

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 27 August 2015 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon

Members Present: Councillor Dillon, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Bateson, Buchanan, Burton, Clarke , Cuddy, Cuthbertson, Forde, Gildernew, Gillespie, Glasgow, Kearney, Mallaghan, McAleer, McEldowney, McFlynn, McGinley, B McGuigan, S McGuigan, McKinney, McLean, McNamee, McPeake, Molloy, Monteith, Mullen, Mulligan, C O'Neill, J O'Neill, M Quinn, T Quinn, Reid, Robinson, J Shiels, G Shiels, Totten and Wilson

Officers in Attendance:

Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive
Ms Campbell, Director of Culture & Leisure
Mr Cassells, Director of Environment and Property
Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health and Infrastructure
Ms Linney, Head of Community Development
Mrs Mezza, Head of Marketing Communications
Mr Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Mr Tohill, Director of Finance
Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

C148/15 Apologies

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillors Bell and Elattar

C149/15 Chairs Business

Councillor McGinley spoke of the untimely death of Mr Aaron Devlin, commended local people for the tremendous community spirit displayed and requested that a letter of sympathy be forwarded to the Devlin family.

Councillor B McGuigan requested that the Chair forward a letter to Lughaidh Mac Giolla Bhrigde commending him on 19 years of public service in the Ambulance Service as he was having to retire due to ill health. Speaking about Lughaidh Councillor B McGuigan stated that his public service went beyond his paramedic duties and that he drove the Library Board bus in Dungannon, worked as a volunteer, was a great fundraiser and had served as an elected Member of Magherafelt District Council where he had been Vice Chair in 1985. It was further requested that it be put on record Council's appreciation of all frontline workers all of whom make a valuable contribution to society.

Councillor Buchannan congratulated Cookstown Bowling Club on becoming All Ireland Champions and requested that the Chair host a civic reception for the club. The Chair stated that she would most certainly acknowledge the achievement and in the future would be hosting a reception for many achievers and the club could be included.

Concurring with the request Councillor T Quinn stated that Cookstown Bowling Club had won the Irish Junior Cup which was a massive achievement as clubs from all over Ireland participated and referred to the achievement as the FA Cup in bowls and requested that it be recognised as a single event emphasising that the bowling community represented all ages, communities, religion and was a great cross community organisation and the request regarding this achievement should be treated as a special circumstance.

The Chair stated that she would not give a commitment but would consider the request.

Councillor McLean requested that on agreement of a Civic Receptions policy Abigail Wenlock winner of the European Scottish Championship Drum Major title and Paula Braiden who came second in her grade as Drum Major be recognised for their achievements. Councillor McLean also stated that he would like a policy in place as soon as possible as there was a frustration in the community that people were not being recognised. Concurring with the comment the Chair, Councillor Dillon stated that the names would be included on the list to be undertaken.

Councillor Wilson supported Councillor Buchanan and McLean in their proposals for recognition and requested that Emily Crooks who attained third place in the Drum Major Junior Section in the All Ireland Pipe band competition be included. Councillor Wilson further requested that Lukasz Kowalczyk be included in a civic reception for being the second person from Northern Ireland to swim the English Channel.

Councillor McGinley expressed appreciation to the Chair for visiting Mrs J O'Neill from Ardboe who had celebrated her 100th birthday.

Resolved That the aforementioned be recognised at forthcoming civic reception and letters as requested be forwarded by the Chair

C150/15 Declarations of Interest

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

Matters for Decision

C151/15 Receive and consider minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at Council meeting held on Thursday 23 July 2015

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on Thursday 23 July 2015 (C130/15 – C140/15 and C147/15), transacted in “Open Business” having been printed and circulated were considered and signed as accurate and correct.

C152/15 Receive and consider the minutes and recommendations of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Planning Committee (Development and Enforcement) held on Tuesday 28 July 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Kearney
Seconded by Councillor Gildernew and

Resolved That the Minutes and recommendations of the Planning Committee (Development and Enforcement) meeting held on Tuesday 28 July 2015 (P83/15 – P94/15 and P96/15) transacted in “Open Business”, having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

Councillor Mulligan drew attention to a recent article in the Tyrone Courier newspaper regarding the classification of towns and villages and sought clarification as to what stage the process was at and if the situation could be reviewed. Continuing Councillor Mulligan stated that many leading people in Fivemiletown had been contacted by the media to query their views on villages recommended for town status and it was not popular with the community that Ballygawley had been recommended for town status and Fivemiletown which was the gateway to the district had not.

Councillor Kearney stated that the document had been a proposal document and that the community in Fivemiletown would have opportunity to discuss and feed into the process. Concurring the Chief Executive stated that the paper was a discussion paper for Members and no decisions had been made.

Councillor Mulligan sought assurance that the consultation process would be open and available for the community in Fivemiletown and other areas affected. The Chief Executive advised that consultation would take place with the entire community.

Councillor G Shiels stated that architects had expressed concern to him regarding the planning website remarking that there were now eleven sites as opposed to the previous one. The Chief Executive, in the absence of the Planning Manager, advised that there was one website which was the Planning Portal and that Council’s website hosted some planning information but had a link to the main planning portal. The Chief Executive also stated if anyone had difficulty accessing information they should contact the Council’s planning office.

The Chair stated that it had been suggested that the planning department hold a meeting with architects. The Chief Executive stated that a meeting had been held with the construction sector and other interested parties.

Councillor Burton stated that architects had expressed concern to her that the planning process had been slowed up. Continuing Councillor Burton concurred with Councillor Mulligan’s comments regarding Fivemiletown stating that at the meeting it had been commented upon but many settlements and villages would be effected and that development organisations and Chamber of Commerce should be contacted.

C153/15 Conferences and Seminars

The Head of Democratic Services referred to details of the undernoted conferences and sought approval for the attendance of Members and Council officers, the payment of attendance fees and associated costs as incurred.

- (i) Recycling Waste Management Conference & Exhibition on Tuesday 15 to Thursday 17 September, at NEC, Birmingham;
Attendance request 1 day only: for two officers.
- (ii) Lisburn & Castlereagh Community Planning Conference (LG Training Group) on Wednesday 23 September at Civic Centre, Lisburn.
- (iii) National Association of Councillors – Training and Development Seminar Planning & Partnerships on Friday 25 to Sunday 27 September at the Carleton Hotel, Blackpool.
- (iv) Chartered Institute for Waste Management Conference on Wednesday 30 September at Titanic Centre, Belfast.
Attendance request for two officers.
- (v) Annual Economic Conference (Agenda NI) on Tuesday 20 October at Culloden Hotel, Belfast.

Councillor Cuddy to attend.
- (vi) Building Better Supply Chains (Social Enterprise NI) Thursday 22 October at Dunadry Hotel, Templepatrick.

In addition to the conferences aforementioned the Head of Democratic Services sought approval for undernoted conference to be included:

- Half day seminar Environmental Better Regulation Bill in Northern Ireland on Wednesday 2nd September 2015 at the Law Society, Belfast at a cost of £40 per delegate for non-members, £30 for UKELA and EPLAN members.

One staff member to attend at cost of £40.

Councillor Mulligan referred to report for Members of Tullyvar Joint Committee to attend RWM Conference and Exhibition at NEC, Birmingham.

Councillor McPeake stated that he wished to attend NILGA conference 'The new General Power of Competence' on Wednesday 28 October at the Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown which was also being repeated on Friday 29 October at Lough Neagh Discovery Centre, Craigavon and noted that places were limited to 35.

Proposed by Councillor McPeake
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

Resolved That the attendance of Members and officers, the payment of attendance fees and associated costs as incurred be approved, as required

C154/15 Responses to the Northern Health & Social Care Trust and Southern Health & Social Care Trust

The Chief Executive drew attention to the previously circulated report which detailed both responses to the Northern Health & Social Care Trust and Southern Health & Social Care Trust regarding Consultation on the future of residential homes and sought approval for same.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor T Quinn and

Resolved That the letters to Northern Health & Social Care Trust and Southern Health and Social Care Trust be approved.

Councillor McNamee also stated that at the meeting with the Northern Trust Members made it clear that they wanted Westlands retained, the non-admission policy removed and investment by the Trust resumed and whilst the suggested community services hub on Westlands site would be positive it was not to be in place of the residential care. Concluding Councillor McNamee emphasised that Council had a mandate from the community to campaign for the retention of Westlands and if Council did not win Westlands would be privatised. Concurring Councillor T Quinn stated that he had attended a protest rally against the closure of the home and yet again residents, family and staff did not know what was going on.

Councillor Wilson concurring with the comments of Councillors McNamee and T Quinn stated that it was imperative that Westlands Home was retained and that consultation must be meaningful. Expressing disappointment that the Northern Trust had expected Council to support them in the closure when previously the same Councillors had campaigned against it Councillor Wilson stated that the Trust had to act on the results of the consultation.

Councillor S McGuigan stated that he had attended the meeting with the Southern Trust and that the tone was the same they were seeking Council support for the closure of residential care and although tabling other services to be delivered it was imperative that they understood that additional services were welcome but not in place of residential care. Councillor S McGuigan emphasised that the argument for consultation must be strengthened and that the conclusions are acted upon.

Councillor Monteith concurred with previous speakers and stated that the Trusts were using the meetings with local councillors as political cover for decisions already made. Councillor Monteith stated that he had asked the Southern Trust what response would change the decision for closures and had been told that consultation must prove they were 'doing their sums wrong'. Continuing he stated that Council must make it clear the decision for closure had no democratic mandate and no

credibility and that political representatives must shout for the people who had elected them.

Councillor Buchanan concurred with previous speakers and stated that the Democratic Unionist Party had met with senior people from the respective Trusts to campaign to keep the homes open.

Concurring with previous speakers Councillor Reid suggested that Council organise a petition to be signed in public buildings. Councillor Wilson supporting the sentiments stated that Council must think the process through and suggested that the matter be brought to the Development Committee for further discussion. Councillor Glasgow seconded the suggestion subject to discussion on the matter at the Development Committee.

Matters for Information

C155/15 Correspondence

The previously circulated paper on correspondence notified to Mid Ulster District Council was noted.

Resolved That the correspondence contained within the previously circulated report be noted

C156/15 Consultations notified to Mid Ulster Council

The previously circulated paper on consultations notified to Mid Ulster District Council was noted.

Resolved That the consultations contained within the previously circulated report be noted

C157/15 Consideration of Motions

C157.1/15 Councillor Glasgow to move the motion

Councillor Glasgow in moving the motion stated there were approximately 2684 dairy farms in Northern Ireland which represented approximately 279,500 dairy cows, 1290 dairy farms were within the Mid Ulster area and played a big role in the Northern Ireland milk market. Continuing he stated that in recent months all would have witnessed the protests farmers were holding at supermarkets to highlight the seriousness of the crisis within the dairy industry and that in July farmers had been receiving 18p per litre for milk produced and that prices had been in steady decline since January 2014 yet overhead costs had increased. Councillor Glasgow further stated that by the time farmers had paid all overheads there was almost nothing left for them to live on and drew attention to the fact that in Mid Ulster the farming tradition had been a way of life handed down through generations. Emphasising that farmers could not continue to produce milk at a loss Councillor Glasgow stated that the dairy industry was being destroyed and many were opting

out of farming due to stress brought on by financial pressures and the huge losses being incurred could not be sustained. Concluding Councillor Glasgow sought support for the dairy farmers of Mid Ulster and proposed the undernoted motion.

“That this Council agrees to write to the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and the three elected members of the European Parliament expressing our concerns that the dairy farmers of Mid Ulster are at breaking point due to the current prices they are having to accept for their produce. The Minister for Agriculture must now realise her absolute main priority should be promoting local produce as well as identifying and opening new export markets. In addition she must work with all her Ministerial counterparts most especially Liz Truss, Secretary of State at DEFRA, on increasing pressure on Commissioner Hogan to raise the intervention price for milk. Unsustainable milk prices are destroying the dairy farms in Mid Ulster, farms will have to close, and generations of farming families will no longer exist as their way of life will be taken from them if action is not taken at once”

Councillor Molloy left the meeting at 7.43pm

Supporting the motion Councillor Clarke stated that in the North of Ireland in 1993 milk production was 1439 million litres, from 4596 holdings whilst in 2013 it was 1979 million litres from 2684 holdings. This represented a 38% increase in production from a region which had been an exporter of from 75% to 85% of its dairy product over that period. Councillor Clarke added that supply and demand makes an impact on producer returns.

Continuing Councillor Clarke stated that the Minister for Agriculture had endeavoured to raise the issues and that there should be a joint approach throughout the Island of Ireland to the common problems experienced in the farming industry where over 50% of milk produced was purchased by companies in both parts of Ireland. Calling for a proactive approach to the difficulties for all sectors of farming throughout Ireland Councillor Clarke emphasised that the structure of farming families at the heart of rural communities would disappear for ever if all producers did not receive a sustainable return.

Councillor Mallaghan stated that as Chair of Northern Ireland Government Association Rural Development Committee he was encouraged by the work of the Minister of Agriculture working with all counterparts for farmers and indeed for the new markets secured from China.

Councillor Molloy returned to the meeting at 7.48pm

Councillor Kearney stated that the farming industry was in turmoil throughout all sectors and issues with the single farm payment needed to be addressed. Stating that 75% of all farms in Magherafelt were less than 30 acres he emphasised that all made a valuable contribution to the community and that the SDLP supported the motion.

Seconding the motion Councillor McKinney stated that the industry was in crisis, that words would not help farmers action was needed from the Minister of Agriculture. Referring to single farm payments Councillor McKinney stated that farmers were dependent on the payment.

Supporting the motion Councillor Robinson stated that he had a dairy farm which was now run by his son and that in 1977 milk per litre produced was 14p approximately yet in 2015 it was 18p and that the rise in costs were high. Speaking of the difficulties Councillor Robinson emphasised that dairy farmers could not continue, that milk was oversupplied thus prices were low and this was a result of the removal of milk quotas. Referring to the world arena such as the political decision by Russia to ban imports, the financial crisis in China Councillor Robinson stated that effective decisions needed to come from Brussels. Speaking regarding the single farm payment Councillor Robinson stated that whilst the Minister for Agriculture was doing all she could and 90% of single farmer payments arrived on time it was imperative that 100% were paid on time as if you were unfortunate to be one of the 10% it resulted in severe difficulties and although banks would offer assistance farmers paid dearly for same.

Councillor Mulligan supporting the motion stated that in a lifetime he did not recall a period when farming was in such a precarious position and it was the only business that operated without knowledge or guarantee of end price and stated that both the Minister for Agriculture and the European Union should ensure the industry is maintained as it was a major employer in Northern Ireland.

Councillor McGinley stated that it was ironic that the Ulster Unionist Party were requesting that Council write to the Minister for Agriculture the same week their party walked away from the Northern Ireland Executive. Responding Councillor Glasgow emphasised that his aim was to support 2190 farmers in Northern Ireland.

As all parties had expressed support for the motion the Chair Councillor Dillon declared the motion carried.

Councillor C O'Neill left the meeting at 7.55pm

.Declaration of Interest

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in Cookstown Enterprise Centre

C157.2/15 Councillor Wilson to move the motion

Councillor Wilson spoke of the skills deficit across Mid Ulster emphasising the impact it was having on many industries and proposed the undernoted motion:

“That this council resolves to give full support to its officers to research the extent of the skills deficit manifest across Mid Ulster. Our entrepreneurs, of which there are many, for example within the Engineering Sector, are battling soul destroying pressures regarding recruitment of skilled personnel. A high level of skills through intensive training provides the staple diet of Innovation and Entrepreneurship. We would ask our officers to come back to council with a short interim report.

Further that this council requests the Minister for Employment and Learning Mr Stephen Farry to attend a future Council meeting to explain what his Department can do to help”

Seconding the motion Councillor G Shiels stated that the skills dearth was preventing companies from expanding to a level where they have economy of scale to the point they can teach skills 'in-house' thus young people travel abroad to acquire skills and experience and not returning. The impact of the economic downturn resulted in the upper level i.e. 40 to 50 year old leaving construction, the 20 to 30 years olds were now working in England and thus there is nothing for the 30 to 40 year olds or the teenagers who are referred to as NEETs i.e. 'not in employment, education or training. Councillor G Shiels emphasised the needs for proper training grants continuing all the way through apprenticeships, employment grants for three to five years and then industries should step up to the mark. Referring to the former Maghera school site Councillor G Shiels stated that it is a golden opportunity to develop a new skills base and endeavour to set in place a set of circumstances whereby the construction industry workforce is reskilled and simultaneously create the circumstances to strengthen the engineering sector which in turn would complement the wider industrial base.

The Chair, Councillor Dillon supporting the motion commended companies in the engineering sector offering the 'gold programme' whereby young people took GCSEs, sat an aptitude test and were employed by the company and whilst working were educated to degree standard. Stating that unfortunately there were not enough of these opportunities the Chair, emphasised the need for Council to support companies and stated that those saying foreign nationals were taking jobs were incorrect as many young people did not have the skills required to fill the posts. Continuing the Chair spoke of the work of Francie Molloy MP who was pushing for a centre of excellence for engineering as this sector was a massive employer in the District and stated that he had met with the Minister of Department of Enterprise, Trade and Industry to drive the initiative forward.

Councillor McPeake concurred with the comments and spoke also of the deficit in skills in the metal work industry especially trailer manufacturing together with the aerospace and quarry industries. Referring to a similar motion brought to the former Magherafelt Council in 2013 Councillor McPeake stated that Council should be proactive and that a centre of excellence for engineering was essential.

Concurring Councillor McLean stated that a distinction should be made between construction and engineering speaking of engineering outlets that had undertaken training of young people to find that four out of every ten would leave to travel thus the companies were suffering the loss of the employee and the investment cost of training and although a supporter of apprenticeships there needed to be direction. Referring to the construction sector Councillor McLean acknowledged locally there was not a lot of work but companies who had sourced work across the water were keeping airports busy flying personnel to and from England each week. Referring to the skills deficit Councillor McLean suggested putting it on an agenda for development committee to see how it could be addressed.

Councillor Molloy supporting the motion stated that like the engineering sector the agri-food sector was also a major employer effected by a skills dearth and companies needed to explore options. Councillor Molloy also referred to exploitation of unskilled labour whereby people entered the workforce unskilled and left it unskilled and thus young people did not see it as a viable career.

Responding to Councillor M Quinn's question the Chief Executive stated that the motion suggested a scoping exercise to be carried out by officers and reported back to Members. Councillor Ashton concurred with comments that young people are up-skilled to match the work opportunities on offer and that she would await with interest the response from the Minister of Employment and Learning as what was really required was investment in colleges.

As all parties had expressed support for the motion the Chair, Councillor Dillon declared the motion carried.

C157.3/15 Cllr McNamee to move the motion.

Councillor McNamee proposed the undernoted motion:

"This Council calls for an urgent meeting with the chief Executive of Translink and the Minister for Regional Development, Mr Danny Kennedy MLA to discuss the potential closure of Cookstown Bus depot and the impact this would have on the service to Cookstown and the surrounding area"

Councillor McNamee stated that Translink had indicated that the bus depot was not closing but there was scepticism as cessation of parcel services, refuelling of buses and closure of driver base had been suggested and it was essential that Council seek a meeting with Translink and the Minister for Regional Development whoever it may be to seek answers as it was imperative the busy depot did not turn into a mere bus shelter.

Councillor McKinney left the meeting at 8.23 pm

Councillor Cuthbertson stated he had attended a public meeting with the Regional Manager at the Dungannon site at which time a new timetable was issued which indicated that the smaller town bus which went through the housing estates accommodating elderly users was being withdrawn and some people would have to walk, in some instances half a mile, to the main road to board a bus. Supporting the motion Councillor Cuthbertson asked that the removal of smaller town buses be added to the agenda for the meeting being sought.

The Chair, Councillor Dillon agreed with this stating that whilst the motion referred to the Cookstown depot the whole service was important and wider discussion was essential.

Councillor Buchanan supporting the motion emphasising the need to support public transport especially as it had suffered attacks for many years.

Councillor Mallaghan added his support to the motion stating that the closure of the services at the Cookstown depot would be a major loss and it would be interesting to see who would meet Council given the current political situation.

Councillor McKinney returned to the meeting at 8.27pm

Councillor T Quinn supported the motion stating that although Translink had retracted on the closure assurance was needed to ensure the retention of the

services and that the public should be encouraged to use them. Responding the Chair Councillor Dillon stated that it was not Councils remit to encourage people to use public transport but that Council did need to ensure the service met the needs of the people.

Councillor Wilson stated that Cookstown was a regional hub and the A29 a major transport corridor yet Translink had given no consideration to this when cutting services to the depot and the timetable.

As all parties had expressed support for the motion the Chair Councillor Dillon declared the motion carried.

Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That items C158/15 to C 162/15 be taken as confidential business.

The press left the meeting at 8.30 pm

C163/15 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7pm and ended at 8.45pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____