finance and Personnel will create a “derived NAV” figure for each council. This derived NAV, when multiplied by the district rate for each council, will equal the sum due to that council. The NAV values will only be able to be identified once councils have struck their rate for the 2015/16 year.
9. The schedule to the Regulations sets out the amount by which the total of the rateable net annual values of the hereditaments in the district of each council is increased (that is, its derived NAV) in the first year in order to meet the funding requirement of the transferred functions. In future years, the amount each council receives will be calculated as the derived NAV (as set in year 1) multiplied by each individual council’s district rate.

Question 1.

Do you foresee any practical or administrative difficulties with these arrangements?

Question 2.

The derived NAV will be set in year 1 and remain constant in each year after that. In year 2, and each year thereafter, the funding to be provided to each council will be the derived NAV multiplied by each council's district rate. Do you agree with this method of calculating the allocation of funding?

Human Rights

10. The Department believes that the proposals are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

Equality

11. Under the terms of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department carried out screening for equality impact and is satisfied that the proposed legislation will not lead to discriminatory or negative differential impact on any of the section 75 groups. A copy of the screening form can be viewed on the Department's website:

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/information/equality_unit/policies_screened_out_-_january_to_march_2014.htm

Regulatory Impact Assessment

12. The Department has not conducted a regulatory impact assessment as the proposed legislation does not give rise to any associated costs or savings on business, charities, social economy enterprises or the voluntary sector.

Rural Proofing

13. The Department has assessed the proposed measures and considers that there would be no differential impact in rural areas or on rural communities.

Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations

14. The Department may publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read Annex B on the confidentiality of consultations. It gives guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

Alternative format

15. This document is available in alternative formats. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

Consultation

16. Comments should be sent by 12 January 2015 to Piers Dalgarno at the address below or by e-mail to:
piers.dalgarno@doeni.gov.uk
17. If you have any queries in relation to the proposals, you should contact:
Piers Dalgarno
piers.dalgarno@doeni.gov.uk
Tel: 02890823377

18. This consultation document is being circulated to persons and bodies listed in Annex C and is also available to view at:

http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local_government/local_government_consultations.htm

Local Government Policy Division

Causeway Exchange

Level 4

1-7 Bedford Street

Town Parks

Belfast

BT2 7EG

Functions transferring from central government departments to local government on 1 April 2015

Planning

- Local development plan functions
- Development control and enforcement

Roads

- Off street parking (except Park and Ride)

Urban regeneration and community development

- Functions associated with physical development (e.g. environmental improvement schemes)
- Area based regeneration (such as Neighbourhood Renewal)
- Some community development programmes for the voluntary and community sectors

Housing

- Registration of houses in multiple occupation
- Housing unfitness responsibilities, including repair and demolition notices

Local Economic Development (transfer from Invest NI)

- Start a Business Programme and Enterprise Shows
- Youth Entrepreneurship (such as Prince's Trust and Shell Livewire)
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Investing for Women
- Neighbourhood Renewal funding relating to enterprises initiatives

Local Tourism

- Small scale tourism accommodation development
- Providing business support including business start-up advice along with training and delivery of customer care schemes
- Providing advice to developers on tourism policies and related issues

Other

- Some elements of the delivery of the EU Rural Development Programme
- Authority to Spot List to enable councils to add a building to the statutory list on a temporary basis, subject to ratification by the Department of the Environment
- Authority to draw up local lists of buildings that are of architectural and/or historical interest
- Armagh County Museum
- Local water recreational facilities
- Local sports (greater involvement of local government in local sports decisions)
- Donaghadee Harbour

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations

1. The Department may publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.
2. The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity, should be made public or be treated as confidential.
3. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:
 - the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information

in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;

- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

4. For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see website at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>).

List of Consultees

All Northern Ireland New Councils

Association of Local Government Finance Officers

Local Government Auditor

Local Government Staff Commission

NI Assembly / Committee for the Environment

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

Society of Local Authority Chief Executives

Local Government Chief Executives Group

XX December 2014

Mr P Dalgarno
Local Government Policy Division
Causeway Exchange
Level 4
1 – 7 Bedford Street
Town Parks
BELFAST
BT2 7EG

Dear Mr Dalgarno,

**The draft Local Government (Transferred Functions Grant) Regulations
(Northern Ireland) 2015**

I refer to your letter dated 20 October 2014 in relation to the above.

I am pleased to confirm that Council considered the draft Regulations at its meeting on Thursday, 18 December 2014 and made the following comments.

Firstly Council is pleased to have been offered the opportunity to comment on the draft Regulations and trusts that its response will be useful in the finalisation of same.

Generally Council is satisfied with the proposal that any arrangement put in place to ensure that councils should be removed from the uncertainty of bidding each year for funding, subsequent monitoring and accounting.

In relation to the two questions posed in the consultation document Council would reply as follows:

Question 1

Do you foresee any practical or administrative difficulties with these arrangements?

The arrangements are fundamentally based on the agreement of a budget to be transferred which will allow the functions to be delivered on a rates neutral basis. Unfortunately engagement to date with the Department and the consultants (Deloitte) appointed to perform a due diligence exercise has failed to produce a budget which can be agreed as rates neutral.

Consequently Council must consider the possibility that the ultimate budget determined by the Department may not be rates neutral. In those circumstances Council would have to seek additional funding from the ratepayer. This would only be possible by including an estimate of the relevant amount of underfunding in the rates estimates process, which concludes with the striking of the rate by the prescribed date of 15 February 2015.

Consequently although Council recognises that it is unlikely and certainly not the intention of either the Department or councils, as the proposed process necessarily requires the establishment of the derived NAV post Council setting its rate, it is possible that councils would not be in a position to confirm the adequacy of the transferring funding until after the

rate is struck. This is why councils have been requesting a review of the funding allocation at some time in the future.

In reply to the above question therefore, Council would simply ask the Department to note that there continues to be significant issues impacting on councils' confidence in the Department's ability to quantify and agree a budget allocation which will be rates neutral prior to the rates estimates process and that, in the event that this situation were to arise, councils may not be in a position to accurately budget for some elements of the transferred functions such as car park maintenance and repairs.

Question 2

The derived NAV will be set in year 1 and remain constant in each year after that. In year 2, and each year thereafter, the funding to be provided to each council will be the derived NAV multiplied by each council's district rate. Do you agree with this method of allocating the funding?

In principle Council is satisfied with the proposed methodology. However, notwithstanding the issues referred to in Council's response to question 1 (above), Council would point out that any inadequacies in the original budget transferred will be compounded in future years and associated deficits cross subsidised by other Council activities and ratepayers generally if the methodology is implemented.

Council would therefore simply ask the Department to consider the issue of cross subsidisation as it is Council's opinion that, as a general principle, public sector organisations should not knowingly cross subsidise services.

Should you wish to discuss any of the above in more detail please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Anthony Tohill
Chief Executive

F

Subject	Web site and social media convergence
Reporting Officers	Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To endorse the approach for the convergence of existing digital media channels (web sites and social media accounts).

2	Background
2.1	The use of multiple and unique sub-brands, whether in visual identities or through separate digital platforms, creates a disconnect between the individual product, service, facility or function and the 'parent' organisation. This often translates into a loss of positive linkages between the organisation and its customers, as well as misunderstandings and misperceptions about what an organisation is and what its responsibilities are.
2.2	By establishing and applying a new, strong brand across the organisation, the Council is seeking to minimise brand dilution and optimise the positive associations and impact on its reputation which can be derived from its complete range of services, functions and responsibilities.
2.3	The multiple web sites and social media channels in operation across the existing councils were highlighted in the interim Communications Strategy (2014-2015), together with the corresponding brand dilution issues and reputational risks.
2.4	With work now underway to create a new Council web site, an approach has been developed to manage the convergence of existing web and social media presences.

3	Key Issues
3.1	Between the existing councils, 26 separate web and social media sites have been identified to date. As well as the brand dilution issues, there is a reputational risk to a continuation of multiple sites with multiple managers of content (e.g. the consistency and tone used as the 'voice' of the Council, corporate knowledge, requirement to plan content, react to content, to engage appropriately).
3.2	A significant reduction in sites is required to allow a strategic approach to be developed to the management of the new Council's web and social media presence.
3.3	The new approach proposes that, with the exceptions cited below, all existing web sites will be replaced by the new council web site and existing social media

	sites phased out as the council's new social media channels become live and gain momentum.
3.4	Recognised exceptions to this corporate approach include local authority-run commercial theatre and arts spaces or distinct visitor attractions. The suggested approach, therefore, would allow the Burnavon, Ranfurly House and, in the future, the Heaney Centre, to maintain separate web and social media channels, but with the creation and maintenance of clear linkages to Mid Ulster District Council through appropriate textual and graphic branding, and content planning.
3.5	Guth, the existing Irish language site, should remain in place and be considered in the context of the Council's development and implementation of a language policy.

4	Resources
4.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>The reduction in sites will result in a corresponding reduction in web hosting and registration fees.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Human</u></p> <p>Responsibility for content management of digital channels lies with the marketing communications function in the Council's new structure and a reduction in sites will also mean, therefore, that staff time elsewhere in the organisation will be released.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.4	<p><u>Other</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

5	Other Considerations
	None

6	Recommendations
6.1	That the approach to the convergence of digital media channels is endorsed.

7	List of Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Existing web and social media sites

Appendix 1

Existing web and social media sites

	Web	Facebook	Twitter
Cookstown District Council	√	√	√
Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council	√	-	-
Magherafelt District Council	√	√	√
The Burnavon	√	√	√
Cookstown Leisure Centre	-	√	-
Mid Ulster Sports Arena	√	√	-
Moneymore Recreation Centre	-	√	√
Ballyronan Marina & Caravan Park	-	√	-
Ranfurly House	√	√	√
Meadowbank Sports Arena	-	√	-
Evolve Fitness	-	-	√
Sperrintrekkers	√	√	-
Guth	√	√	-
Davagh Forest Trails	-	√	-

G

Subject **Customer Service Policy**

Reporting Officers **Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager**

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To consider the introduction of a Customer Service Policy for Mid Ulster District Council.

2	Background
2.1	As an organisation committed to a customer-focussed approach to its work, the Council requires a Customer Service Policy and associated procedures, including those for handling complaints, which supports this commitment and communicates the standards expected from both staff and customers.
2.2	The Policy has been created to reflect key elements contained in the Customer Service Excellence Standard and the 'framework for effective complaint handling' which is recommended by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman.

3	Key Issues
3.1	The policy seeks to create an organisational culture which focuses on the needs of customers, both internal and external, in the design and delivery of services, which values customer views and will listen to and act upon them.
3.2	The adoption of a positive customer service ethos is highlighted as being key, with the emphasis on the need to build an understanding of customer service values among all employees and to ensure they demonstrate those values in the behaviours and interaction with customers.
3.3	A set of customer service principles and associated complaints principles are interpreted through customer service and complaints standards and procedures. These include the standards and procedures for personal contact in public reception areas, written (including electronic) contact and telephone contact.
3.4	
3.5	How to complain, the definition of a complaint, together with the informal and formal stages of dealing with complaints are also detailed.

4	Resources
4.1	<u>Financial</u> N/A
4.2	<u>Human</u> Customer service training for all front line staff will be incorporated into the DoE funded Capacity Building Plan for January to March 2015.
4.3	<u>Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support</u> N/A
4.4	<u>Other</u> N/A

5	Other Considerations
	None

6	Recommendations
6.1	That the Customer Service Policy is adopted.

7	List of Documents Attached
	Customer Service Policy

Customer Service Policy

Document Control			
Policy / Procedure Owner (name, role & section)	Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager		
Policy/ Procedure Author (name, role & section)	Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager		
Version	v1.0		
Consultation	<div>Transition Management Team Yes</div> <div>Trade Unions No</div>		
Equality Screened by		Date	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes / No	Date	
Approved By	Policy & Resources Committee	Date	
Adopted By	Council	Date	
Review Date	April 2016	By Whom	MCM
Circulation	Mid Ulster District Council staff		
Document Linkages	Code of Conduct for Councillors Code of Conduct for Council Employees Communication Strategy Communication Policy Freedom of Information Policy Language Policy Uniform Policy		

Contents

Paragraph	Description	Page Number
1.0	Intoduction	4
2.0	Policy Aims & Objectives	4
3.0	Policy Scope	4
4.0	Linkage to Corporate Plan	5
5.0	Roles and Responsibilities	5
6.0	Procedure and Implementation	5
7.0	Impact Assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Equality Screening and Impact Assessment○ Staff and Financial Resources	7
8.0	Support and Advice	8
9.0	Communication	8
10.0	Monitoring and Review Arrangements	8
	Appendix 1	9

1.0 Introduction

As an organisation which is primarily service-based and which has increasing responsibility for the planning, design and delivery of services which impact significantly all aspects of the lives of local people, Mid Ulster District Council is committed to adopting a customer-focussed approach to its work.

A corporate Customer Services Policy will establish the principles to which the Council is committed, together with the procedures and standards for staff, through which the Council expects to demonstrate excellence in customer service.

The policy has been created to reflect the elements within the Customer Service Excellence ® Standard. It also includes the principles, procedures and standards for managing complaints, which have been developed in line with the Northern Ireland Ombudsman's document 'A framework for effective complaint handling'. The framework is recommended for any new public body when creating a complaints scheme and the Ombudsman will use it to assess the adequacy of an organisation's response when considering complaints made to his office.

2.0 Policy Aims & Objectives

The Customer Service Policy aims to create an organisational culture which:

- focuses on the needs of customers in the design and delivery of services, whether internal or external
- seeks, listens and acts on the views of its customers
- values customer views and complaints as important sources of information for putting things right and as opportunities to improve service delivery.

The policy objectives are to:

- promote a positive customer service ethos across the organisation
- ensure staff understand customer service values and demonstrate them in their behaviours and interaction with all customers
- develop appropriate and measurable standards across all customer access channels
- ensure that meaningful engagement and consultation with customers takes place
- ensure that the results of engagement, consultation and feedback are used to influence strategic and operational decisions.

3.0 Policy Scope

Everyone with whom the Council comes into contact, externally and internally, is a customer and therefore the Customer Service Policy affects residents, visitors, other organisations across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, and all Council staff.

The policy and its procedures apply in all circumstances except where:

- other procedures are prescribed by law
- legislative or other requirements take precedence.

The policy does not apply to complaints outside the definition provided in the Complaints Procedure at Appendix 1 or to social media engagement which is managed via the Council's Communication Strategy.

4.0 Linkage to Corporate Plan

In its Corporate Plan for the transitional period, the Council has prioritised the development and implementation of 'systems to underpin and deliver services' and the Customer Services Policy is designed to support this stated objective and to contribute to the smooth transfer and harmonisation of services.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

The Customer Services Policy acknowledges that good customer service is dependent upon a commitment from the Council as a corporate body and is the responsibility of all Council employees.

- Elected members will endorse the policy, its implementation and procedures.
- The Senior Management Team will demonstrate its commitment to the policy by adopting the customer service values and principles, promoting them among their Heads of Service and through them, the wider staff, monitoring performance and recommending change to improve customer service.
- Heads of Service will adopt and promote the customer service values and principles, ensure procedures are applied consistently across their areas of service responsibility, review standards and performance, encourage staff training and, based on customer feedback and experience, recommend developments and improvements to the Senior Management Team.
- The Organisational Development Department and Marketing Communications Service will support the dissemination of the customer service ethos throughout the organisation, particularly through a planned customer service training and development programme.
- All staff will demonstrate the customer service values and principles through their positive behaviour and professional approach to the delivery of their services and by participating in on-going training and development opportunities.

6.0 Procedure and Implementation

The policy is subject to a set of core customer service principles and a complementary set of principles for managing complaints.

Customer Service Principles

- We will design and deliver our services around our customers, rather than business processes.
- We will be professional, helpful and courteous at all times.
- We will be open, transparent and proactive in our information provision.
- We will act with fairness, integrity and impartiality, according equal respect to all.
- We will use a mix of contact channels for our customers to help them reach us in a way which best suits their needs.
- We will maintain our standards across all customer contact channels and at all stages of the customer journey.
- We will undertake regular, appropriate and effective consultation with our customers to identify their needs, to inform our decisions and improve our services and performance.
- We will monitor our performance, evaluate and act on the outcomes.
- We will seek to be efficient in our customer service, using technology appropriately to improve the flexibility and accessibility of customer contact and reducing avoidable contact for our customers.
- We will develop a high standard of customer service by investing in our staff training and development and engaging with them on customer service issues.
- We will provide and maintain safe and clean facilities for our customers, minimising risk of injury to our customers and our staff.

Complaints Principles

The Council, in line with its commitment to providing high standards of customer care, and to listening and acting on the views of its customers, values complaints as an important source of information for putting things right and as an opportunity to improve service delivery.

In doing so, the Council is committed to the following principles for effective complaint handling:

- Our complaints procedure will be customer-focussed, clear, accessible and simple.
- Our complaints handling will be fair and impartial.

- Our complaints handling will be timely, sensitive, effective and consistent.
- We will be accountable, acknowledge and apologise for our mistakes and put things right whenever possible.
- We will strive to use complaints as an opportunity to deliver continuous improvement in the design and delivery of our services.

These principles have been used to create a set of customer service and complaints handling standards, together with procedures for managing customer services and complaints across existing customer contact channels.

The Northern Ireland Ombudsman considers it good practice to limit any complaints procedure to two or, at most, three formal stages with the final stage being undertaken by the Chief Executive and this is the approach reflected in the Council's procedure.

The Ombudsman also encourages informal resolution as a means of achieving a timely solution, while cautioning against a lack of formality which may lead to poor or no record-keeping and, therefore, no opportunity to learn from the complaint or to manage the complaint should it progress to the formal stages. This is also reflected in the complaints handling procedures.

Standards of behaviour for customers of the Council also form part of these procedures.

The standards and procedures are detailed in the Customer Service procedural document at Appendix 1.

Implementation will be via a rolling customer service training programme, featuring both general and bespoke elements, and tailored appropriately for staff.

This policy will be published in hard copy and on-line, and promoted appropriately across the Council's communication channels.

Procedures for recording customer service data and for monitoring adherence to customer service standards will be developed.

7.0 Impact Assessment

- Equality screening and impact assessment

The policy will be equality screened using Mid Ulster District Council's Equality Scheme when agreed.

- Staff and financial resources

Initial training for all front line staff will be provided and financed via the Capacity Building Programme (January 2015 – March 2015) and thereafter via an on-going customer service training programme.

Implementation of the policy requires the release of staff across the organisation to attend core customer service training, with regular refresher training for key customer-facing staff.

8.0 Support and Advice

For further information about the policy, please contact Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager.

9.0 Communication

The policy will be communicated internally using a range of appropriate internal communication methods, with external communication via traditional print and digital channels.

The policy will also form part of the induction process for all new staff.

10.0 Monitoring and Review Arrangements

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored using feedback from those staff involved in its implementation and data collated on performance against standards.

Formal review, with any appropriate recommendations for change, will take place 1 year after implementation.

Appendix 1

Customer Service Standards & Procedures

Please note that procedures apply in all circumstances except where other procedures are prescribed by law or legislative or other requirements take precedence, for example, under the Freedom of Information Act.

Council Facilities: Public Reception Areas

In principle, any council building which is open to the public is a potential customer access point for council services.

Public reception areas in these facilities are generally multi-functional, where staff meet and greet visitors, provide telephone answering services, signpost to other organisations, deliver services directly and support other services.

They are, therefore, prime customer facing points requiring a well-trained and knowledgeable staff.

Customer facing staff working in public reception areas will:

- wear the agreed corporate uniform.
- wear the agreed corporate name badge.
- greet every customer.
- give priority to those customers present in the reception area over telephone answering, dealing with other issues or dealing with staff.
- not use personal mobile phones at their work station, except in cases of emergency.

Council staff who do not work in public reception areas but who interact or transact business with customers in those spaces, will give priority to dealing with those customers and will adhere to the principles, procedures and standards in the Customer Service policy.

Council staff who do not work in public reception areas will only spend time in those areas and with the reception-based staff when they are dealing with work-related issues.

Telephone Answering

The telephone remains an important tool for customers contacting the Council, and is cited as a preferred method when making service enquiries. Maintaining a high standard of customer telephone contact across the organisation is, therefore, essential to perceptions of the Council as a customer-focussed organisation.

- All staff will aim to answer phone calls within 20 seconds.
- All staff will answer the phone to an external caller by saying good morning, good afternoon, good evening, followed by the council/department/service name as appropriate, followed by their first name and a phrase, such as 'can I help you?' or 'how can I help you?'.
- All staff will endeavour to deal with customer queries and requests directly and will only transfer a call to another member of staff if the caller specifically requests to speak to a named officer or if they do not have the information required.
- Where a caller wishes to speak to a member of staff who is unavailable, the staff member dealing with the call must always offer to help, take a message or, if applicable, provide a mobile telephone number.
- If a member of staff is on leave, the call should be transferred to another nominated member of staff who will be able to deal with the issue or query.
- If a call cannot be dealt with directly or transferred to an appropriate officer for response, a message should record the caller's contact details and sufficient information about the subject of the call. Staff should avoid telling a customer that another member of staff is sick, at lunch, on a tea break or busy and should not ask a customer to ring back.
- Where an issue or query raised by telephone cannot be dealt with immediately, the responsible officer will provide a reply as soon as possible, adhering to the response times for written communication, but recognising that telephone contact is expected to be, and should be, considerably more rapid.
- Where a caller contacts the Council about a service, facility or responsibility of another organisation, all staff will provide a 'signposting' service, providing points of contact for the other organisation whenever possible.
- Telephone messages must be communicated in a timely manner.
- Where voice mail is used for 'out of office' cover, the member of staff must record an appropriate greeting and must respond to messages in a timely manner or ensure messages are passed to another appropriate member of staff for prompt call back.
- Voice mail should not be used as 'out of office' cover for extended periods of time. Calls should be diverted to an appropriate extension.
- The use of speakerphones should be avoided and when used, customers must be informed they are on speaker and who else is present.

Written Communication

Any letter or email communication is accepted by the recipient as being from 'the Council' and therefore all care must be taken to ensure that content, language and grammar are correct and the tone of the correspondence is suitable.

While often considered more informal, particularly when used internally, email communication should adhere to the same standards as traditional letters.

As well as the standards below, written communication will also follow guidance contained in the Communications Policy, specifically those parts relating to the use of the Council's brand, font type and size, and the procedure for managing requests for information in alternative formats, including languages other than English.

- All letters issued by council officers will be issued on the official Mid Ulster District Council letterhead.
- Where hard copy information which does not require an accompanying letter is being issued by post an official Mid Ulster District Council compliment slip should be used.
- In formal written correspondence, the Council will be referred to as Mid Ulster District Council.
- In all written communication, the first name and surname of the officer signing the correspondence will be used, together with job title. Contact details, including direct dial telephone numbers and email address, where applicable, will be provided to ensure customers have an easily identifiable point of contact. Normally, formal correspondence will be signed by a senior member of staff (Director, Head of Service or other officer designated by a Director).
- Standard phrases to close letters will be used as appropriate, that is 'yours sincerely' or 'yours faithfully'. When appropriate, officers may use less formal closing phrases, such as 'kind regards' or 'best wishes'. Phrases such as 'yours in sport' are not to be used.
- All staff with a '@midulstercouncil.org' email address must use the standard email template, including the agreed signature template.
- Out of office automatic email response must be enabled where a member of staff will be absent for more than 1 working day. The out of office message must provide an alternative point of contact for enquiries and the agreed point of contact for anyone making a request under the Freedom of Information Act, Environmental Information Regulations or Data Protection Act.
- All correspondence by letter received by the Council will be acknowledged within 3 working days, unless a full response is to be issued in the interim period. Acknowledgements should be issued by email whenever possible.

- All external correspondence received by email will be acknowledged within 1 working day, unless a full response is to be issued in the interim period.
- All correspondence will receive a response within 15 working days. Where a response cannot be issued within the 15 working day timeframe, the Council will contact the customer to provide an explanation and a new target response time.
- When appropriate, a response to written correspondence can be made by telephone or in person, in which case a file note should be made and retained to record details of the contact, including date, time and outcome.

Councillors routinely receive written correspondence, by letter, by email and via on-line channels and routinely respond in their capacity as individual elected members.

- Where an elected member receives correspondence relating to Council business in an official capacity (as Chair/Presiding Councillor, Vice Chair/Deputy Presiding Councillor or Chair of a Committee), the appropriate senior council officer will, on request, assist in providing information to facilitate a response which reflects the corporate position or, if requested, draft a response.

Standards For Our Customers

We are committed to providing a high quality service that meets the needs of our customers. In return, we expect certain standards from our customers:

- We expect our customers to treat all of our staff with the respect that they themselves would wish to receive.
- We do not expect our customers to threaten, physically or verbally abuse any of our staff.
- In the event that we make a mistake, we will always try to make amends. Abuse of staff in these or any other circumstances does not help any situation. During a telephone call, should such abuse reach an unacceptable level, staff will politely end the conversation. In person-to-person circumstances staff will remove themselves from the situation and call for assistance if required. All incidents of abusive behaviour will be recorded.
- We expect all our customers to co-operate with any reasonable instructions or requests from our staff.
- Our customers will not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors or staff.

Complaints Standards & Procedures

Definition of a complaint

In line with the Ombudsman's definition, the Council considers a complaint to be:

'Any oral or written expression of dissatisfaction by any person, however made, about the service, actions or inactions of the Council or its officers which requires a response.'

This definition excludes requests for a Council service, information requests or appeals to a tribunal. It also excludes any complaints which are governed by other legislative processes or have distinct or separate mechanisms to handle complaints (e.g. internal grievance and disciplinary policies).

Who can make a complaint

The definition of a complaint allows 'any person' to express their dissatisfaction.

On occasions when the 'aggrieved' party may be incapable of making a complaint (a minor or person suffering from an illness or other incapacity), the Council will accept a complaint made on their behalf on receipt of a letter of authorisation or power of attorney.

At any stage the customer may seek the advice and / or support of their local Councillor or MP in dealing with a complaint against the Council. Councillors should make their constituent aware of this procedure, and complaints passed on by them will be processed in accordance with it.

Employees may also use the complaints process to make a complaint about services or actions of the Council which they experience as a customer. Complaints relating to their employment with the Council will be dealt with via the relevant internal procedure.

How to complain

Complaints can be made in person, by telephone, by email, by post and on-line.

In person: at any staffed council facility.

By telephone: 03000 132 132

By email: info@midulstercouncil.org

In writing: Council offices, Burn Road, Cookstown; Council offices, Circular Road, Dungannon; Council offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt.

On-line: www.midulstercouncil.org

Informal stage

Where possible, the Council will aim to resolve complaints informally at the point of service through direct and immediate engagement with the complainant.

Formal stage

Stage 1: A complaint is considered by the relevant service and a response issued by the relevant Head of Service.

Stage 2: If the complainant feels the complaint has not been resolved adequately and is unhappy with the outcome of Stage 1, the complainant may ask for the complaint to be referred to the relevant Director (Planning Manager where the complaint refers to planning) for review and response.

Stage 3: If the complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome of Stage 3, the complaint may ask for the complaint to be referred to the Chief Executive or the Chief Executive's nominee who will review the investigation and issue a final response.

A complainant who is dissatisfied with the outcome of the Council's investigation at the conclusion of Stage 3, may then refer the complaint to the Northern Ireland Ombudsman.

Where a complaint relates to a Director or Head of Service who would normally be responding, the issue will be passed to another appropriate member of staff.

Response standards

Complaints made in writing (by post, email or on-line) will be acknowledged in writing within 3 working days and contain the name and contact details of the member of staff dealing with the complaint. Acknowledgements should be issued by email whenever possible.

Where a complaint is received in person or by telephone, the complainant's relevant contact details must be recorded to allow acknowledgements and responses to be issued as appropriate.

All complaints will be responded to within 15 working days. If a complaint cannot be responded to within 15 working days, the Council will contact the complainant to provide an explanation and a new target response time.

Cross-Departmental Complaints

Where a complaint concerns the services delivered by more than one Department, a lead Department will take responsibility for co-ordinating a single corporate response and for ensuring that procedures and standards are adhered to.

Anonymous complaints

The Council will not normally investigate anonymous complaints. However, the Council recognises that its complaints procedure must be sufficiently flexible to allow anonymous complaints to be investigated in exceptional circumstances where the complaint identifies systemic issues of concern.

Special or unusual cases

The Council's complaints procedure will also be sufficiently flexible to allow special or unusual cases to be dealt with. For example, where a complaint highlights financial impropriety or any criminal activity, the Council will obtain legal advice or pass the complaint to a designated fraud officer to ensure that any evidence pertaining to a potential criminal investigation is not tampered with or lost.

Making a complaint about a Councillor

Under the Local Government Act (NI) 2014, Councillors are bound by a mandatory Code of Conduct which sets out the principles and rules which Councillors must observe.

Anyone who believes that a Councillor has breached the Code of Conduct may complain in writing to the Northern Ireland Ombudsman who has the power to investigate in his capacity as Commissioner for Complaints.

Recording and monitoring

Accurate recording of complaints is essential to ensure they are handled effectively, and to ensure information on the nature, number and outcome of complaints can be collated, analysed and used to inform decision-making, service design and delivery.

H

Subject	Residents' Magazine & Marketing Activity
Reporting Officers	Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To endorse arrangements for a residents' magazine and to consider wider marketing activity to support the Council's operational launch.

2	Background
2.1	In October 2014, the Council agreed an interim Communications Strategy (2014-2015) which focussed on the introduction and adoption of a range of communications' channels to promote and build an understanding of its preparatory work and new responsibilities.
2.2	A residents' magazine to be issued in March 2015 was identified as a key channel of direct communication.

3	Key Issues
3.1	Distribution of the first Mid Ulster District Council magazine will take place to some 47,000 households across the region during the week beginning Monday 30 th March 2015.
3.2	Delivery will be via Royal Mail's Door to Door service (to approximately 40,000 households in those postcode sectors which are completely within the Mid Ulster District Council boundary), with the remainder delivered via a direct addressed mail service (to approximately 6,500 households located in postcode sectors which cross council boundaries).
3.3	The distribution of the magazine has been timed to coincide with the Council assuming full operational responsibility for service delivery and will be a key opportunity to introduce and build awareness of the Council's brand.
3.4	Content will range from information about the Council and Councillors, together with new responsibilities (specifically planning), the 2015-2016 rate and the new corporate plan to the new telephone number, web site, events and stories around key, current and relevant services, highlighting changes, and confirming no change where appropriate.
3.5	Planned media and social media activity will support the Council's launch, contributing to brand building and the communication of key messages in this initial period.
3.6	Ideally, other marketing activity (e.g. press ads, the use of billboards and

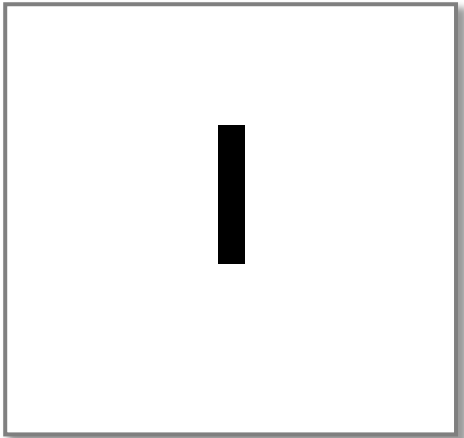
	targeted radio advertising) would also support the launch. However, as the communications budget was established some time ago and before the appointment of a Marketing Communications Manager, there is no corresponding budget to engage in this additional supporting activity.
--	---

4	Resources
4.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>Design, print and distribution costs for a 16 page magazine delivered direct to all Mid Ulster District Council households will be approximately £12,000, which is within current budgets.</p> <p>To provide some modest supporting marketing activity, would require an additional budget of £8,000.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Human</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.3	<p><u>Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.4	<p><u>Other</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

5	Other Considerations
	None

6	Recommendations
6.1	That arrangements for a residents' magazine are endorsed and consideration given to the allocation of an additional budget to allow supporting marketing activity to take place.

7	List of Documents Attached
	None



Subject: Data & System Convergence of Environmental, Regulatory and Building Control Services

Reporting Officer Barry O'Hagan

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update members on the convergence of ICT systems affecting Environmental Health(EH), Building Control(BC) and other Licensing and regulatory functions To seek approval for the convergence and recurring costs of Information systems within the Environmental, Building Control and Regulatory functions.

2	Background
2.1	Each council has its own individual management information systems (MIS) to maintain the function of EH,BC and Regulatory and licensing function. The new council needs to converge the systems and data from each into a single accessible solution across the entire new council. Now, the vast majority of the functions are carried out by Tascomi as Councils have aligned MIS systems to ease the burden and complexity of migration the functions and resources required to fulfil the function for Mid Ulster.

3	Key Issues
3.1	<p>The systems of choice were previously approved at the environment committee and Tascomi were tasked with this work.</p> <p>Progress :Building control convergence has all three sets of information now contained within a single database segregated by security features built in which will become one solution accessible by all officers at an agreed time when the appropriate staff are appointed .</p> <p>EH and licensing have yet to start significant data convergence. Mapping the various processes scoping the plan are underway.</p> <p>Licensing: The proposed solution will allow online licensing on the new website.</p> <p>Online Accessible services: The extension of the online portal will allow the council to incorporate a wider range of services within the new website including the potential for other online licensing applications to be developed in the future e.g. building control..</p>

4	Resources			
4.1	Financial: The costs for convergence with the EH,BC and licensing functions was previous budgeted. Current Alignment work within the councils has significantly reduced the convergence and migration costs expected. They are summarised as follows.			
	Tascomi Solution	Magherafelt	Dungannon	Cookstown
	Te-Build	Yes	Yes	yes
	Te Dogs	Yes	No: to be adopted	Yes: online
	Te-Environment	Yes	Yes	Yes
	Te-License	Yes	No: to be adopted	No:to be adopted
	Online			
	Existing and Future costs			
	The following costs will be incurred as part of the convergence of systems			
4.2	Service	Cumulative Software Maintenance costs (£)	Transition	
	Building Control & property cert	£26,500	0	
	Dog Licensing	£3,075	1500	
	Environmental Health & LPS	£25,975	5150	
	Regulatory Licensing	£2,000	0	
	Online provision	£1500	0	
	Net Costs	£59,050	6650	
4.3	Recurring Costs The total recurring costs for mid Ulster next year for software maintenance will be reduced by 5% based on the £59,050 to £57422.50 .			
4.4	Human Training will be built in to the future convergence of EH and Regulatory functions as they happen. Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support : None			
5	Other Considerations			
5.1	Some additional licensing may be required for licensing and regulatory services. These will be determined following the new appointment of Directors and service delivery models.			
6	Recommendations			
6.1	To approve the convergence of Information systems and recurring costs within the Environmental ,Building Control and Regulatory functions.			
7	List of Documents Attached			
7.1	None			

J

Subject	Proposed New Non-Geographic Telephone Number
Reporting Officers	Ursula Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager Barry O'Hagan, Lead Officer IT

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform members of the proposed new telephone number for Mid Ulster District Council.

2	Background
2.1	The Council agreed in October 2014 to introduce a single non-geographic contact telephone number from the 03 range, which is specifically intended for use by public sector and not for profit organisations.
2.2	The use of a single number is intended to have a unifying effect internally and also support the message externally that a new Council is in operation from 1 April 2015.

3	Key Issues
3.1	Key to the successful implementation of any new telephone number is its memorability.
3.2	From the numbers available in the current 03 Gold range, the most memorable is considered to be 03000 132 132 and this is the telephone number which has been reserved as the new Mid Ulster District Council telephone number.

4	Resources
4.1	<p><u>Financial</u></p> <p>As previously reported and agreed, the cost of purchasing the proposed 03 number is £3,000.</p>
4.2	<p><u>Human</u></p> <p>N/A</p>
4.3	<p><u>Basis for Professional/ Consultancy Support</u></p> <p>N/A</p>

4.4	<u>Other</u> N/A
-----	--------------------------------

5	Other Considerations
	None

6	Recommendations
6.1	That the Council notes the proposed new telephone number.

7	List of Documents Attached
	None

K

Subject	Response to Consultation Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015
Reporting Officer	M Canavan, Head of Human Resources

1	Purpose of Report
1.1	To inform members regarding a response to a “Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015”.

2	Background
2.1	The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (“the 2014 Act”) makes provision for payment of compensation for loss of office or diminution of emoluments which is attributable to any provision made as a result of the reform of local government.

3	Key Issues
3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Application of these Regulations; • Prescribed conditions; • Calculation of compensation payment; • Limit on compensation, i.e. the period all costs associated with the payment are to be recouped or paid back; • Notification of compensation; and • Payment.

4	Resource Implications
4.1	<u>Financial</u> – N/A
4.2	<u>Human resources</u> – N/A
4.3	<u>Assets and other implications</u> – N/A

5	Other Considerations
5.1	<p>The closing date for submission of ““Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015” is 5 January 2015.</p> <p>Response will be forwarded to Unions for their views/comments prior to submission.</p>

6	Recommendations
6.1	N/A

7	List of Documents Attached
7.1	The Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 Consultation Document
7.2	Response to above Consultation Document



Department of the
Environment
www.doeni.gov.uk

**The Draft Local Government Reorganisation
(Compensation for Loss of Employment)
Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**

Consultation Document

November 2014

**DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION
(COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT) REGULATIONS
(NORTHERN IRELAND) 2015**

This Consultation Document seeks views on the draft Local Government
Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations
(Northern Ireland) 2015.

Comments should be sent by 05 January 2015 to:

**Local Government Policy Division 1
Department of the Environment
4th Floor, Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Town Parks
Belfast, BT2 7EG**

E-mail: LGPDConsultations@doeni.gov.uk

Textphone 028 9054 0642

The following people will be able to answer queries in relation to the draft
regulations:

Name	E-mail	Telephone
Lynn McCracken	lynn.mccracken@doeni.gov.uk	028 9082 3393
Tracey Cowan-McClinton	tracey.cowan-mcclinton@doeni.gov.uk	028 9082 3397

Crown Copyright 2014

This material may be freely reproduced except for sale or advertising purposes.

CONTENTS

	Page
Purpose of the Consultation Document	1
Background	2
Details of the Proposals	3
Human Rights	7
Equality	7
Regulatory Impact Assessment	8
Rural Proofing	8
Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations	8
Alternative format	8
Annex A – The Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015	10
Annex B – The Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations	14
Annex C – List of Consultees	16

DRAFT LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT) REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2015

PURPOSE OF THE CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

1. The Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 (“the 2014 Act”) makes provision for payment of compensation for loss of office or diminution of emoluments which is attributable to any provision made as a result of the reform of local government. Section 123(3) provides for the Department to make regulations under Article 19 of the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 (the 1972 Order) for the purpose of the payment of compensation in respect of such loss.
2. The Department of the Environment is seeking comments on its proposal to make the Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, under Article 19 of the 1972 Order. The purpose of the proposed regulations is to allow a compensation payment to be made to certain employees who cease to hold employment with a relevant body by reason of redundancy or in the interests of the efficiency of their employer during a specified period as a consequence of local government reorganisation in Northern Ireland.
3. The draft Regulations are attached at **Annex A**.

Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

BACKGROUND

4. Section 123 of the 2014 Act allows for regulations to be made under article 19 of the 1972 Order for the purpose of the payment of compensation for loss of office to any person who is employed by a local government body (means a council, joint committee of a council or the Local Government Staff Commission), and suffers loss attributable to Local Government Reform.
5. Following a request from the then Minister of the Environment, the Local Government Reform Joint Forum (LGRJF) was established in July 2009. The role of the LGRJF was “to facilitate consultation and negotiation between Employer and Employee representatives on a range of Human Resources (HR) related issues that are cross sectoral in nature”.
6. The LGRJF was tasked to take forward all HR implementation issues associated with Local Government Reform, including the development of a severance scheme /compensation arrangement. The Review of Public Administration (RPA) Staff Severance Scheme for Local Government (the Scheme), was developed by the LGRJF and collectively agreed by both Employers and Trade Unions.
7. The Scheme is based on established RPA models and reflects the 5th Guiding Principle from the Compendium of Principles, Practice and Guidance Notes published by the Public Service Commission

and the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister and will apply specifically in cases of both voluntary and compulsory redundancy.

8. These proposed Regulations are the legal articulation of the compensation element of the negotiated Scheme and provides the manner in which and to whom compensation is to be made.
9. It is the intention of the Department to issue guidance on the application of these Regulations for all local government bodies.

DETAILS OF THE PROPOSALS

10. The proposed Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 set out the details, as required under Article 19 of the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972, in relation to:
 - Application of these Regulations;
 - Prescribed conditions;
 - Calculation of compensation payment;
 - Limit on compensation, i.e. the period all costs associated with the payment are to be recouped or paid back;
 - Notification of compensation; and
 - Payment.

APPLICATION OF THESE REGULATIONS

11. The Regulations require a local government body to determine if a person is entitled to an enhanced redundancy payment during the prescribed period from 1st April 2015 to 31st December 2019. This

period has been agreed as sufficient time to introduce the new organisational structures and harmonise terms and conditions of service in the new councils.

PRESCRIBED CONDITIONS

12. The 2014 Act provides that compensation is to be paid to any person who is employed by a specified local government body and suffers loss of employment which is attributable to:
 - a. The 2014 Act;
 - b. The Local Government Boundaries Act (Northern Ireland) 2008;
 - c. The Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011;
 - d. Any regulations or statutory provisions made as a consequence of any transfer of functions to a local government body.
13. The 2014 Act also specifies that the person would need to qualify for a statutory redundancy payment under the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 as a result of being employed by a local government body and have two years continuous service with that body or continuous previous service with an employer to which the Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employments in Local Government, Etc.) (Modification) Order (Northern Ireland) 1999 applies.
14. Staff who transfer from central government, under section 122 of the Act, to the new councils, will be eligible for compensation under these Regulations. However as members of the Principle Civil Service Pension Scheme they will be entitled to compensation under the Civil Service Compensation Scheme (CSCS), paid for by

the local government body. To ensure parity of treatment in relation to compensation due as a result of Local Government Reform any payment received from the CSCS scheme will be deducted from the enhanced redundancy payment to identify the amount of compensation due under these regulations.

CALCULATION OF COMPENSATION PAYMENT

15. The compensation payable forms part of an enhanced redundancy package which is calculated by multiplying the amount of statutory redundancy payment due by 3.46. The compensation element of the resulting amount is calculated by subtracting the actual statutory redundancy payment.
16. The maximum amount of statutory redundancy that can be paid is calculated in accordance with the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) Order 1996 is 30 weeks pay, subject to the specified limit.
17. The multiplier of 3.46 to the statutory redundancy payment will therefore equate to approximately 104 weeks of the person's pay. The maximum amount for the enhanced redundancy payment must not exceed 104 weeks.
18. For staff who transfer from central government, the compensation payment will be calculated by deducting their CSCS payment from the enhanced redundancy.
19. Where someone has received compensation previously under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007

or any Regulations made under Article 19 of the Superannuation Order 1972 during the period, treated as qualifying employment, any payment made shall be deducted from any enhanced redundancy payment made under these Regulations.

LIMIT ON COMPENSATION

20. Compensation awarded will be limited by two possible factors.
Where the enhanced redundancy payment exceeds 104 weeks, the amount of compensation awarded will be reduced to meet the 104 week maximum.
21. Where the enhanced redundancy package costs exceed the person's total annual salary costs (as prescribed) multiplied by 3.25. The amount of compensation payable should be reduced to ensure the full redundancy costs are equal to the figure resulting from the above calculation.
22. The 3.25 years is the payback period during which the full costs incurred in respect of the enhanced redundancy, could be recouped by the employer. This formula determines the affordability criteria in which the respective council potentially recovers the full costs by the non-replacement of the post. The period of 3.25 years has also been used for similar severance schemes in both the health and libraries sectors in relation to job losses as a result of the Review of Public Administration.

NOTIFICATION OF COMPENSATION

23. A local government body must, as soon as reasonably practicable, give the person to whom the compensation is awarded, written notice of the compensation payable and how the compensation is calculated.

PAYMENT

24. A local government body must, as soon as reasonably practicable, pay the compensation awarded to the person.

HUMAN RIGHTS

25. The Department believes that the proposals are compatible with the Human Rights Act 1998.

EQUALITY

26. Under the terms of section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, the Department carried out screening for equality impact and is satisfied that the proposed legislation will not lead to discriminatory or negative differential impact on any of the section 75 groups. A copy of the screening form can be viewed on the Department's website: http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/information/equality_unit/policies_screened_out_-_october_to_december_2014.htm

REGULATORY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

27. The Department has not conducted a regulatory impact assessment as the proposed legislation does not give rise to any associated costs or savings on business, charities, social economy enterprises or the voluntary sector.

RURAL PROOFING

28. The Department has assessed the proposed measures and considers that there would be no differential impact in rural areas or on rural communities.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – CONFIDENTIALITY OF CONSULTATIONS

29. The Department may publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read Annex B on the confidentiality of consultations. It gives guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

ALTERNATIVE FORMAT

30. This document is available in alternative formats. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

COMMENTS

31. Comments on the draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 should be sent by 05 January 2015 to the address below or by e-mail to LGPDConsultations@doeni.gov.uk.
32. If you have any queries in relation to the proposals, you should contact:

Lynn McCracken

lynn.mccracken@doeni.gov.uk

Tel: 028 9082 3393

or

Tracey Cowan-McClinton

tracey.cowan-mcclinton@doeni.gov.uk

Tel: 028 9082 3397

33. This Consultation Document is being circulated to persons and bodies listed in Annex C and is also available to view at:
http://www.doeni.gov.uk/index/local_government/local_government_consultations.htm

Local Government Policy Division

Causeway Exchange

4th Floor

1-7 Bedford Street

Town Parks

Belfast

BT2 7EG

Textphone: 028 9054 0642

DRAFT STATUTORY RULES OF NORTHERN IRELAND

2014 No.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
**The Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of
Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015**
Made - - - -

Coming into operation -

The Department of the Environment makes the following Regulations, in exercise of the powers conferred by Article 19 of, and paragraph 13 of Schedule 3 to, the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972⁽¹⁾ and now vested in it ⁽²⁾:

Citation and commencement

1. (1) These Regulations may be cited as The Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

(2) These Regulations shall come into operation on 1st April 2015.

Interpretation

2. (1) In these Regulations—

“the 1996 Order” means the Employment Rights (Northern Ireland) 1996⁽³⁾;

“the 2014 Act” means the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014⁽⁴⁾;

“CSCS” means a Civil Service Compensation Scheme made and maintained by the Department of Finance and Personnel under Article 3 of the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972;

“employment” does not include the office of councillor;

“enhanced redundancy payment” means statutory redundancy payment and compensation paid under these regulations;

“local government body” means a council, joint committee of a council or the Local Government Staff Commission;

“loss ” means the loss of employment or office in the circumstances specified in regulation 3 and 4;

“material date” means the date of the final day of a person’s employment which is lost;

“the prescribed period” is the period which commences on 1st April 2015 and ends on 31st December 2019;

⁽¹⁾ S.I.1972/1073 (N.I. 10).

⁽²⁾ S.R. & O (N.I.) 1973 No. 504 Article 7 (1); S.I. 1976/424 (N.I. 6) Article 4

⁽³⁾ S.I. 1996/1919 (N.I. 16).

⁽⁴⁾ 2014 c. 8 (N.I.).

“the Pension Regulations” mean the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014⁽⁵⁾ and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment and Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014⁽⁶⁾;

“recognised pension scheme” refers to the Local Government Pension Scheme or the Principle Civil Service Pension Scheme Northern Ireland.

(2) Expressions not defined in paragraph (1) but used in these Regulations and in the Pension Regulations have the same meaning as in those Regulations.

Application of these Regulations

3. These Regulations apply to a person, determined by a local government body as entitled to an enhanced redundancy payment who—

- (a) suffers loss during the prescribed period—
 - (i) by reason of redundancy; or
 - (ii) in the interests of the efficient exercise of the local government body’s functions; and
- (b) satisfies the prescribed conditions in regulation 4.

Prescribed conditions

4. (1) The provisions of the following paragraphs of this regulation are the prescribed conditions for the purposes of regulation 3.

(2) The first condition is that, on the material date, the person, is employed by a local government body for a continuous period of 2 years or whose employment record satisfies the requirements of Redundancy Payments (Continuity of Employments in Local Government, etc.) (Modification) Order (Northern Ireland) 1999⁽⁷⁾.

(3) The second condition is that the local government body determines that the loss of employment is attributable to the provisions of—

- (a) the 2014 Act;
- (b) the Local Government (Boundaries) Act (Northern Ireland) 2008; or
- (c) the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Calculation of compensation payment

5. (1) A person’s compensation payment is calculated by subtracting his statutory redundancy payment or payment under CSCS (whichever is the higher) ,and specified compensation from his enhanced redundancy payment.

(2) A person’s enhanced redundancy payment is calculated by multiplying his statutory redundancy payment by 3.46.

(3) Subject to regulation 6(1)(b) the enhanced redundancy payment must not exceed the value of 104 weeks’ pay.

(4) For the purposes of paragraph (1),”specified compensation” is compensation paid or payable to that person :-

- (a) under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007;

⁽⁵⁾ S.R. 2014 No. 188.

⁽⁶⁾ S.R. 2014 No. 189.

⁽⁷⁾ S.R. 1999 No. 409.

(b) regulations made under Article 19 of the Superannuation (Northern Ireland) Order 1972 prior to the date of making of these regulations;

Limit on compensation

6.(1) Compensation payable in respect of a person by a local government body under these regulations shall not exceed either of the following amounts—

- (a) the amount by which the enhanced redundancy payment exceeds 104 week' pay ;
- (b) the amount the enhanced redundancy package costs exceeds the eligible person's annual salary cost multiplied by 3.25.

(2) For the purpose of this regulation enhanced redundancy package costs are:

- (a) the enhanced redundancy payment, plus;
- (b) where the person is a member of a recognised pension scheme, the cost of bringing the pension into payment early without an actuarial reduction if applicable; and
- (c) the cost of any additional pension, where awarded by the local government body.

(3) For the purpose of this regulation a person's annual salary costs to the local government body, on the material date, are:

- (a) the person's gross annual salary, plus;
- (b) the annual national insurance contribution payable by the local government body in respect of the person; and
- (c) where the person is a member of a recognised pension scheme, the annual pension contribution payable by the local government body.

Meaning of "gross annual salary"

7. (1) For the purposes of regulation 6, a person's gross annual salary is the total of—

- (a) all the salary, wages, fluctuating emoluments and other payments paid to the person for the person's own use in respect of the person's employment; and
- (b) any other payment or benefit specified in the person's contract of employment as being a pensionable emolument.

(2) For the purposes of regulation 7, a person's gross annual salary does not include—

- (c) payments for non-contractual overtime;
- (d) any travelling, subsistence or other allowance paid in respect of expenses incurred in relation to the employment;
- (e) any payment in consideration of loss of holidays;
- (f) any payment in lieu of notice to terminate the person's contract of employment;
- (g) any payment as an inducement not to terminate the person's contract of employment;
- (h) any payment to buy out an existing term or condition of employment;
- (i) any amount treated as the money value to the person of the provision of a motor vehicle or any amount paid in lieu of such a provision; or
- (j) any award of compensation (excluding any sum representing arrears of pay) for the purposes of achieving equal pay in relation to other employees.

Notification of compensation

8. A local government body after making a determination in accordance with regulations 3 and 4 must as soon as reasonable practicable give the person in respect of whom the determination is made written notice of the compensation payable, and the calculation thereof.

Payment

9. A local government body shall pay compensation (payable under these regulations) as soon as reasonably practicable to or in trust for the person entitled to receive it.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the Department of the Environment on ***

Name

A senior officer of the Department of the Environment

The Freedom of Information Act 2000 – confidentiality of consultations

1. The Department may publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. The Department can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.
2. The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, the Department in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. The Department cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential.
3. This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Lord Chancellor's Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- the Department should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of the Department's functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- the Department should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature; and
- acceptance by the Department of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

4. For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see website at: <http://www.informationcommissioner.gov.uk>).

List of Consultees

All current 26 Northern Ireland District Councils

11 New Councils

Local Government Staff Commission

National Association of Councillors

Local Government Reform Joint Forum

Committee for the Environment

Executive Departments

Northern Ireland Local Government Association

NIPSA

Unite

GMB

SIPTU

Public Service Commission

4 December 2014

Local Government Policy Division
Department of the Environment
4th Floor, Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Town Parks
Belfast, BT2 7EG

Dear Sirs

The Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

I refer to the above consultation and would respond on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council as detailed below.

Mid Ulster District Council is pleased with the details of the scheme. Council acknowledges the good work in addressing the issue of staff transfer from central government, outlined under point 14 of the document.

However, Mid Ulster District Council would prefer to see some additional detail in relation to the following:

Break of Service – Circumstances may arise where an employee, originally who worked with a Council has went to work in for example an Education Board, or Civil Service Department and then returns to the Council. Can clarity be provided as to whether or not continuous service applies for the whole of the Council service or that it can only apply when the employee re-joins the Council?

Leave of Absence (Maternity / Secondment / Career Break) – Mid Ulster District Council wish to see that in any of these areas of absence, continuous service will apply in this instance.

Yours faithfully