

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 29 June in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon

Members Present: Councillor Ashton, Chair

Councillors Bell, Buchanan, Burton, Cuddy, Cuthbertson, Forde, Gildernew, Gillespie, Glasgow, Kearney, McAleer, McElDowney, McFlynn, S McGuigan, Milne, Mulligan, J O'Neill, M Quinn, Reid, Robinson, G Shiels, J Shiels, Totten and Wilson

Officers in Attendance: Mr A Cassells, Director of Environment and Property
Mr A McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities
Mr M Kelso, Director of Public Health and Infrastructure
Mr P Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Mrs E Forde, Member Support Officer

In Attendance: Invest NI

Ms E McNamee	Regional Manager
Ms Ciara Kilpatrick	Client Executive
Ms Katherine Spratt	Client Executive

Transport NI

Mr C Loughry	Divisional Manager
Mr G Hackett	
Mr N Bratton	

Northern Ireland Water

Mr D Crabbe	
Mr P Davidson	
Mr S Murphy	NIW Projects Manager
Ms C Burns	Farrans Customer Care
Mr D Murphy	Site Manager

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

SC22/17 Apologies

Councillors McGinley, B McGuigan, McKinney, McLean, McNamee, Mullen, T Quinn

SC23/17 Declarations of Interest

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

SC24/17 Chair's Business

The Chair Councillor Ashton drew attention to the report sheets for each of the agencies presenting and requested that Members record non-strategic issues for each organisation. Each agency would then report back to individual Members on any specific issues highlighted.

SC25/17 Invest NI

The Chair, Councillor Ashton welcomed representatives from Invest NI to the meeting. Ms McNamee delivered a presentation (appendix 1) giving an overview of Invest NI Activity and drew Members attention to the Mid Ulster 'Regional Brief' (appendix 2).

The Chair, Councillor Ashton thanked the representatives for the presentation and invited Members questions.

Councillor Wilson thanked Ms McNamee for the presentation and expressed his disappointment that whilst Invest NI could establish offices worldwide they did not have one within Mid Ulster. He also sought detail on Invest NI land within Cookstown in particular and Dungannon. The councillor also asked if Invest NI had a specific budget for each district or if there was a 'common pot'.

In response, Ms McNamee stated there was work on going in relation to land bank information details of which she would report to Council. With regard to budget Ms McNamee confirmed that Invest NI held a global budget and within Northern Ireland a local budget which was allocated on a project driven basis.

Councillor Cuddy stated that he raised the issue that Invest NI did not have an office in the Mid Ulster district each year emphasising that the district had the most industry and although a sub office had been promised in the past there was still no progress. Councillor Cuddy asked if Brexit was an opportunity to grow business; an update on Moy Park in relation to new ownership; and in relation to 'small medium enterprises' he stated that owners claimed that they had been through Invest NI processes but were not seen as clients who would export yet independently had been successful and asked if there was too much red tape in Invest NI processes.

In response, Ms McNamee advised that the subject of an office in Mid Ulster district was on the corporate agenda and she would provide a future update. With regard to the question of Moy Park she advised she would investigate and that in regard to Brexit Invest NI were redoubling their efforts to address any opportunities from it. Ms McNamee stated that Invest NI applied criteria in relation to small medium enterprises export potential and if they hadn't articulated this or if they feel Invest NI are not listening she would need examples to follow up on. In conclusion she emphasised that companies could approach Invest NI at any stage it did not have to be at the beginning.

Councillor Cuddy made mention of the recent 'Spotlight' programme which had not been a good reflection on Invest NI. Ms McNamee stated the points raised had been noted by Invest NI.

Invest NI representatives left the meeting at 7.30pm.

Councillor Wilson raised the issue of Invest NI office provision referring to Ms McNamee's comment that it was on the corporate agenda and that this was the first Members were aware that Council was in discussion with them regarding the matter. In response the Director of Business and Communities stated that the Council had offered access space and in the very near future hoped to have a proposition.

SC26/17 Transport NI

The Chair, Councillor Ashton welcomed representatives from Transport NI to the meeting. Mr Loughrey introduced his colleagues Mr Hackett and Mr Bratton and delivered the Spring Report (appendix 3) giving an overview of work within the district.

The Chair, Councillor Ashton thanked the gentlemen for the presentation and for dealing with Members issues on a daily basis. Councillor Ashton invited Members questions and asked about the bypass for Dungannon noting that within the Spring Report bypasses had been referenced for both Cookstown and Magherafelt. In response, Mr Loughrey advised that all major schemes were decided at Executive and Ministerial level but at present other major corridor routes were being addressed in the province but at this time a bypass in Dungannon was unfortunately not one of them.

Councillor Cuddy stated that Council had previously met with Minister Hazzard in relation to a bypass for Moneymore at which time he had indicated that the process for attaining a bypass was a long one. Councillor Cuddy stated that Dungannon had previously had an outline of a bypass which had not been progressed by planners at the time and emphasised that it was the 'table top' work that Council should be looking at to progress. He stated that there were three principal towns within the district taking upwards of half a day to travel between them. The councillor said he hoped a bypass for Dungannon would have been further advanced than it was at present.

In response, Mr Loughrey said he appreciated the comments but stated there was a risk in taking schemes forward too early as for example development and environmental statements could become outdated and have to be repeated.

Councillor G Shiels commended the Magherafelt bypass and the difference it made. He noted that Cookstown had been mentioned as the next piece of work but emphasised that Moneymore bypass should be next on the agenda as it was badly needed and would be small in comparison to some projects. The councillor suggested that Cookstown and Moneymore be treated as one project. The Councillor made mention of footpaths in Maghera.

The Chair, Councillor Ashton reminded Councillor G Shiels that such matters should be recorded on the enquiry sheet provided for follow up from Transport NI. Councillor G Shiels stated that Members should be allowed to speak on the night.

In response to Councillor G Shiels comments regarding the proposed bypasses for Cookstown and Moneymore he stated he was unaware of any two schemes coming together emphasising that it was better to progress in smaller chunks as if the overall project cost was higher it could be overlooked due to cost.

Councillor Mulligan thanked the representatives for the presentation and commended the work on the A4. He stated that he was aware of a few 'close shaves' and suggested that similar improvements were needed in Clogher to that which was carried out at Ballygawley. He emphasised that the junction was very dangerous and that perhaps a passing lane may resolve issues.

Councillor Mulligan stated he had been asked to participate in an Environmental Survey with a view of providing electricity cables in the roadway in the Clogher Valley area and asked Transport NI if they were aware of this. In response, Mr Hackett stated they were aware of a proposal for underground link from a windfarm and the matter was subject to a recent planning application.

Councillor S McGuigan left the meeting at 7.56pm
Councillor Clark left the meeting at 7.57 pm

In response to Councillor Reid's question about heavy goods vehicles being diverted from a bridge at Coagh Mr Loughry advised he would refer to the structural section.

Councillor Wilson thanked the representatives for the presentation and for local staff courtesy to elected members throughout the year. He asked (i) when people report a street light out on the internet why is there no follow information other than the matter has been reported and requested that even an estimated follow-up would be helpful should it be weeks or months at least people would know; and (ii) regarding consultation with other major utilities, he stated that NI Water was presenting next regarding the scheme for new waterline in Cookstown and simultaneously Gas to the West would be laying gas lines thus both ends of Cookstown would be under pressure and asked how Transport NI could link the projects to minimise disruption especially when they partially fill in the holes left and Transport NI complete the works.

Councillor Clarke returned to the meeting

In response, Mr Loughry stated in relation to (i) there is a 10 day target for street light repairs. With regards to (ii) Mr Loughry stated that it was a major issue and Transport NI had a responsibility to ensure their asset is maintained as Transport NI do not wish to repeatedly refill holes left. He added that they kept a 'tight eye' on the quality of reinstatements carried out by other utilities. Emphasising that they had a right to carry out works he advised that Transport NI endeavoured to manage and did apply regulations such as taking works off roads at peak times and planning works for the summer period.

Councillor Wilson asked at what time Council was consulted on their preferences. In response, Mr Loughry stated that Transport NI were working closely with Gas to the West and NI Water to plan works to ensure least disruption possible.

The Director of Public Health and Infrastructure advised that the Gas to the West programme had only been finalised on 28 June and that NI Water had only recently advised of their planned works for Cookstown thus they had been included within the meeting agenda.

The Chair, Councillor Ashton stated that Council needed to address the situation with Senior Management.

Councillor Gillespie stated that in village housing estates a lot of street lights were being removed at the back of pensioners' dwellings and requested that they be restored, using the example which he had recorded on the sheet provided, of a set of 13 steps which were two meters wide at the rear of pensioners' homes. Mr Loughry advised that the policy was now to provide street lighting on main roads and to the front of properties and that lights were not being removed but were not upgraded at the rear of properties nor replaced when broken. He stated that street lighting costs were £10m per annum and there was no appetite to replace them due to costs and to do so in one area and not another would create inequalities.

Councillors Cuddy and Reid left the meeting at 8.07pm

Councillor McAleer stated she was delighted to learn of possible commencement of A5 works but asked when phase 1B Omagh to Ballygawley would commence as the stretch of road was treacherous. In response, Mr Loughry advised that phase 1a only had been allowed for in the current budget which was determined by the Secretary of State but that the project was included in discussions for allocations of mid-year funding.

Councillor Burton commended Transport NI for recent works within the Clogher Valley area but had concerns in relation to the road at Aughnacloy Primary School and Nursery School, emphasising that the situation was 'an accident waiting to happen' due to speed increasing daily on the road.

Councillor Bell thanked the representatives for the report and welcomed Mr Bratton to Mid Ulster. He highlighted the condition of the roads on the Loughshore B routes emphasising they took a lot of pressure off A routes and were constantly being used by HGV traffic. The councillor said that whilst he understood budget constraints he stated that more needed to be done to tackle the condition of the roads. He acknowledged that Transport NI had conducted a traffic survey at his request the results of which were stark showing some 10k traffic movements per day.

Councillor McEldowney left the meeting at 8.12 pm

In response, Mr Loughry advised that a programme of schemes had been highlighted and would be addressed in due course.

Councillor McAleer left the meeting at 8.13pm

Councillor G Shiels thanked the representatives stating that matters raised can often be a life or death matter.

The Director of Business and Communities asked if the £600k mentioned in the report was money set aside for Cookstown bypass and also emphasised that Transport NI and Council must engage to drive forward project for Dungannon.

Councillor Gildernew left the meeting at 8.15pm

In response, Mr Loughry advised that £600k was the stimulus package for a number of schemes and had not been translated in the current year and that Transport NI awaited the new Executive funding priorities. He also welcomed engagement with Council emphasising that they would like to fund many schemes but it was not possible and in many cases authorities and communities were bridging the gap.

The Chair, Councillor Ashton thanked representatives for the presentation and requested a swift response to issues raised on the reports sheet.

Transport NI representatives left meeting at 8.16pm

Councillor Mulligan left the meeting at 8.17 pm

SC27/17 Northern Ireland Water

The Chair, Councillor Ashton welcomed representatives from NI Water and Farrans Construction to the meeting. Mr Crabbe assisted by Farrans representatives delivered a presentation (appendix 4) drawing attention to Lough Fea works package which was now 70% complete and the scheme due to commence and should be completed in a 5-8 week timeframe.

Councillor Robinson left the meeting at 8.21pm

The Chair, Councillor Ashton thanked the representatives for the presentation making mention of the fact there would be major disruption in Cookstown due to NI Water and Gas to the West schemes running consecutively. The Chair invited questions from Members.

Councillor Wilson stated that as a public representative for the area this was the first he was aware of the planned works yet Transport NI had been consulted and Council itself some two weeks ago. He said that he understood it was essential work but it was taking place on what was an 'unofficial' bypass around Cookstown with little or no notice given to residents.

In response Mr Crabbe stated he worked on the engineering side of the project but was aware that there had been correspondence with Dungannon and Cookstown representatives on 28 November 2016 when the project was at design stage to

which one reply had been received from Sandra Overend's (MLA) office. He advised that NI Water had been in consultation with Transport NI since then.

Councillor Wilson asked NI representatives if they felt the level of consultation with residents was acceptable.

The Chair, Councillor Ashton stated there was to be six representatives from NI Water yet only three were in attendance to discuss this serious issue. The Chair proposed that the representatives would be invited back to Council to engage with Cookstown DEA representatives. Councillor Wilson concurred with the proposal.

In response Mr Crabbe stated that it was a long programme of work and this was the start of the consultation as parts of the project such as Morgans Hill were some 4-5 months from commencement.

Councillor Wilson left the meeting at 8.35pm

The Director of Business and Communities thanked the representatives for the presentation stating that he had made them aware when two weeks ago they had first engaged with both himself and the Director of Public Health and Infrastructure that Members would be aggrieved at the lack of consultation. He emphasised that Cookstown did grind to a halt when schools close and that the public would be dissatisfied with the traffic disruption causing chaos.

Councillor Glasgow expressed concern at the lack of representatives in attendance and the lack of consultation emphasising how other statutory agencies consult with council prior to any works, closures or cessation of services. He outlined how Council had consulted with the public in relation to environmental schemes and stated that NI Water should have engaged both with council and the public.

In response to Councillor Clarke's queries Mr Crabbe advised that the current pipes were made of iron and put in place in the 1950's and that the typical average overcut was 60% to 40%.

The Chair, Councillor Ashton thanked the representatives for attending.

Resolved That a meeting with NI Water and SGN representatives be convened for relevant District Electoral Area councillors to discuss further.

SC28/17 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00pm and ended at 8.40pm

Chair _____

Date: _____