

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 9 May 2024 in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown

Members Present

Councillor Corry, Chair

Councillors Brown, F Burton, Cahoon, Gildernew, Johnston, McAleer, McFlynn, McLernon, S McPeake

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env)
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP)
Ms Dyson, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)
Ms Keys, Marketing and Communications Development Manager (MCDM)
Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E)
Mrs McNally, Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Finance (AD: CS&F)
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy & Performance (AD: ODSP)
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Services and Finance (SD: CS&F)
Miss Thompson, Committee and Member Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Councillor Kerr

Agenda Item 4 – Deputation: NIPSA

Mr Mullholland, Deputy Secretary
Ms McSherry, Classroom Assistant and NIPSA Rep

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

PR089/24 Notice of Recording

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

PR090/24 Apologies

Councillors Bell, J Burton, McLean, Molloy, Totten and Wilson.

PR091/24 Declarations of Interest

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

Councillor Gildernew declared an interest in agenda item 15 – Staffing Matters for Decision.

PR092/24 Chairs Business

None.

PR093/24 Deputation – NIPSA

The Chair, Councillor Corry welcomed Mr Mulholland and Ms McSherry to the meeting and invited them to address the committee.

Mr Mulholland stated the purpose of the presentation tonight was to make Members aware of the issues regarding the ongoing pay and grading review in education. Mr Mulholland stated it was regrettable that the presentation is needed but that he was grateful that Members were prepared to listen and take discussion points forward. Mr Mulholland provided a history of the pay and grading review in education which arose from 2018/2019 NJC pay agreement at which it was agreed that all NJC bodies would review pay spines. Mr Mulholland outlined the issues raised as part of the discussions of the pay and grading review, namely –

- Length of pay scales
- Pay differentials
- Outstanding job evaluations
- Ongoing education welfare officers pay dispute

Mr Mulholland stated the pay and grading review was supposed to deal with these issues and after two years of negotiations consent was agreed and a business case was constructed however due to the suspension of the Assembly this business case stopped moving. Since the return of the Assembly with additional budget the expectation was that the pay and grading review would be dealt with quickly however he advised that within the new budget not one penny has been allocated to this review. Mr Mulholland highlighted that the review is not for senior staff in the education authority but for lower paid workers – cleaners, classroom assistants, kitchen staff etc and that the review is valued at £180 million for 2022/23, 2023/24 and 2024/25. Mr Mulholland advised that since the first draft of the budget there have been new developments and that there is a proposal for an early draw down of £58 million to cover 2024/25 with nothing backdated. Mr Mulholland advised that assurances have been sought that the issue of backdating is also dealt with and a response to this is expected in the near future.

Mr Mulholland stated there is now anger amongst education authority employees and that this will mean a period of industrial unrest and that unions will submit legal notice for industrial action next week. This industrial action will be in the run up to the summer but will continue into the new school term in the autumn. Mr Mulholland stated that it

has been clear in exchanges with political parties that there is agreement as to the justice of the case being advanced and also commitment to try to do something about it but to date this has not turned into cash on the table.

The Chair, Councillor Corry thanked Mr Mulholland for the informative presentation and stated she has stood alongside education workers on the picket lines and recognises the important work they all do.

Councillor McLernon stated that Sinn Féin recognise the importance of the education workers who are amongst the lowest paid in the community and do the most vital work to support children and young people. The Councillor stated that the Sinn Féin Finance Minister is committed to working collectively with the Education Minister to find a resolution for the education workers and will be raising the matter as a priority with the Treasury.

Councillor Kerr stated he was a passionate trade unionist and hoped that the situation regarding the pay and grading review is resolved quickly. The Councillor stated it is a shame there is a shortfall regarding backdated pay and that he would encourage NIPSA to reach out to every other local authority in the North on this matter.

Mr Mulholland stated that both the Education and Finance Minister have been clear on their commitment to go to the Treasury to seek additional funding and that he was also aware of the other pressure points such as health that are out there but that he would ask that the pay and grading review is put to the top of the political agenda. Mr Mulholland stated that there has been engagement at various levels – Secretary of State, Ministers, MLAs and Councillors and anything that can be done by this Council to reach out to other Councils would be extremely helpful and that Councillors use the avenues available to raise the issue up through the assembly. Mr Mulholland stated there needs to be a collective push by everyone and that a lot of pressure will need to be put on Treasury to find a resolution.

Councillor Brown stated he was a Chair on a Board of Governors and that cleaning, kitchen and building maintenance staff are an integral part of the school. The Councillor stated that his party will continue to press on the pay and grading review issue.

Mr Mulholland stated that the Education Minister has met with NIPSA and is fully supportive of the pay and grading review and that this is noted and helpful, likewise with the Finance Minister. Mr Mulholland stated that the issue now needs to be elevated within the Assembly and given the same standing as health as a crisis area that needs to be resolved. Mr Mulholland stated that unfortunately there is potential for an extended period of disruption in schools and one of the things under discussion is industrial action around exam periods and that this is not a comfortable place to be.

Councillor Johnston stated that as a teacher who got a pay award and is going to get backdated pay she was embarrassed that there was no equality for support workers. The Councillor stated she had no doubt that both the Education and Finance Minister will be committed to giving priority to the issue and asked in terms of the £58 million for an early draw down for the 2024/25 pay award if this is the best that can be hoped for.

Mr Mulholland stated that the expectation and demand is that the pay and grading review is paid in full and that there is nothing left out. Mr Mulholland stated that the pay

and grading review was a fully negotiated settlement and that as a trade union he expected that when negotiations take place that it means something. Mr Mulholland stated that the Education Authority are the employer and that they should be instructed to pay what was agreed.

The Chair, Councillor Corry stated the consensus of the Members is that they are fully supportive of the education workers and that Members will continue to raise the pay and grading review issue wherever they can and that she would encourage people to join a trade union as that is where the strength is.

Mr Mulholland, Ms McSherry and Councillor Kerr left the meeting at 7.26 pm.

Matters for Decision

PR094/24 Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property

Members considered previously circulated report which sought approval to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Mesothelioma UK: Action Mesothelioma Day: 5th July 2024 Colour: Pink
- Deafblind Awareness UK: Deaf Blind Awareness Week: 27 June 2024 Colour: Purple
- Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): World PCOS Day: 2 September 2024 Colour: Teal
- North West Migrants Forum: Black History Awareness & Show Racism the Red Card: 1 October 2024 Colour: Red

The HoSS&E advised of additional requests which had been received since the report was published namely:

- Child Brain Injury Trust: Acquired Brain Injury Awareness Week: 24 May 2024 Colour: Purple and Blue
- Mid Ulster Loneliness Network: Loneliness Awareness Week: 10 June 2024 Colour: Blue

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Councillor F Burton and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties as follows –
- Mesothelioma UK: Action Mesothelioma Day: 5th July 2024 Colour: Pink
 - Deafblind Awareness UK: Deaf Blind Awareness Week: 27 June 2024 Colour: Purple
 - Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS): World PCOS Day: 1 September 2024 Colour: Teal
 - North West Migrants Forum: Black History Awareness & Show Racism the Red Card: 1 October 2024 Colour: Red

- Child Brain Injury Trust: Acquired Brain Injury Awareness Week: 24 May 2024 Colour: Purple and Blue
- Mid Ulster Loneliness Network: Loneliness Awareness Week: 10 June 2024 Colour: Orange and Yellow

PR095/24 Member Services

No issues.

Matters for Information

PR096/24 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 April 2024

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11 April 2024.

PR097/24 Update Committee on the Outcome of the Consultation Undertaken on the Council's Proposed Performance Improvement Objectives 2024 – 2025

Members noted previously circulated report which provided update on the outcome of the public consultation undertaken on Council's proposed improvement objectives 2024 – 2025.

PR098/24 Rural Needs Annual Progress Return to DAERA (2023/24)

Members noted previously circulated report which set out Mid Ulster District Council's Annual Progress Report to DAERA in relation to the Rural Needs Act NI (2016) for the period 2023-24.

PR099/24 Annual Subscriptions

Members noted previously circulated report which outlined correspondence received from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) and the National Association for Councillors (NAC) and Northern Ireland Local Government Association (NILGA) on annual contributions payable for 2024-2025.

PR100/24 Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance Directorate Service Plan 2024-25

Members noted presented previously circulated report which set out the Directorate Service Plan for Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance for period 2024-25.

PR101/24 Chief Executive - Marketing & Communications Service Plan 2024-25

Members noted previously circulated report which set out the Service Plan for the Marketing and Communications Service for the 2024-2025 year.

Live broadcast ended at 7.29 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor McLernon
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

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 PR102/24 to PR115/24.

Matters for Decision

PR102/24 Land and Property Matters
PR103/24 Staffing Matters for Decision
PR104/24 Revised Policies: (1) Safeguarding of Children & Young People Policy (2) Adult Safeguarding Policy
PR105/24 Draft ICT Strategy for Review & Feedback
PR106/24 Ann Street Development – Update
PR107/24 Verbal Update: Mid South West Growth Deal: Desertcreat Project

Matters for Information

PR108/24 Confidential Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11 April 2024
PR109/24 Microsoft Enterprise Licensing Agreement Tender Award Update
PR110/24 Staff Matters for Information
PR111/24 Managing Employee Attendance Report 23/24
PR112/24 Pension Discretions Policy
PR113/24 Treasury Management – Update
PR114/24 Financial report for 12 months ended 31 March 2024
PR115/24 Contracts and DAC

P116/24 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.17 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, [Cookstown/Dungannon/Magherafelt].

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

I would 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 agenda.