

**Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 23 March 2023 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means**

<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Corry
<b>Members Present</b>	Councillors Ashton, Bell*, Black, Brown, Buchanan, Burton*, Clarke*, Colvin, Cuddy, Cuthbertson, Doris*, Forde*, Gildernew*, Glasgow, Graham*, Kearney, Kerr, Mallaghan, Martin, N McAleer, S McAleer, McFlynn, B McGuigan, S McGuigan, McKinney*, McLean*, McNamee*, D McPeake*, S McPeake*, Milne*, Molloy*, Monteith*, Mullen*, O'Neill*, Quinn and Robinson
<b>Officers in Attendance</b>	Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive Ms Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance (AD: ODSP) Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F) Ms Keys, Marketing and Communications Manager* Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer

\* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

\*\* Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

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

**C063/23 Notice of Recording**

Members noted that the meeting would be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site.

**C064/23 Apologies**

Councillors Elattar, Mullen, Totten and Wilson

**C065/23 Declarations of Interest**

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

## **C066/23      Chair's Business**

The Chair, Councillor Corry advised that over the past month the focus of her the incredible talent and achievements of the residents of Mid Ulster, such as Philomena Begley, an international ambassador of music for the district as well as many individuals, clubs, groups, and organisations that we have celebrated in our latest round of civic receptions. She commented on the scope of the achievements and the depth of each award recipient's commitment and enthusiasm given to their chosen field of success.

The Chair, Councillor Corry spoke of the generosity of Mid Ulster and thanked all those who attended the Seisiún Mór and International Women's Day events. She said that not only was every entertained with fantastic traditional music, song and dance but they were also inspired by amazing women, whose achievements are making a major impact in the world of business, community and all areas of society. She advised funds had been raised to assist the vital work of her chosen charities: STEPS Mental Health, Causeway and Mid Ulster Women's Aid and Tourette's Support NI.

In conclusion the Chair, Councillor Corry encouraged everyone to contribute to the current consultation on Performance Improvement Objectives. She highlighted that Council want to deliver the best possible services to everyone who uses them, and that is why the objectives have citizen's needs at the heart of service delivery and focus on improving outcomes for residents. She stressed that it was important to ensure Council is on the right track for the next two years and as such have developed objectives that focus on what is important for residents in the twenty first century such as the environment, cleaner neighborhoods, the regeneration of our district and making sure citizens are connected and can access services that matter to them. It was noted that details to contribute to the consultation was on Council's website and that responses should be made by 21 April.

Councillor Doris advised that she had been contacted by residents who were frustrated with the booking of swimming lessons in council owned leisure centres and said whilst she appreciated officers had put the effort in to recruit and train staff the impact of this was not being felt on the ground. She highlighted that in particular she had many complaints about the booking system and many parents have expressed disappointment as, despite being online early, they had not been able to book their children into swimming lessons. Councillor Doris quoted a parent saying that it was easier to get 'tickets for a Beyonce concert than booking swimming lessons with Mid Ulster District Council'.

Councillor Doris said the issue had been raised, work had been done but the issue was clearly not resolved and she would propose that a report be brought to the Development Committee to include an action plan as to how swimming lesson provision could be increased, booking systems improved and the provision of classes and booking systems standardised across the district.

Councillor Kerr said he too had been contacted by parents who were totally frustrated and had expressed disappointment at the lack of transparency and communication. He said that it appeared the service only remained open for a few minutes and people had even been unable to register interest, he requested that the

details be updated and lessons advertised externally. Councillor Kerr asked how Council could meet the demand as more lessons would raise more revenue and children would acquire a lifelong skill. Councillor Kerr also advised he had been contacted by Cookstown Swimming Club and highlighted difficulties in accessing Greenvale Leisure Centre for training. He proposed that Senior Officers progress a meeting as soon as possible with Cookstown Swimming Club with regard to use of Greenvale Leisure Centre to alleviate difficulties caused by short notice booking cancellations.

Councillor Quinn said he too had been contacted by parents who had been totally frustrated by the system and were taking their children and their money to other council areas. He acknowledged the issue had been ongoing for some time and more resources was needed to deliver solutions. He concluded seconding proposals of Councillors Doris and Kerr.

Councillor Cuddy said he recognised the issues being raised but felt it was important to acknowledge the good leisure staff were delivering across the district. He said his wife and family used the facilities regularly and spoke highly of them.

The Chair Councillor Corry said the matter would be referred to Development Committee for discussion.

Proposed by Councillor Doris  
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and

**Resolved** That a report be brought to the Development Committee to include an action plan as to how swimming lesson provision could be increased, booking systems improved and the provision of classes and booking systems standardised across the district.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and

**Resolved** That Senior Officers progress a meeting as soon as possible with Cookstown Swimming Club with regard to use of Greenvale Leisure Centre to alleviate difficulties caused by short notice booking cancellations.

The Chair, Councillor Corry acknowledged that the leisure team had worked hard to address issues and a report would be processed through committee.

Councillor McFlynn spoke of Gallion Heights in Moneymore which was a new development that was only equipped for gas heating which was contracted to one provider thus removing the ability for residents to shop around. She highlighted that the Into the West gas provision bypassed Moneymore and many people had purchased their homes thinking this would be a future option. Councillor McFlynn proposed that Council write to the Regulator regarding gas provision at Gallion Heights, Moneymore stating that the letter should also seek clarity as to why the 'Into The West' gas provision is not going through Moneymore

Councillor Brown seconded the proposal and said that it was his understanding that the decision to bypass Moneymore had been a financial one.

Councillor McFlynn said she had spoken with one resident who said it cost £250 to heat her home per month.

**Resolved** That Council write to the Regulator regarding gas provision at Gallion Heights, Moneymore. Letter to seek clarity as to why the 'Into The West' gas provision is not going through Moneymore.

Councillor Colvin drew attention to parental alienation and explained that it was defined as a strategy whereby one parent can unintentionally and intentionally display to a child unjustified negativity aimed at the other parent with the purpose of damaging the child's relationship with the other parent and turn the child's emotions against them. He explained that the outworking of this can then be captured as a form of Domestic Abuse as it is accepted as a group of behaviours that causes high levels of conflict, confusion and distress for a child. Councillor Colvin shared that international research indicates the impact of parental alienation on children to include emotional and psychological harm, anxiety disorders, depression, trauma and complex trauma, suicidal ideation, self-harm and suicide. In conclusion he spoke of a Local charity *La Dolce Vita Project* that seeks to raise awareness of this important matter and proposed that Council permits the charity to present to an appropriate Committee.

The Chair, Councillor Corry concurred seconding the proposal.

**Resolved** That local charity La Dolce Vita Project be invited to present to committee in relation to Parent Alienation.

Councillor Sharon McAleer advised that she had been contacted by Mr Liam Dougan from Carers NI Policy Forum. She stated there was over 220k unpaid carers in Northern Ireland many, a recent survey had revealed, found it challenging to access breaks and leisure services especially due to the rise in costs due to the cost of living crisis. Councillor S McAleer said that the survey had revealed there was some 15,729 throughout Mid Ulster and only 5000 of these claimed carers allowance. She highlighted that there was no specific discounted rates of carers using council services and also of the need to support Carer ID cards. It was noted that during the pandemic Carer ID cards had been issued by all trusts and following their expiration the Northern Trust launched its own Carer ID Card, which is available to unpaid carers throughout the Northern Trust who are registered but unfortunately not all carers are registered with a trust, to date 993 people have applied for a card. Councillor S McAleer explained that the cards are not automatically issued and were not developed to provide concessionary access to events and venues it does prove someone is an unpaid carer. She further advised that the Southern Trust had not continued to process Carer ID cards post lockdown. Councillor S McAleer proposed that Council liaise with Carers NI and the NHSCT and SHSCT to progress identity card provision for unpaid carers, discuss ways of incorporating unpaid carers not registered with a Trust to allow all to access to concessions to example leisure centres, events etc and that Carers NI and representative from Carers Policy Forum

be invited to make presentation to the Council in relation to unpaid carers identity cards.

The Chair Councillor Corry seconded the proposals and said that many carers both paid and unpaid are struggling especially at this time.

Proposed by Councillor S McAleer  
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Corry

**Resolved** That Council

- (i) Council liaise with Carers NI and the NHSCT and SHSCT to progress identity card provision for unpaid carers, discuss ways of incorporating unpaid carers not registered with a Trust to allow all to access to concessions to example leisure centres, events etc;
- (ii) Carers NI and representative from Carers Policy Forum be invited to make presentation to the Council in relation to unpaid carers identity cards.

The Chair, Councillor Corry advised that there would be an additional document for sealing and sought a proposer and seconder that it be considered later in the meeting.

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn  
Seconded by Councillor Mallaghan and

**Resolved** That as requested Council consider the additional item for sealing Transfer and Conveyance of Lands from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to Mid Ulster Council.

### **Matters for Decision**

**C067/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Council Meeting held on 23 February 2023**

Councillor Kerr drew attention to C039/23 Environment Committee and sought an update on the proposed public consultation with regard to recycling centres emphasising that it needs to happen as soon as possible.

The Chief Executive advised that following ratification of the Environment Committee minutes officers would progress with decisions.

In response to Councillor Kerr’s comments with regard to changes in routes in the Torrent area the Chief Executive advised that the matter would be clarified with staff.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan  
Seconded by Councillor N McAleer and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 23 February 2023 (C031/23 – C046/23 and C056/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C068/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Special Council Meeting held on 2 March 2023**

Proposed by Councillor N McAleer  
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Special Council held on Thursday 2 March 2023 (C057/23 – C062/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C069/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Planning Committee Meeting held on 7 March 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan  
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 7 March 2023 (P023/23 – P029/23 and P034/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C070/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 9 March 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Kearney  
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Thursday 9 March 2023 (PR040/23 – PR051/23 and PR066/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C071/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Environment Committee Meeting held on 14 March 2023**

Proposed by Councillor N McAleer  
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 14 March 2023 (E057/23 – E074/23 and E089/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C072/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Development Committee Meeting held on 16 March 2023**

Councillor Cuddy drew attention to D054/23 lands at Altmore/Cappagh and reflected on discussions from legacy councils and recent reports that a company was building two reservoirs in Scotland to generate hydro power and with the two reservoirs at Cappagh it may be a unique opportunity for council to explore the introduction of hydro power in Mid Ulster.

Councillor Mallaghan said with the watercourse at Dungannon Park there may also be opportunity for a hydro-electric project.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said that both were interesting concepts.

Proposed by Councillor Clarke  
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Development Committee held on Thursday 16 March 2023 (D041/23 – D055/23 and D060/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C073/23 Conferences, Seminars and Training**

The HoSS&E sought approval for the previously circulated report on conferences, seminars and training as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Proposed by Councillor N McAleer  
Seconded by Councillor Mallaghan and

**Resolved** That approval be given to submitted requests for conferences, seminars and training as outlined at Appendix 1 to the report.

**C074/23 Civic Recognition Requests**

The HoSS&E sought approval for the previously circulated report on civic recognition requests from Members, in line with the stated Council Policy, and as detailed within the report at Appendix A.

Councillor Kearney requested that his name be added to nomination for Friel’s Bar in Swatragh.

Councillor Kerr spoke of two nominations approved previously for which he had been the nominating Councillor. He advised that detail had appeared on social media that the two nominees had been invited to a reception by the Chair as they had been unable to attend the Civic Reception event. He sought clarity as to why he had not been invited as the nominating Councillor.

The Chief Executive stated the comments would be taken on board.

Councillor Kerr sought assurance that this would not happen again.

Councillor Glasgow said his understanding was that if a nominee could not attend the civic reception to award was posted out to them.

Councillor Kerr asked if previous Chair's handled the situation in the same manner.

The Chief Executive reminded Members that all comments should be made through the Chair, he reiterated that the comments be taken on board and officers would revert to said Members.

Councillor Robinson proposed that Archie Condy, Country Club Tug of War (Mark Robinson) and Jackie Brush & Officers of Aughnacloy Rising Sons of William LOL 156 be added to civic reception list due to their being no plans for civic recognition in advance of new council.

It was noted that the proposed nominees all met the required criteria for recognition. Councillor Burton requested her name be added as nominating Councillor.

Proposed by Councillor Robinson  
Seconded by Councillor Ashton and

**Resolved** That Archie Condy, Country Club Tug of War (Mark Robinson) and Jackie Brush & Officers of Aughnacloy Rising Sons of William LOL 156 be added to civic reception list.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

**Resolved** That Members receive clarity in relation to presentation of civic awards to those unable to attend designated reception and that nominating councillors be included on invitation list to all civic award presentations

Proposed by Councillor Monteith  
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

**Resolved** That Officers consider if recent Irish Restaurant Awards 2023 presented to hospitality venues throughout the district meet the criteria for civic awards.

**Resolved** That approval be given to submitted requests for civic recognition detailed at Appendix A as outlined in the report;

## **Matters for Information**

### **C075/23 Consultations**

Members noted consultations received for attention of Council.

Councillor Mallaghan proposed that Council respond to Department for Energy Security and Net Zero: Managing Radioactive Substances and Nuclear Decommissioning. He stated that the response should be that Mid Ulster Council does not want nuclear activity either in the district or across the North of Ireland. He stressed it is important that local authority message is it is unacceptable.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan  
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

**Resolved** That Council respond to Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Consultation: Managing Radioactive Substances and Nuclear Decommissioning: Closing Date 24 May 2023. Response to include that Council are opposed to any Nuclear activity across the Mid Ulster District and the North of Ireland.

### **C076/23 Correspondence**

Members noted update on correspondence received for attention of Council.

Councillor N McAleer proposed that that Council support Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in relation to the notice of motion - Reduction in Voting Age to include writing to the Secretary of State as outlined in the motion. He stated that there had been some positive moves in the South and Council should support.

Councillor Mallaghan seconded the proposal.

Councillor S McPeake drew attention to correspondence from ABC Council in relation to energy company profits, he said it was a topic Council had discussed, the profits were obscene especially in the current cost of living crisis. He proposed that Council endorse ABC Council motion and send letters as appropriate.

Councillor Doris drew attention to response from Department of Health regarding a women's health strategy and expressed disappointment that they declined the offer to meet with Council. She stated that as elected representatives each Member was the bridge from the elected and emphasised that the National Health Service is a funded body. She also alluded to waiting lists in relation to, for example, smear tests which were unacceptable.

Councillor Doris proposed that Council respond to Permanent Secretary for Department of Health expressing disappointment that they are declining to meet with Members especially given that NHS is a funded body, Members are elected to represent and there are so many ongoing issues in relation to women's health provision.

The Chair, Councillor Corry seconded the proposal stating that a Women's Health Strategy was badly needed and highlighted that advertisements in relation to heart attacks only relate to male symptoms.

Proposed by Councillor Doris  
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

**Resolved** That Council respond to Permanent Secretary for Department of Health expressing disappointment that they are declining to meet with Members especially given that NHS is a funded body, Members are elected to represent and there are so many ongoing issues in relation to women's health provision.

Councillor Mallaghan seconded Councillor S McPeake's proposal

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake  
Seconded by Councillor Mallaghan and

**Resolved** That Council support the motion moved by ABC Council and write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer in similar terms as requested.

Councillor Gildernew drew attention to correspondence from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council in relation to consultation regarding South West Acute Hospital. He proposed that Council send a robust response to the consultation as a large proportion of Mid Ulster residents use the SWAH hospital. He advised that going by google maps it was 17 miles from Fivemiletown to SWAH but 43 miles to Craigavon Area hospital and stressed that those in outlying areas would have to travel further. He said that the hospital had difficulty in attracting consultants and Council needed to make strong representation as in a life saving situation 20 miles made a huge difference. Councillor Gildernew concluded that the hospital was noted for its work with stroke patients.

Councillor Kerr seconded the proposal.

**Resolved** That Council support Fermanagh & Omagh District Council request and respond positively to the SHSCT Public Consultation on the South West Acute Hosital.

Councillor Colvin referred to the earlier proposal to support Newry Mourne and Down District Council motion regarding the age of voting. He said not everyone agreed with the Sinn Féin position and he himself would like more information on the matter. He said for example in America the age to drink was 21 whilst in Northern Ireland it was 18. With regard to the proposal to support ABC Council motion regarding the energy company profits he said it was somewhat disingenuous of Council to speak of others when the rates had been raised by almost 8% and ABC Council rates raised by approximately 7% and concluded that people in glass houses should not throw stones.

Councillor Burton concurred with Councillor Gildernew's comments regarding SWAH and said whilst residents of the Clogher Valley paid their rates in Mid Ulster they worked, shopped and were educated in Fermanagh and it was important for Council to respond to the consultation. She said the issue regarding getting doctors to work west of the Bann was huge and Council should be robust in its response.

Councillor Cuthbertson referred to the correspondence from Department of Infrastructure emailed to Members. He welcomed the response but said the

response only referred to a bunker available in Magherafelt and asked if clarity could be obtained as to whether it was available elsewhere in the district.

Councillor Cuthbertson asked if when correspondence comes for information, Council decides to support the request surely it is not an endorsement of Mid Ulster Council policy.

The Chief Executive said the Member was correct that the request was an endorsement of another councils position. He said Mid Ulster policy would be agreed through Policy & Resources Committee then ratified by Council.

Councillor S McAleer concurred with the comments in relation to SWA Councillor Gildernew referred to comments in relation to Department for Infrastructure and raise the issue of resurfacing works on Main Street, Caledon. He said the entire street was closed in both directions for 12 weeks and businesses were 'up in arms' and it had been a topic on the Nolan show earlier in the day. He requested that Council write to DfI and also the Contractors to ask if a light system could be introduced to allow access from one or other side of the road.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said the issues would have to be considered by environment committee.

Councillor S McGuigan drew attention to correspondence from Planning Appeals in relation to A5 public enquiry timetable and said that at a meeting of the A5/A2 group all councils had been asked to be supportive and also highlight the public enquiry on all platforms to encourage people to respond.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan  
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Corry and

**Resolved** That Council promotes the A5 Public Enquiry timetable on its website and communication platforms encouraging people to respond.

The Chief Executive stated there had been a proposer and seconder to support Newry, Mourne and Down district Council request and a counter proposal by Councillor Colvin thus it would go to vote.

Councillor Colvin said it had been a comment but then proposed not to support the request but to seek more information on the matter.

Councillor Glasgow seconded Councillor Colvin's proposal.

Councillor Kerr stated he fully supported the quest for the voting age to be lowered as young people were more inclined to use their vote, he also said he would not look to America for guidance as you can walk into Walmart and buy a gun.

Councillor Colvin reiterated he was not against changing the age to vote but he would like that it is referred to relevant committee for debate.

Councillor N McAleer said he was happy with his proposal.

Councillor Mallaghan sought clarity as to why it had been stated it would go to vote when Councillor Colvin had not formerly proposed.

The Chief Executive said he had assumed it was a proposal.

Councillor Mallaghan said he thought it had been a concern.

Councillor Cuthbertson sought clarity as to what the letter would say.

Councillor N McAleer said it was straightforward in that Council would support Newry Mourne and Down District Council motion and send a letter as request.

Councillor Glasgow said he had 'no notion of what was going on but it was no surprise regarding a vote as it would mean skipping through the thought process.

The Chief Executive said it would be Members decision.

Councillor Cuthbertson again sought clarity as to what the letter would say and that it would not be the policy of Mid Ulster Council.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said the letter would detail that Mid Ulster supported the Newry Mourne and Down motion.

Councillor Cuthbertson stated the Chief Executive stated this would not happen.

The Chief Executive said the letter would state support for the motion.

The Chair, Councillor Corry called for a vote on Councillor N McAleer's proposal.

For	21
Against	13
Abstained	0

The Chair Councillor Corry declared the proposal carried.

That Council support Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in relation to the notice of motion - Reduction in Voting Age to include writing to the Secretary of State as outlined in the motion.

Councillor Burton referred to earlier comments in relation to road works at Caledon and said whilst there is conflict the works has been long awaited. She said she thought there was a light system.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said the matter could be discussed at Environment Committee.

Councillor Burton sought clarification regarding travel permits as she had been advised they were issued to council on 15 March but Members had not received copy.

The Chief Executive reiterated the Chair's statement that the matters would be looked at by the Environment committee and reminded Members it was not an agenda item.

Councillor Glasgow reflected on the traffic management at Moneymore and said that communications regarding diversions needed to be shared early.

Councillor S McAleer concurred with comments in relation to the response to be sent to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health. Councillor S McAleer mentioned the roadworks.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said road work matters would be referred to Environment Committee.

### **C077/23 Notice of Motion**

Councillor S McPeake moved the motion,

"That this Council recognises the vital role that 'Out and About Community Transport' and 'Shop Mobility' organisations provide in our towns and rural areas of Mid-Ulster for various user groups including the elderly, people with disabilities, the unemployed and our young people and that this Council is shocked to learn that these much valued, not-for profit, Charitable organisations have been put on notice that no departmental funding is guaranteed for them beyond April 2023 and that this Council seeks an urgent meeting with DFI Permanent Secretary seeking the securing and ring fencing of the budget necessary to sustain this vital service to our rural communities"

Councillor S McPeake speaking on the motion said, "It was approximately a fortnight ago when I was first made aware of the potential cuts to 'Rural Community Transport' and 'Shop Mobility' services locally. It was at a meeting the week earlier where a DFI official had with Rural Transport Managers across the north when this official stated that no further DFI funding could be guaranteed to sustain these services post April 2023. Out and About Community Transport run a vital service throughout the district providing over 18,000 'Dial-a-Lift' services each year. They provide transport for people with disabilities, health appointments, Day centre appointments, shopping, local employment, training needs, links to wider public transport or going out to meet family or friends. The breadth and importance of these services to the health and wellbeing of our local communities is truly immense.

Shop Mobility provides equipment for people with disabilities to help them travel around towns. They bridge the gaps in the health service by providing equipment and support to people with a broad range of mobility issues. They work closely with the medical profession, GP's, Occupational Therapists, Social Workers, providing wheelchairs, mobility scooters and other walking aids for those needing them.

As news of the potential funding shortfall began to emerge the sheer and devastating impacts that the cuts would have quickly dawned on those directly impacted. Not least to the committed staff and the many service users whose lives would be most

directly impacted. Users of the services that include many of the most vulnerable groups in our society. I have spoken with the managers of the service providers whose futures are being threatened and they are at a loss for what it means to their clients whom they see more of a family than customers or clients and also their staff and volunteers and they are seeking support of any kind to help save the services.

Just a few days ago I received a call from an elderly lady who, that morning had received notice from Out and About, that potentially her weekly visit to the town was going to stop as a consequence of cuts to the rural transport budgets. She wanted whatever could be done to be done to save this vital service. She spoke of her looking forward to her weekly excursion to the town with friends of mixed religions, most of whom were like herself, lived alone and whose only social occasion of the week was to meet others thanks to Rural Community Transport. To say that this lady I spoke to was in despair would be an understatement. She was devastated at the thought of what might happen, should the service cease.

For me the possible termination of these services would be disastrous in so many fronts and serious questions need to be asked as to why these services are under threat. For example-does the department not to have a statutory duty to sustain these services to these people, the elderly, people with disabilities. Has, or will there be Equality Impact Assessments carried out to determine the impacts such cuts will have on these groups of people? We hear a lot being talked about the policy of 'Rural Proofing'. Where does Rural Proofing fit in when vital services to the most disadvantaged rural dwellers could possibly be stripped away, surely rural proofing and safeguarding these services cannot be ignored?

I have seen correspondence which Francie Molloy MP has received from Secretary of State in response to Francie's request to him seeking assurances on the Rural Transport and Shop Mobility budgets being secured. In the response the Secretary of State says that resolving such matters is the role of elected members of the NI Assembly and in the absence of such the matter should be referred to Department of Infrastructure. We are clearly at a disadvantage at present in terms of having no Assembly up and running or elected and accountable Ministers to lobby on this important issue affecting all our communities. What I am proposing is that we nevertheless request a meeting with the DFI Permanent Secretary on this issue and seek the ring fencing of funds that are so absolutely vital for the retention of these services within our district."

Councillor McNamee seconded the proposal and said he had been a director of Rural Transport and a member of Shop Mobility and would concur with Councillor S McPeake. He said intervention is needed from the Secretary of State and Permanent Secretary as to not save this service would be scandalous.

Councillor Bell said people had worked tirelessly to build the services up and the impact would be felt on the whole of the North.

Councillor S McGuigan concurred with previous contributors and said he had met with Mark Farquhar and the Chief Executive of Community Transport over the past weeks. He spoke of the range of emotions being felt by service providers and users in that they felt shocked, angry and attacked. He said he had submitted questions

but to date had received no answers. Councillor S McGuigan reiterated the question about the impact assessments especially on elderly people, if a cost benefit analysis had been carried out, who would absorb the gap in costs. He highlighted that the service is across a range of departments and a joint approach was needed. He concluded that it was imperative that Council seek a halt to the withdrawal of funding.

Councillor Martin spoke of the shock in the community when people learned that the funding was not guaranteed post March. She said like other Members had been inundated with calls from service users who would feel the impact of the cuts both in their physical and mental wellbeing given that 80 and 90 years olds would be losing their independence. She said she had a specific interest in the service as one of her parents had MS and whilst they don't avail of the service directly many of their friends from rural areas who attend MS support groups describe the service as a lifeline. She concluded that the SDLP would support the motion.

Councillor Kerr supported the motion stating it was a vital service which should be retained and not decimated.

Councillor Glasgow said the UUP would support the motion and shared that he had attended a meeting along with Councillors McFlynn and Forde at Community Transports new premises. He said they are a rural service and as such he would like to see the equality impact assessment, Section 75 as in the words of one community group their life line was being cut off. He said it had recently been discussed at planning committee that a journey of 7 mile required three bus changes. He said this happening shows the importance of devolved government and said that the Secretary of State is in charge when devolved government is not in place. Councillor Glasgow said the people using the service did not care about nationality or anything else they just wanted the service to go to church, the shops, support groups etc. He highlighted that occupational therapists and hospitals refer people to the service so they can attend appointments and the impact of cuts would be wide spread. He said elected members at local government level were the only body meeting at present and thus must do all they can. In conclusion, Councillor Glasgow said that the withdrawal of the service would have a serious detrimental impact on mental health as people would be left stuck in their homes and this situation demonstrated the need for effective devolved government.

Councillor Colvin concurred and said it was an insensitive cynical attack on the most vulnerable in society. He shared stories of service users and said that the Secretary of State had a track record of making decisions and there is bound to be money to sustain this service. He concluded that civil servants should hang their heads in shame and Council must make the strongest case possible for those impacted.

Councillor Burton said the DUP would support the motion stating that since the news broke of the cuts there is a public outpouring of despair given the huge impact they would have on the most vulnerable in society. Councillor Burton said that she represents council on CDM Community transport and knows first hand the vital need the service provides both in through the door to door and dial a lift. She said it was somewhat ironic that DfI introduced the service and now it is Shopmobility and Community Transport who deliver it. She spoke of the friendships which evolve as

people travel together to shop or attend appointments and the vital lifeline the service provides to many elderly people. Councillor Burton spoke of the 154 staff across Northern Ireland 15 of whom were in Mid Ulster and 6 within Shopmobility stating that they were the front face of the service and were in fear of being put on notice. She highlighted that the deadline for written confirmation 29 March for April funding and stressed the urgency especially given the end of the financial year when lease agreements may need renewed and also referred to the 2017 legislation that permitted the Department of Finance to redirect funding. In conclusion Councillor Burton asked if Councils strategic development grant funding could be fast tracked to the organisations.

In response to the Chair, Councillor Corry's query Councillor S McPeake said that points raised by Members had been pertinent and he was happy to include them in correspondence in particular relating to impact assessments. He said he was delighted with the views and support across the Council on what was a very emotive issue.

The Chair, Councillor Corry declared the motion carried.

Councillor Corry said that the matter was close to people's hearts and it was dreadful the impact it would have should services be cut on 1 April especially given the aging population.

#### **C078/23 Notice of Motion**

Councillor McFlynn speaking on the motion said, "During Covid our health service was under extreme pressure. Dentists practically closed apart from emergency appointments. Our hospitals and A and E were complete overwhelmed. Our GPs and practices were also under stress. Appointments were difficult to get and we are still hearing stories of how difficult it can be to get an appointment with your GP. When GPs closed pharmacies had great difficulty get the prescription though for patients. During that time our Pharmacies stepped up a gear and filled the gap helped people every single day and we should all be extremely thankful. They carried out blood pressure checks, diabetes checks and filled blister packs for the vulnerable and they continue to offer these services without funding. They helped residents with heart conditions and helped deliver vaccinations. Approximately 123,000 people visit the 523 pharmacies every day in N Ireland that's a staggering 37m visits each year.

The Mid Ulster SDLP team recently met with community pharmacies NI and local pharmacists from Mid Ulster and Fermanagh. We wanted to thank them for the work they have done in recent years and to hear first-hand the difficulties they are facing. Which included staff issues, accessing drugs and the cost of getting them delivered due to increase fuel costs. The finances they are currently receiving are nowhere near what they need to maintain their service. Some pharmacies are facing closure and where will our residents be then. Pharmacists feel that the computer systems between the health service GP surgeries and pharmacies could be digitalised which would make it easier for patients to obtain their medications without having to contact the GP this would be very helpful to long term patients they wouldn't have to continually order the medications at the surgery. The KPMG report estimates that

community pharmacies could be underfunded by 30% in 2022/23. It also states that NI could question the drug tariff it receives in comparison to other regions in the UK.

The remuneration and reimbursement options provide mechanisms to address the funding deficit which would enable long term sustainability and viability of this important primary sector care. The community pharmacy commissioning plan which was agreed by our previous health minister Mr Robin Swan if implemented could bring benefits to patients and deliver efficiencies to the health service.”

Councillor McFlynn moved the motion

“This Council recognises the vital role played by Community Pharmacies, particularly in rural areas, in providing access to healthcare during the Covid-19 pandemic and that the network made a huge contribution to the public health response through new and enhanced roles developed in conjunction with the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Board. Notes the finding of a recent KPMG report that estimates the cost of providing community pharmacy services for 2022/23 to be around £200million compared to indicative community pharmacy funding of £133.2million. Agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary at the Department for Health highlighting this funding deficit, and calls on any incoming Executive to secure the significant investment needed to implement the agreed 2021 Community Pharmacy Commissioning Plan.”

Councillor Kearney seconded the motion and said like the motion presented by Councillor S McPeake society is being confronted by another vital service in crisis. He said that often community pharmacies were family run passed down generation to generation, they serve their local communities and had been a tremendous prop to the health service especially during covid. Councillor Kearney concluded that health centres were closing throughout the north and that as his son was a community pharmacist he was very aware of the demand on their services.

Councillor Doris said that Sinn Féin would support the motion. She said that community pharmacists play an excellent role in taking the pressure off hospital and GP services and fully deserve more support.

Councillor Brown stated that community pharmacies play a crucial role and are the most accessible in care providers. He stated they understand their communities, are well placed to deal with marginalised groups and are greatly appreciated by the wider public. He said that throughout the pandemic they remained open and played a huge role in the vaccination programme. He concluded that the DUP would support the motion.

Councillor Glasgow stated that the UUP would support the motion. He said that the pandemic had changed everything but the community pharmacy continued their role at a time when dentists closed and GPs were limited. Councillor Glasgow said that to remove community pharmacies would be another detriment. He spoke of Robin Swann in his time as Health Minister had pushed to enhance community pharmacies especially given that GPs are struggling. He highlighted the services being provided by community pharmacies such as blood pressure checks, cholesterol checks, diet

advice and a first point of contact for new mothers. He concluded that the UUP would support the motion.

Councillor Kerr supported the motion stating that during the pandemic community pharmacies had stood up to the test and spoke of the support the community volunteer group had given local pharmacies during the pandemic to ensure people received their medication.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said that community pharmacies provide a fantastic service and declared the motion carried.

Councillor McFlynn thanked Members for their support and said it was vital to fight for the retention of this service in that they can stay close to residents so that people do not have to travel to the next town.

### **C079/23 Notice of Motion**

Councillor Quinn moving the motion said, "If you are a councillor in the Dungannon area you will no doubt know about the First Steps Women's Centre based in Dungannon Town. If you are not from the area you will know it by reputation alone and I know chair you yourself called into the centre only a few weeks ago. If by some accident you don't know the centre then it can simply be described in one phrase and that is "A LIFE LINE". The services that the centre provides can really be described as 2nd to none. It is a life line to struggling mothers who can't get the help they need anywhere else and it's a lifeline to women coming from other countries who are struggling, in dire need or simply running out of option to look after themselves and their family.

This centre provides a warm safe space for women, it's gives them a chance to meet other people in a similar situation, it's gives them links to educational courses, to badly needed counselling, it's gives them the chance for professional child care which is an invaluable resource to those mothers who are trying to advance themselves in ways that simply wouldn't be possible without FSWC. It also provides safe transport for those at risk and for those women now able to get into the centre themselves. It helps those coming to our shores the chance to learn English which in turns helps those families integrate better into our community. Their staff have been able to bring in a minimum of 450k per annum over the last 12 years into the mid ulster area. They have provided 350 course places, 65 child care places as well. Last week Cllr McAleer, Patsy McGlone MLA and myself met with Michael McGoldrick and he was able to show us first-hand the amazing work that they do, he was also quick to stress how helpful and supportive our council have been in the past and particularly our current chief executive. During the visit I was simply blown away by the wide range of help offered by FSWC, to have something like this on our doorstep is something we should be very proud off. We can't underestimate the impact that this service has in our rural areas as well.

Despite all this work, these services are now at risk because of the cuts set to come in. FSWC are set to lose 270K per annum because of the cut to the ESF fund. They are having to make 5 of its staff redundant, losing over 62 years' experience. They

are going to lose additional services like their benefit checker which has brought in 500k over the last 10 years to the Mid-Ulster area

These are just some of the losses they are facing, but the impact of those cuts will have on the community as a whole will be devastating. It's not over stating it that losing these services may have fatal impacts for some living in our community. I am also well aware that it is not just FSWC that are going to have their services devastated, with other groups in Mid-Ulster facing similar cuts"

Councillor Quinn moved the motion

"That this Council notes with concern the massive reduction to ESF funding which will have major implications in both the voluntary and community sector right across Mid-Ulster which will leave many vulnerable people at risk. That the Council calls for an emergency meeting with the permanent secretaries to Department for Communities, Department for the Economy, Department of Finance and Department of Health to discuss."

Councillor Quinn stated that it may not be possible to have the meeting prior to the elections but emphasised it should be a priority in the new council term.

Councillor Kearney seconded the motion stating that the funding would be sorely missed as the centre supported education, provided mentoring, counselling and other services. He referred to the consequences of the Barnett formula and drew attention to childcare provision in England which monies has recently been made available for 30 hours of free childcare. He spoke of a National Association of Councillors NI event earlier in the day which highlighted the number of people who benefitted from the funding to be approximately 200k and its loss would leave a huge gap and also lead to job losses.

Councillor Cuddy said that the UUP would support the motion. He said ESF had provided development of work place skills and helped people in reaching their full potential. He said it was imperative to find a way forward.

Councillor Kerr concurred with the points raised and highlighted that he had raised the same issue at the February Development committee. He said a number of education facilities receive ESF funding and the impact of its loss would be felt both locally and nationally. He concluded that local facilities provide good courses which are much needed.

Councillor Buchanan stated that the DUP would support the motion.

Councillor Molloy said that Sinn Féin would support the motion stating that ESF funding cuts had been predicated with the arrival of Brexit and it was clear there was no plans to replace it. He said it FSWC carry out sterling work, as a party they had engaged with them and would support all that can be done to protect funding.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said she too had engaged with groups back in October and had lobbied on their behalf she stated that the groups do good work and this was another example of the result of Brexit and the most vulnerable being impacted.

The Chair, Councillor Corry declared the motion carried.

Councillor Quinn thanked parties for their support and stated that he was delighted to see three motions carried this evening.

*The live broadcast concluded at 8.55 pm.*

**Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The public will be asked to withdraw from the meeting at this point.**

Proposed by Councillor N McAleer  
Seconded by Councillor McAleer and

**Resolved** That items C080/23 to C086/23 be taken as confidential business.

**Matters for Decision**

- (i) Council Confidential minutes of meeting held on 23 February 2023
- (ii) Planning Confidential minutes of meeting held on 7 March 2023
- (iii) Policy & Resources Confidential minutes of meeting held on 9 March 2023
- (iv) Environment Confidential minutes of meeting held on 14 March 2023
- (v) Development Confidential minutes of meeting held on 16 March 2023
- (vi) Council Insurances 2023/24
- (vii) Document for Sealing – Grant of Easement/Wayleave Land Registry CLC001-0004

**C087/23 Duration of Meeting**

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 9.07 pm.

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Annex A - Introductory Remarks from Chairperson**

Good evening and welcome to our meeting of Mid Ulster District Council in the Chamber, Dungannon whether you have joined us remotely or in the Chamber.

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

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

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

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda – apologies and then a roll call of members in attendance.