

Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 15 June 2023 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor McNamee, Chair

Councillors Bell, Black*, W Buchanan, F Burton, Clarke, Corry, Forde, Gildernew, McLernon, McQuade, Monteith*, Milne*, Quinn, Wilson

Officers in Attendance

Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities and Place (SD: C&P)
Mr Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing (AD: HL&W)
Ms Linney, Assistant Director of Development (AD: Dev)**
Mr McCreedy, Strategic Programmes Service Manager (SPSM)
Mr McKenna, Economic Regeneration Service Manager (ERSM)
Ms McKeown, Tourism Service Manager (TSM)
Miss Thompson, Committee and Member Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Agenda Item 4 – Tbus Funding Streams
Mr Gardner – Head of Good Relations***

Councillor McFlynn**

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

D076/23 Notice of Recording

This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's YouTube site.

D077/23 Apologies

Ms McKeown, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes.

D078/23 Declaration of Interests

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

D079/23 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor McNamee asked that if Members want to raise something under Chair's Business that two days notice is given so that other Members and officers can be given prior notice. The Chair stated that if something comes up as an emergency then it can be dealt with.

The Chair, Councillor McNamee passed the condolences of the Development Committee to Councillor Varsani whose brother had passed away.

Councillor Bell spoke in relation to the blue-green algae bloom that is developing on Lough Neagh at present. The Councillor stated that due to the recent hot weather and lack of rainfall Lough Neagh waterflow has stagnated resulting in the build up of dangerous levels of algae. Councillor Bell advised that exposure to high levels of this this algae and its toxins can cause illness in humans and illness and death in animals if they consume large amounts of water containing blooms. The Councillor stated that pollution is also killing large numbers of fish in the Lough and it has been reported that over 200k tonnes of raw sewerage is dumped in the Lough every year. Councillor Bell stated that Lough Neagh is the source of 40% of drinking water for 750k people and if nothing is done he felt that we are sitting on a public health crisis and a biodiversity threat. The Councillor stated it is for these reasons that he asked officers to liaise with NIEA and have water from the Lough tested and that warning signs are placed along the lough shore. Officers were commended for their efforts to date but Councillor Bell felt that Council should do more to highlight this ever increasing hazard. Councillor Bell proposed that NIEA be invited to a future meeting to present on the water quality in Lough Neagh and what they are actively doing to protect the waterways that flow into the Lough.

Councillor McLernon seconded Councillor Bell's proposal.

That it be recommended to Council to invite NIEA to a future meeting to present on water quality in Lough Neagh.

Councillor Quinn stated that Mid Ulster is only one of six Councils which are around the Lough but that there is more lough shore in the Mid Ulster area. The Councillor felt this is not an easy issue to tackle and that the weather is not helping but that the water quality around the Washingbay / Brocagh area has been a cause for concern for him for a number of years with this year being particularly bad. Councillor Quinn stated that Councillor Bell had already highlighted the danger to animals from blue-green algae but also advised that a number of dead birds that have been found at lough shore areas which is being put down to Avian Flu which is another issue. The Councillor felt that the absence of a Minister in Stormont is not helping and that this is an issue which needs tackled at a Stormont level. Councillor Quinn stated that rain may or may not help to alleviate some of the issues but that the problems need to be sorted. The Councillor stated that the Lough was strange in that in some areas you couldn't go into the water

whilst in other areas there are blue beach flags where it is safe for people to swim. Councillor Quinn stated that a uniform approach is needed across the Lough as it is a national treasure and that it needed to start being looked after. The Councillor thanked officers who have been proactive during the last couple of weeks and that he would be happy for the NIEA to be invited to Committee.

Due to technical difficulties it was decided that the meeting be adjourned. Members to be advised of date / time to reconvene the meeting.

D080/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7pm and ended at 7.33 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

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