

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Wednesday 10 January 2018 in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown

Members Present

Councillor Wilson, Chair

Councillors Clarke, Cuddy, Doris, Elattar, McEldowney, McFlynn, McNamee, Molloy, Monteith (7.05 pm), J Shiels

Officers in Attendance

Ms Campbell, Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation
Mr McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities
Mr Browne, Head of Tourism
Mr Oliver McShane, Acting Head of Leisure
Mr Hill, Head of Parks
Ms Linney, Head of Community Development
Mr McCance, Head of Culture and Arts
Ms McKeown, Head of Economic Development
Ms Grogan, Committee Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Agenda Item 4 – Deputation

Rural Broadband Action Group based in
Aughadarragh, Augher, Co. Tyrone
Mr Wilson, Mr Monaghan, Mr McMeel and Mrs McElduff

Meeting commenced at 7 pm.

D001/18 Apologies

Councillors Burton, Forde, McAleer, Milne, G Shiels,

D002/18 Declaration of Interests

None.

D003/18 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor Wilson advised that the Seamus Heaney HomePlace had been shortlisted for a Best Tourism Initiative Award by the All Ireland Community & Council Award 2018. He said that the event was to be held on Saturday 3 February 2018 in the Croke Park Stadium and that permission was sought for Mr Brian McCormick - HomePlace Manager, Chair or Vice Chair to attend.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that the HomePlace Manager and the Vice-Chair attend the event.

D004/18 Rural Broadband Action Group based in Aughadarragh, Augher, Co. Tyrone

The Chair, advised that the representatives from group were yet to arrive and that the committee would proceed with meeting business and would return to this item later.

Matters for Decision

D005/18 Economic Development Report

The Head of Economic Development drew attention to the previously circulated report to provide Members with an update on key activities as detailed below:

- 1) Research Study into the Engineering Sector in Mid Ulster**
- 2) Rural Development Programme Business Plans – Select List**
- 3) Mid Ulster Digital Seminars Report**
- 4) NIBSUP (NI Business Start Up Programme) Update**

The Chair asked that the report be amended to read that “Workspace were the ‘lead contact’ for the Business Start Programme in Mid Ulster, not the lead partner”.

- 5) Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme**
- 6) Village Renewal Project**
- 7) Coalisland Public Realm**
- 8) Market Square Improvement Project, Dungannon**
- 9) Magherafelt Town Centre Forum Minutes**
- 10) Ofcom NI Broadband Discussion Forum**
- 11) Mid Ulster Skills Forum Minutes**
- 12) Irish Central Border Area Network**
- 13) LED Outdoor Mobile Screen – Amendment to Purchasing Arrangements**
- 14) Dungannon Branded Bags**

Councillor McFlynn stated that it seemed a lot of money to spend.

The Head of Economic Development advised that a completely new town brand had been developed in Dungannon and there is an ongoing need to promote it, and the bags are an excellence mechanism to use to do that. She said that the bags were very well received by shoppers and the traders in Dungannon.

In response to Councillor Elattar’s query about the costings of the bags, the Head of Economic Development advised that Council has yet to procure the bags but based on previous quotes received for similar work, the bags may cost in the region of £1.50 each. She added that the jute bags provided good value for money as they have a long shelf life.

Councillor Monteith said although this was a good start, there was a lot more items of merchandise than bags discussed at the meetings and how traders would be putting their own brand on things to promote Dungannon. He enquired what was happening to the rest of branded material like the reusable coffee cups etc.

The Head of Economic Development said that last November it was agreed with the Director of Business & Communities that rather than do a formal launch during the ongoing public realm works in the town centre, that the new branded shopping bags be released to traders and shoppers in Dungannon prior to the Christmas shopping period. She added that further merchandise has been procured and will be imminently delivered to Council. Upon receipt of this, a brand awareness campaign will commence to disseminate the new branded merchandise to the various user groups, such as schools and traders, etc.

Councillor Monteith said that a good news story would be to launch the branded cup.

Councillor Molloy enquired if the funding was all allocated through DfC or was there additional funding sought.

The Head of Economic Development advised that the first batch of branded bags were part-funded by the Department for Communities and the remaining merchandise has been funded by Council.

Councillor Cuddy said it would be worthwhile to hold a Dungannon DEA meeting to iron out any issues regarding the branded merchandise and get an update on Anne Street.

The Chair stated that when the Cookstown branded bags were launched a few years ago there was an article on the website to see which bag travelled the furthest.

Councillor Monteith entered the meeting at 7.05 pm

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be granted to:

1) Research Study into the Engineering Sector in Mid Ulster

The appointment of Cogent Management Consultancy LLP at a cost of up to £27,500 (including expenses and excluding Vat) to deliver the Research Study into Mid Ulster's Engineering Sector to be completed by March 2018

2) Rural Development Programme Business Plans – Select List

The appointment of BD Consultancy and Mid Ulster Enterprise Partnership at a cost of £500 per Plan (including expenses and excluding Vat) to the Select

List to deliver high quality Business Plans for applicants to the Rural Development Programme until 31 March 2019.

3) Mid Ulster Digital Seminars Report

Note Report on Digital Media Seminars.

4) NIBSUP (NI Business Start Up Programme)

Note progress.

Report be amended to read that ““Workspace were the ‘lead contact’ for the Business Start Programme in Mid Ulster, not the lead partner”.

5) Mid Ulster Village Spruce Up Scheme

Note progress.

6) Village Renewal Project

Note progress.

7) Coalisland Public Realm

Note progress.

8) Market Square Improvement Project

Note progress.

9) Magherafelt Town Centre

Note Minutes of Magherafelt Town Centre Forum dated 7 August 2017.

10) Ofcom NI Broadband Discussion Forum

Note progress.

11) Mid Ulster Skills Forum Minutes

Note Minutes of Mid Ulster Skills Forum dated 27 September 2017.

12) Irish Central Border Area Network

Release the 2nd (and final) 50% payment of £5,000 for 2017/18 to ICBAN.

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn
Seconded by Councillor McNamee

Resolved: To release the 2nd (and final) 50% payment of £5,000 for 2017/18.

13) LED Outdoor Mobile Screen – Amendment to Purchasing Arrangements

Instead of using the budget of £50,000 to outright purchase the LED Outdoor Mobile Screen that it be more prudent to lease/contract hire the screen over a three year period. The following accounting treatment has been discussed with the Director of Finance and agreed subject to Committee and Council approval.

Council has identified funding of £50,000 in 2017/18, which in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2017 and the

Department for Communities Accounts Direction may be reserved for application in 2018/19 and beyond. Reserving the funds in the this manner will result in Council technically having a £50,000 underspend in 2017/18 in its year end accounts which will be matched by a technical overspend in subsequent years when the funds are released. Council's management reports, however will show neither an under or overspend but will apply the reserved funding in the financial period in which the screen is hired and Council derives economic benefit therefrom.

Approve the reserve of £50,000 from Council's economic development budget in 2017/18 for use over the next three year period (2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21) in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2017 for the lease/contract hire for a large LED Outdoor Mobile Screen.

Approve the tender of an LED Outdoor Mobile Screen Lease/Contract Hire for key events over the next three year period (2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21).

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor J Shiels and

Resolved: To approve the reserve of £50,000 from Council's economic development budget in 2017/18 for use over the next three year period (2018/19, 2019/20 and 2020/21) in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice on Local Authority Accounting 2017 for the lease/contract hire for a large LED Outdoor Mobile Screen.

To approve the tender for an LED Outdoor Mobile Screen Lease/Contract Hire for key events over the next three year period (2018/19, 2019/20, 2020/21).

14) Dungannon Branded Bags

Budget of up to £25,000 towards procurement and purchase of a further batch of new branded jute bags for Dungannon town.

Resolved: To approve the procurement and purchase of a further batch of new branded jute bags for Dungannon town with a budget of up to £25,000

Continuation of

D004/18 Deputation – Rural Broadband Action Group based in Aughadarragh, Augher, Co. Tyrone

The Chair welcomed representatives from Aughadarragh, Augher Broadband Action Group to the meeting who provided overview on problems incurred due to the lack of broadband facilities within the Aughadarragh/Augher areas.

The representatives advised that Aughadarragh, Augher was a community located off the Augher/Aughnacloy road, which was a vibrant rural community off the A28 Augher/Aughnacloy Road. It had an 81 pupil local Primary School, Woodlands Pre and Afterschool club and Tourism Resource.

The community consists of St Patrick's Primary School with an enrolment of 81 pupils, redevelopment in 2016/17 with 3 new classrooms, office and kitchen/dining room & ground works, Woodland Pre and After school – 51 children enrolled, on the newly developed Carleton Trail & Ulster Way and strong farming and business community.

The representative advised that the area suffers from very poor broadband service and said that new USO regulate for 10mb download speeds, with residents having a average speeds of 0.8 – 1.5 mb downloads.

The representative advised that a meeting was held before Christmas with over 40 householders being in attendance, which had been addressed by Airfibre reps.

The options which were available to householders in the area were BT FTTP which would service 69 homes at a cost of £107,807 on contract reduced to £77,807 because of the local primary school, the other option would be Airfibre, which would service 30 homes at a cost of £33,600.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their presentation and advised that Mid Ulster Council were very proactive in trying to get broadband to areas which were badly affected. He said that there was a huge problem with rural broadband and indeed in a number of cases urban broadband. He said in his area just because a business or household is located beside a green box, doesn't necessarily mean their premises are connected to it, as was his personal experience.

The Director of Business and Communities advised that poor broadband service was a common experience as many households and businesses in the Mid Ulster area were affected. He said that Council had taken delegations to meet with previous Ministers and Officials and had lobbied, submitted evidence to government on poor broadband connectivity issues but have witnessed little progress.

He said that Broadband Voucher Schemes for businesses had helped to some extent but it too had ended abruptly as the UK government funding ran out. He indicated that there is some funding available under the Rural Development Programme in Mid Ulster but the Local Action Group had agreed to 'hold' this funding until March 2018 until more details became available on how and where the £150m funding from the DUP/Conservative deal will be spent.

The Head of Economic Development stated that many rural communities in Mid Ulster struggle to get a decent broadband connection and whilst responsibility for telecoms provision lies with Government, Council had been proactive in its efforts to lobby and source funding to deliver solutions such as the broadband business voucher scheme. She added that work was ongoing to find a more strategic and permanent fibre solution to address broadband deficiencies in Mid Ulster, but work has paused until the outcome of the DUP/Conservative deal is known.

The Chair advised the representatives that although it was of little comfort to leave without a commitment, they could be assured that Mid Ulster Council is trying to do all it can to find solutions and would continue to do so, as Mid Ulster is the most entrepreneurial region in Northern Ireland and it is incumbent upon us to address the needs of local businesses and communities.

Councillor Molloy advised that a local community group that he belonged to had met with BT regarding poor broadband services to local primary school and over 50 homes which only had a 1mb speed. He said that he felt that the group should try to get a better deal from BT, due to the school and community use, as in his area the cost negotiated down to around £350 per household.

Councillor Clarke thanked the group for their presentation and advised that he was a Councillor for 12 years and that he was continuously fighting a battle to get a broadband service to the Sperrins. He said that the Council representatives had met every Minister there was and wouldn't be confident of ever getting broadband through a fibre connection. He said that he had wireless broadband as that was his only option, but the solution which is really needed is fibre to the home. He stated that money was set aside for broadband but in his opinion BT had let everyone down. He said that he was aware that this was little help to the group but was aware of many rural areas being in the same situation.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their attendance and reiterated that the Council were doing everything they could and would continue to work on the issue.

The representatives left the meeting at 7.40 pm.

Councillor Monteith stated that this was a perfect example for the Council to use its power of general competence as people in rural areas can't be expected to put up with inferior broadband any longer. He said that he would be suggesting that a rural funding initiative be set up for communities as a collective or that the Council be prepared to contribute towards a household connection fee. He said that BT would not solve this and that it was a perfect opportunity for the Council to step up to the mark and ask the rural community to get involved. He said that the Council could address infrastructure through the general power of competence and would ask that the Officers look at options and bring a report back on findings.

The Chair advised that there was a need to be careful before making decisions on a new broadband grant scheme.

Councillor Monteith advised that a new way of thinking was needed as the old way was not working.

The Director of Business and Communities said there would be a significant cost in delivering a fibre solution across the whole of Mid Ulster, but to achieve such would provide a future proofed telecoms solution for the area. Councillor Clarke said that we were starting to talk business in regional government terms and that he hoped there would be a chance of getting funding for a proportion of this investment to help bring this solution to a reality, instead of delivering piecemeal solutions.

The Chair said that £150m had been earmarked for rural broadband between the DUP and the Conservatives and that BT were reluctant to proceed until they see the outcome of how these monies will be spent.

Councillor Molloy advised that ICBAN were looking at connectivity and that it would be worthwhile getting their view by inviting them to a future meeting.

D006/18 Community Development

The Head of Community Development drew attention to the previously circulated report to seek approval for Good Relations and Community Festivals rolling grant award recommendations and to update on Community Development.

The Head of Community Development advised that additional Executive funding of £20,000 had now become available, instead of £15,000 as stated within the report.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given to:

- 1) Grant award recommendations under the Community Local Festivals grant as per appendix 1 - £1860.
- 2) Allow consideration for additional Executive funding (pending it becoming available) of up to £20,000 towards the current Speedwell project that is being delivered to allow for additional schools, to be allocated by March 2018.
- 3) Note the community development update report.

D007/18 Grants Review 2017/18 and Grants Policy 2018/19

The Head of Community Development drew attention to the previously circulated report to seek approval for the:

The Head of Community Development referred to the Rolling Grants for Good Relations and the Community Local Festivals and advised that the threshold should read not £1,500 but £1,200 to keep in line with the other community, arts and heritage small grant.

In response to Councillor McNamee's query about the assurance of fulfilling the grants, with advance payments, the Head of Community Development advised that a 50% initial allocation would be made and the remaining 50% would be allocated upon delivery of their activity. She further advised if delivery of an activity wasn't carried out that funding would have to be recouped.

Councillor Monteith said that it made sense and was very helpful that people were taken through the changes. He said that discussions took place on a heritage grant for physical or community based projects.

The Head of Community Development advised that Community Groups with heritage projects had an opportunity to apply up to £1,200 for heritage grants.

The Director of Business and Communities said that the Work Up Programme would be coming for consideration to this committee, but that there was a need at present to be prudent as we were working within existing budgets, indeed we are now having to manage reductions in budgets which would prove to be extremely difficult. For example, Council's financial support towards Strategic Partners was previously subvented by some 50% from the Arts Council NI. This subvention is not available for 2018/19 and will therefore have to be reduced accordingly.

The Chair said that it was important to secure the funding for the schools sports grant as it was important to ensure schools are open to the community for use.

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation said that there wasn't a particular budget for the grant scheme and for a number of years it had been funded from other budgets through underspends. She said that there was an extra school included this year which added an extra financial pressure. The funding of the programme would have to be considered by members as part of the budget setting process for 18-19.

The Chair said that this needed to be looked at as the Council had encouraged the schools to become involved.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be granted to:

- 1) Grants Policy 2018-2019 for implementation with Good Relations and Community Local Festivals being amended from £1,500 to £1,200
- 2) Advance payments of micro and small grants to Voluntary and Community organisations.

D008/18 Heartland: A Heritage and Literacy Project for Primary Schools in Mid Ulster

The Head of Culture and Arts drew attention to the previously circulated report to seek Council approval to develop a Heritage and Literary Project, Working in conjunction with the NI Children's Writing Fellow, Myra Zepf and the Historic Environment Division of Department for Communities.

Proposed by Councillor J Shiels
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given to develop and deliver the Heritage and Literary project as proposed working in conjunction with NI Children's Writing Fellow, Myra Zepf at a cost of £8,000.

D009/18 Northern Ireland Forest Schools Scheme

The Head of Parks drew attention to the previously circulated report to seek approval to register and engage with Northern Ireland Forest Schools Association (NIFSA) to develop a schools programme in Mid Ulster District Council area for a second year 2018-19.

Proposed by Councillor J Shiels
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given to register Mid Ulster District Council with Northern Ireland Forests Schools Association and subject to available budget initiate a year two programme to engage local schools and youth groups to embrace local parks and greenspace where feasible across the district.

D010/18 Recommendations on Allocations of Schools' Sports Facilities Access Grants

The Acting Head of Leisure drew attention to the previously circulated report to advised Members on the Schools' Sports Facilities Access Grants

Proposed by Cuddy
Seconded by McFlynn and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council to agree the recommendations for successful grant applications.

D011/18 Davagh Forest/Dark Skies Observatory

The Head of Tourism drew attention to the previously circulated report to update the Council and seek approval to apply for additional funding from the DAERA Rural Tourism Programme (Round 2) for an outdoor interpretation visitor experience for Davagh Forest/Dark Skies Observatory and visitor centre.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given to seek additional funding from the DAERA 's Rural Tourism funding programme of up to £250k, with match funding of £62,500 (25%) to Design & Build Outdoor Interpretative that would add to the overall attractiveness and enhance the Davagh Forest Dark Skies Visitor Centre project. Total cost of the project £312,500. Engage original ICT team Teague & Sally to contract manage the Interpretative elements and associated works of the build which was not included in their original fee submission. Fees to be basis as per their original tender submission.

D012/18 World Travel Market, Excel London 6 – 8 November 2017

The Head of Tourism drew attention to the previously circulated report to inform and feedback to Council on Mid Ulster District Council presence at World Travel Market, London on the Tourism Ireland stand.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved: That it be recommended to the Council that approval be given to return to showcase Mid Ulster Tourism product at World Travel Market 2018 and bring local businesses representatives along to sell alongside staff.

Matters for Information

D013/18 Minutes of Development Committee Wednesday 6 December 2017

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on Wednesday 6 December 2017.

Councillor McNamee advised that a delegation from Cookstown Town Centre Forum including himself and Mary McCullagh had met with Mr Philip Orr regarding the sale of the market rights in Cookstown. Councillor McNamee said that he understood that Cookstown District Council tried to purchase these previously but Mr Orr had indicated that no discussions had taken place between representatives of the Council and himself. Councillor McNamee said that on a Saturday Cookstown was extremely busy and Mr Orr was attempting to address some health and safety issues which were brought to his attention. Councillor McNamee said that Mr Orr had indicated he would make a decision relatively soon on whether he wished to sell the market rights, after he had fully discussed the matter with his family. He added that Mr Orr had specified that he did not want to see the Saturday Market in Cookstown dying out and was keen to see the two allocated fair days starting up again. Councillor McNamee said that Mr Orr agreed to inform Council if he intended to sell the market rights for Cookstown and if they came up for sale, Council would have an opportunity of bidding to purchase them.

The Director of Business and Communities advised that he would liaise with Council's Regeneration Manager on the matter.

D014/18 The Heart of Ancient Ulster Landscape Partnership Scheme (THoAULP) – Update on Community Consultations

Members noted previously circulated report to update Members on The Heart of Ancient Ulster Landscape Partnership Scheme (THoAULP) – Update on Community Consultations.

Councillor Clarke advised that within the proposal there was walks included and that some time ago there were right-aways and would like a report on the progress as it would fit in well with some features.

The Director of Business and Communities said that the Council had to November to pull it together for HLF and would be happy to invite the two newly appointed Officers to update the members on how things can be progressed.

Councillor Cuddy referred to the closure of Dungannon Park over the Christmas break and enquired if there was a facility to have it open over the holiday period.

The Head of Parks advised that Parks were closed to vehicular access, but that the pedestrian gates remained open. He said that a member of staff does come in on days off.

Councillor Cuddy said that it was only open for pedestrians and that he had received complaints that the gates were locked.

He also asked that the Christmas lights be turned on earlier in the future as he also had complaints that they were not being turned on early enough.

D015/18 NISRA Tourism Statistics 2016

Members noted previously circulated report to update Members on a summary of Tourism Statistics for 2016.

D016/18 Parks Service Progress/Update Report

Members noted previously circulated report to update Members on progress being made regarding activities and associated to Parks Services and highlight events or consultations that would be occurring in the future.

D017/18 Leisure Services Update Report

Members noted previously circulated report to update Members on progress being made regarding activities in Leisure Services and highlight events that would be occurring in the future.

D018/18 Culture & Arts Progress Report

Members noted previously circulated report to update Members on progress being made across Culture and Arts Services and to highlight events that have taken place during the previous quarter. The report also highlights specific events and activities within Culture & Arts Services that are currently being developed by the Officer team and which were planned to take place in the future.

Local Government (NI) 2014 – Confidential Business

Resolved: In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items D019/18 to D021/18.

Matters for Decision

D019/18 Proposal for the Delivery of the Fusion Pilot Project

D020/18 Proposal to identify Improvement Works to Events Space at Hill
of the O'Neill Dungannon

Matters for Information

D021/18 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on
Wednesday 6 December 2017

D022/18 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7 pm and concluded at 8.30 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____