

**Minutes of Meeting of Policy & Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Tuesday 2 December 2014 in Cookstown District Council Offices**

**Members Present:** In the Chair, Councillor McPeake (Chair)

Councillors Ashton, Buchanan, Forde, Glasgow, McFlynn, McGinley, McLean, Molloy, M Quinn, Reid and Totten

**Members in Attendance:** Councillor G Shiels

**Officers in Attendance:** Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive  
Mrs Canavan, Lead HR Officer  
Mrs Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager  
Mr Moffett, Change Management Officer  
Mr O'Hagan, ICT Manager  
Mr JJ Tohill, Lead Finance Officer  
Mrs Smith, Council Business Manager (D&STBC)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

**PR64/14 Apologies**

Councillors Elattar, S McGuigan and Mallaghan

**PR65/14 Declarations of Interest**

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

**PR66/14 Receive and confirm minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 4 November 2014**

Proposed by Councillor Molloy  
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 4 November 2014 (PR50/14 – PR61/14 & PR63/14) were considered and signed as accurate and correct.

**Matters for Decision**

**PR66/14 Occupational Health Services**

The Lead HR Officer stated that a report was brought to the Policy & Resources Meeting held on 4 November 2014 and Members requested further clarity and breakdown of use and purpose of the current Occupational Health Services in place within the existing Councils. The Officer presented a further report setting out the information and sought Member approval for the procurement of Occupational Health Services for Mid Ulster District Council.

Proposed by Councillor McFlynn  
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to the Council to approve the procurement of an Occupational Health Services for the Council.

#### **PR67/14 Integrated HR and Payroll System**

The Lead HR Officer presented a report the purpose of which was to seek approval to carry out a procurement exercise to purchase an integrated Time and Attendance, HR and Payroll software solution. The officer stated that moving forward to a single organisation across multiple sites the realisation of improvements in processes and integrated solutions where possible. The officer added that the continued operation of 8 stand-alone systems would prove difficult to manage and whilst the convergence of existing systems to three is being explored as a short term option, the strategic longer term objective would be to establish a single solution.

The Officer referred to a series of advantages for such a system with research showing that it could be deployed as a modular methodology through integrated components in order to meet the ongoing and future needs of the Council. The initial software costs of £50,000 have been budgeted within the ICT convergence budget for Mid Ulster District Council. Annual software and support fees are likely to be in the region of £15,000 per annum based on a 5 year agreement for the council. The support costs for maintaining the existing software systems currently cost £25,000 per annum.

Councillor McLean noted that research has shown that systems have the facility to add modules as things develop and stated that this was an important element.

In response to a question from Councillor Reid the Lead HR Officer stated that the cost has been budgeted for within the ICT convergence budget

Councillor McFlynn noted the reduction in annual maintenance costs, asked if the workforce would continue to clock in and if there would there be any reduction in the human resource element to operate the system.

The Lead HR Officer stated that a swipe system would be used and when staff swipe in or out it would automatically generate information needed. She added that given the increase in staff numbers from transferring services existing resources would continue to be required.

Proposed by Councillor McLean  
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to the Council to approve the procurement of an integrated Time and Attendance, Payroll and HR software system.

#### **PR68/14 Conference and Seminar Attendance Policy**

The Chief Executive advised that this item was premature coming to the Committee and would be brought back to committee following further discussions.

## **PR69/14      Transferred Functions Grant Regulations – Consultation Response**

The Lead Finance Officer presented a report seeking comment on the proposed Mid Ulster District Council response to The Department of Environment on the proposed methodology and associated draft regulations for the distribution to councils of funding to support the transfer of functions from central to local government as part of the Review of Public Administration. The consultation sought commentary on two questions; a rates neutral budget for transferring functions and proposed methodology for future funding. The officer recommended adoption of the draft response.

Councillor Reid asked if this included all transferring services. The Member made reference to a deputation, which he was part of, from the Council to the NI Assembly Regional Development Committee to provide evidence on functions transferring from DRD and the lack of member knowledge on the process.

The Lead Finance Officer stated that all services will be funded through the proposed mechanism.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake stated that he had attended the first meeting of the Partnership Panel and this consultation document was the main subject discussed. He indicated that all 11 councils represented at the meeting had the same concerns in relation to receiving adequate funding for transferring functions. The Member also referred to the due diligence review being undertaken by Deloitte on the proposed transferring functions grant.

The Chief Executive confirmed that the consultation is about the mechanism for how money will be transferred to councils. He confirmed that correspondence has been provided to the Minister seeking a delegation to meet with him on adequate funding and rates neutrality for transferring functions. He indicated that a response was outstanding but a meeting will continue to be sought.

Councillor McLean stated that everyone was aware for some time of the pending Review of Public Administration and the functions transferring. He added that what affects ratepayers and local government also affects MLAs. It was important for every political party to make representation to their MLAs to get situation resolved.

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor M Quinn and

**Resolved**      That it be recommended to the Council that response to the Department's consultation on the proposed Local Government (Transferring Functions Grant) Regulations (NI) 2015 is approved.

## **PR70/14      Website and Social Media Convergence**

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report the purpose of which was to seek endorsement to the approach of converging existing digital media channels. The Officer highlighted that currently across the three councils there were 26 sites in operation. By establishing and applying a new, strong brand across the organisation, the Council would seek to minimise brand dilution and optimise positive

associations and impact on its reputation which can be derived from its complete range of services, functions and responsibilities. A reduction in the number of sites was required to allow a strategic approach for the management of the new Council's web and social media presence. The new approach proposes that, with the exception of a number of sites, all existing web based sites will be replaced by the new council web site and existing social media sites phased out as the council's new social media channels become live and gains momentum.

Recognised exceptions to this corporate approach would include local authority run commercial theatre and arts spaces and distinct visitor attractions. The suggested approach, therefore, would allow the Burnavon, Ranfurly House and, in the future, the Heaney Centre, to maintain separate web and social media channels, but with the creation and maintenance of clear linkages to Mid Ulster District Council through appropriate textual and graphic branding and content planning. Guth, the existing Irish language site, should remain in place and be considered in the context of the Council's development and implementation of a language policy.

Councillor Ashton expressed concern that if all sites merged together users could have difficulty sourcing the information required.

Councillor McLean agreed and stated that the website should have ease of navigation. The Member also referred to automatic answering services which was a faceless and very inappropriate system and expressed the need to have efficient, effective and user friendly systems.

The Marketing Communications Manager stated that with the clever use of URLs the public would be signposted to the information required. The Officer also stated that the web site structure has commenced and will be coming to Council in the New Year and that automation would not be an advocated approach.

Councillor McGinley agreed with the concerns expressed but felt if the website was managed effectively there are a lot of benefits in having a standard approach and overall mother brand.

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor M Quinn and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to the Council that the approach to the convergence of digital media channels is endorsed.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, spoke in relation to the need for standardised approach for receiving, capturing and retrieval of Council minutes and papers.

The ICT Manager stated that there had been some initial discussion around the provision of a committee management and a document management paperless solution but this has not been prioritised. The Officer agreed to look at options and bring report to Council at the earliest opportunity.

In response to queries from Councillor Molloy it was agreed to streamline the naming of council and committee papers, inclusive of minutes and documents, being circulated to members by email.

Councillor McLean concurred with the remarks that there was a need for a system to retrieve, access and review council and committee document papers issued to members.

#### **PR71/14      Customer Service Policy**

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report on the introduction of a Customer Service Policy for Mid Ulster District Council. As an organisation committed to a customer-focused approach to its work, the Council requires a Customer Service Policy and associated procedures, including those for handling complaints, which supports this commitment and communicates the standards expected from both staff and customers.

The Policy has been created to reflect key elements contained in the Customer Service Excellence Standard and the 'framework for effective complaint handling' which is recommended by the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. The policy seeks to create an organisational culture which focuses on the needs of customers, both internal and external, in the design and delivery of services, which values customer views and will listen to and act upon them.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy  
Seconded by Councillor McGinley and

**Resolved**      That it be recommended to the Council that the Customer Service Policy is adopted.

#### **PR71/14      Residents' Magazine and Marketing Activity**

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report seeking the endorsement of arrangements for a residents' magazine and to consider wider marketing activity to support the Council's operational launch.

Distribution of the first Mid Ulster District Council magazine will take place to some 47,000 households during the week beginning Monday 30 March 2015. The distribution of the magazine has been timed to coincide with the Council assuming full operational responsibility for service delivery to take the opportunity to introduce and build awareness of the Council's brand.

Content will range from information on the Council and Councillors, together with new responsibilities, specifically planning, the 2015-2016 rate and the new corporate plan to the new telephone number, web site, events and stories around key, current and relevant services, highlighting changes, and confirming no change where appropriate. Planned media and social media activity will support the Council's launch, contributing to brand building and the communication of key messages in this initial period.

Design, print and distribution costs for a 16 page magazine delivered direct to all Mid Ulster District Council households will be approximately £12,000, which is within current budgets. To provide some modest additional marketing activity an additional £8,000 budget would be required.

Councillor Ashton stated that this was a very modest budget and asked what type of promotion would be used.

Councillor McLean expressed concern that bill boards would only target people in specific urban catchment areas whilst there was a large rural hinterland to be covered and queried how messages would be communicated to the most vulnerable in our society who do not necessarily come into contact with such marketing. The Member also spoke of the possibility of having business sponsorship in the magazine and asked if £12,000 will cover the cost of distribution.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, declared support for the need to use bill boards in high usage areas to portray a positive image and the budget, as requested, would be acceptable.

Councillor Reid asked if a month of the billboards, only in main areas, was long enough to catch the public eye. The Member suggested using screen trailers and asked if this had been considered.

In response to Members question the Marketing Communications Manager stated that a combination of methods would be used to keep costs to a minimum. Different messages would focus on the new name, the telephone number and the new website, and with access to 60 bill boards across combined with press activity this would be adequate. Bill board advertising works within two week cycle blocks and the needs of rural area dwellers.

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to the Council that the arrangements for a residents' magazine are endorsed and that additional £8,000 is allocated to allow supporting marketing activity to take place.

**PR74/14      Data and System Convergence of Environmental, Regulatory and Building Control Services**

The IT Manager presented a report updating members on the convergence of ICT systems affecting Environmental Health (EH), Building Control (BC) and other Licensing and Regulatory functions and to seek approval for the convergence and recurring costs of Information systems within the referred functions.

The Officer advised that each council had its own management information systems (MIS) to maintain the EH, BC and Regulatory and licensing functions, and the new council would need to converge the systems and data from each into a single accessible solution. The Officer confirmed that the vast majority of the service's functions were covered by Tascomi as Councils have already aligned their MIS systems to ease the burden and complexity of migration when the new council establishes on 1 April 2015.

The Officer indicated that Building Control data was now within a single database, segregated with built in security features which will become one solution accessible by all officers at an agreed time when the appropriate staff are appointed. He added

that EH and Licensing has now commenced, and a proposed solution will permit online licensing.

The ICT Officer referred to a series of costs which will be incurred as part of the convergence of systems which included:

Service	Cumulative Software Maintenance costs (£)	Transition
Building Control & property cert	£26,500	0
Dog Licensing	£3,075	1500
Environmental Health & LPS	£25,975	5150
Regulatory Licensing	£2,000	0
Online provision	£1500	0
Net Costs	£59,050	6650

The total recurring costs for Mid Ulster District Council in 2015-16 for software maintenance will be reduced by 5% from £59,050 to £57422.50.

Proposed by Councillor McLean  
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to the Council to approve the convergence of Information systems and recurring costs within the Environmental, Building Control and Regulatory functions.

### **Matters for Information**

#### **PR74/14 Proposed New Non-Geographic Mid Ulster District Council Telephone Number**

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report informing members of the new telephone number for Mid Ulster District Council. The Council agreed in October 2014 to introduce a single non-geographic contact telephone number from the 03 range, specifically intended for use by the public sector and not for profit organisations.

The Officer added that key to the successful implementation of any new telephone number would be its memorability and from the current 03 Gold range the most memorable is considered to be 03000 132 132 and as such has been reserved as the new number for Mid Ulster District Council.

As previously reported and agreed, the cost of purchasing the proposed 03 number is £3,000.

#### **PR75/14 Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) – Consultation Response**

The Lead HR Officer presented a report informing members of a response to the “Draft Local Government Reorganisation (Compensation for Loss of Employment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015” and indicated that the closing date for submissions was 5 January 2015.

The Officer indicated that the response would be forwarded to Unions for their views/ commentary prior to submission with the DoE

**PR76/14      Open Consultation List**

Executive Arrangements Guidance and Draft Constitution Framework	Closes: 19 December 2014
The Proposed Revocation and Remaking of the Local Government (Accounts and Audit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006	Closes: 12 January 2015
Local Government Pension Scheme (NI) 2015 - Consultation on cost control arrangements	Closes: 30 January 2015
Commissioner's Guidance on the NI Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors	Closes: 30 January 2015

**IN COMMITTEE**

Proposed by Councillor McGinley  
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

**Resolved** That items PR77/14 and PR78/14 are taken in committee.

**PR79/14      Duration of Meeting**

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm.

CHAIR \_\_\_\_\_

DATE \_\_\_\_\_