

**Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 26 October 2023 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means**

<b>Chair</b>	Councillor Molloy
<b>Members Present</b>	Councillors Bell, Black, Brown, J Buchanan, W Buchanan, F Burton*, J Burton, Cahoon, Carney, Clarke, Corry, Cuthbertson, Forde, Gildernew, Graham*, Groogan, Johnston, Kelly, Kerr, Mallaghan, Martin*, McAleer*, McConnell, McElvogue, McFlynn, McGuigan, McLean*, McLernon, McNamee, D McPeake*, S McPeake*, Milne*, Monteith, Quinn, Robinson, Totten*, Varsani and Wilson
<b>Officers in Attendance</b>	Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive Mr Black, Strategic Director Communities and Place (SD:CP) Ms Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env) Ms Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) Mr McKeown, ICT Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisational Development Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP) Mrs Forde, Committee and Member Services Manager
<b>Others in Attendance</b>	<b>Representatives from NIHE</b>  Ms Grainia Long - Chief Executive - Mr John McCartan - South Region Manager - Ms Sinead Collins - Head of Place Shaping South - Ms Sharon Crooks – Mid Ulster Area Manager – Mr Andy Kennedy*** Mr David Palmer*** Ms Roisin O’Neill*** Ms Mona Conway*** Ms Paula Aiken***

\* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

\*\* Denotes Officers present by remote means

\*\*\* \*\* Denotes Others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

*The Chair, Councillor Molloy 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.*

### **C186/23 Notice of Recording**

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

### **C187/23 Apologies**

Councillor McQuade  
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F)

### **C188/23 Declarations of Interest**

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

### **C189/23 Chair's Business**

The Chair, Councillor Molloy said, "Just a few things for this evening's Chair's business, as we have a busy agenda this evening. Closing off September, I was honored to join in with Mid Ulster Loneliness Network as it held its first annual celebration ahead of Positive Ageing Month in October. The group has grown from strength to strength in this past year with the support of our Age Friendly Coordinator, and its members are creating awareness and taking coordinated action to deal with a key issue affecting our urban and rural communities.

The event in the Burnavon Cookstown was also used to launch the Mid Ulster Age-friendly Alliances' Strategy and Action Plan for the next three years. The strategy will work to ensure all residents in the district can live in security, enjoy good health, continue to participate fully in society, and feel valued and respected – regardless of age. I look forward to seeing its outputs and the difference it will make to our residents.

Attending two other recent events also promoting inclusiveness, firstly myself and Cllr Graham attended a groundbreaking workshop of events help by Tourette's Support to learn more not just on Tourette's Syndrome but also cross aligned conditions and how we can support them. Separately but very much linked to neurodiversity last week, I was pleased to welcome a wide range of representatives from Government Departments, Health Trusts, neighbouring Councils, education sector and community groups to our Best Practice Accessibility and Inclusion event in Cookstown Leisure Centre. As members will know, a focus of a motion passed by Council in 2021 was to meet the sensory accessibility requirements of our neurodivergent resident of all ages and stages. It's within that context that I am delighted that the Council was able to purchase a Cubbie via The Department for Communities' Access and Inclusion funding. While we recognise that one size may not fit all, it is clear that inclusive practice should be common practice.

Yet another Mid Ulster arts and culture facility has secured a prestigious Sandford Award in recognition for excellence within heritage education, as Seamus Heaney HomePlace joins the Hill of The O'Neill and Ranfurly House as winners of this highly

prized award. It's fantastic news for everyone at HomePlace and its education team. HomePlace offers inspiration for our next generation of writers, across all levels from pre-school to third level students. The Education Officer and Creative Learning Officers are to be commended for their passion, creativity, and attention to detail which this prestigious award recognises.

Our Council's Planning Team has been named as a finalist in the category for In House Planning Team of the Year at the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence 2023, for the launch of Mid Ulster's Planning Portal.

With an ethos to put customer needs at the heart of the planning system, the in-house team has delivered a streamlined and efficient digital online planning system. To even be considered again as a finalist in these awards for the fourth time in the past six years is a remarkable achievement for all concerned. It's testament to the team's continuing professionalism and hard work. I am hopeful that the past success achieved by our planning team will be repeated in November.

Two great events took place last week showcasing what Mid Ulster has to offer; Great Days Out, was an opportunity for tour operators and the public to engage with some fantastic local offerings. Then at Meadowbank almost 50 local engineering and manufacturing firms came together with MEGA to demonstrate a flavour of the multitude of employment opportunities within the sector. Over 1500 pupils attended.

To finish, just a reminder that our Halloween activities and firework displays will be taking place from this Friday night, starting in Dungannon and then Cookstown, followed by Coalisland and Maghera on Halloween night itself. It promises to be a truly hair-raising weekend of Halloween fun so don't miss it."

The Chair, Councillor Molloy invited those Members who raised issues in Chair's Business to speak.

Councillor Varsani made reference to the unsightly mast on the Hill of The O'Neill stating that the mast was utterly unacceptable and whilst investigations into options may be ongoing that it had been some months since Members had received an update.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy concurred and the Chief Executive advised that a report would be presented to future committee.

**Resolved** That an update report be brought to Development Committee regarding the mast on Hill of The O'Neill.

Councillor Kerr requested that the Chair send a letter to Coalisland Fianna ladies team who won the County Championship and League. He further made reference to Erin Duffy senior team member who shared her skills throughout the teams. He further requested that Council extend best wishes to the team in their forthcoming Ulster final with Donegal.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy concurred.

**Resolved** That the Chair, Councillor Molloy send a letter of congratulations to Coalisland Fianna Ladies Team winners of the County Championship and League. Also extend best wishes in forthcoming Ulster Final.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy extended best wishes to the ladies' team at his own club Clonmore GAC who are scheduled to play in a final against Lavey GAC at the weekend.

Councillor D McPeake extended best wishes to Ballymaguigan GAC in their Championship successes and to Newbridge GAC in their county wins and wished both clubs good luck in the forthcoming Ulster campaigns.

Councillor Quinn requested that Council write to Aughamullan Primary School to congratulate them on reaching their 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary. He spoke of various challenges the cross community school had overcome and of his enjoyment at the 200<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

**Resolved** That the Chair, Councillor Molloy send a letter of congratulations to Aughamullan Primary School on celebrating its 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Councillor McFlynn referred to the refurbishment project at Manor Park and highlighted several issues with the ongoing works. She said that the refurbishment is to include lighting which was hoped to assist with antisocial behaviours in the area and an issue in relation to flooding. She stated that in the legacy Council there had been engagement with the Rivers Agency in relation to the creation of the pond. She highlighted that there was to be £230k spend on the park and together with the local community she would like the job completed properly to include the eradication of flooding and expressed her disappointment that the stream was not to be cleared. Councillor McFlynn requested that a report be brought to committee.

**Resolved** That an update report to include details of flood eradication be presented to Development Committee regarding ongoing works at Manor Park.

Councillor Cahoon extended condolences to the family of Maud Kells a remarkable lady who had dedicated her life to God and served in Congo for many years had passed away.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy thanked Councillor Cahoon for bringing to the attention of the meeting.

Councillor Cuthbertson spoke of the recent death of Bertie McMinn who had been a long serving staff member of staff in legacy Council Dungannon and spoke of his dedication to local government.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy concurred stating he was a man of great innovation.

**C190/23 Deputation: Northern Ireland Housing Executive (Housing Investment Plan)**

The Chair welcomed Ms Grainne Long and representatives of Northern Ireland Housing Executive who were in attendance to speak on the Housing Investment Plan. Ms Long delivered presentation (Appendix b)

The Chair, thanked Ms Long for her presentation and invited Members questions.

Councillor McConnell queried the figure of people on waiting lists saying that he had been contacted by constituents who had been on the list for alternative housing for a long time.

In response Ms Long said the tenant when making application makes the choice of where they would like to be housed and much depended on that choice. Mr McCartan said that the allocation of housing was determined on a point-based system and sometimes a newer applicant with more housing points supersedes those with less points. He stated that fundamentally there needs to be a review of housing allocation methods but currently it had to be on via the point system.

Councillor Corry said that she was aware of people having to avail of temporary accommodation as landlords were giving notice to people who simply had nowhere to go and ended up living with family. She stated it was a worrying trend and asked what provision the NIHE could offer in such instances.

Ms Long in response stated that more and more people and families were sharing accommodation and unfortunately it was not unique to Mid Ulster. She said the NIHE were identifying temporary accommodation and at times were having to avail of the private rental market as they did not like to base families in hotels or bed and breakfast establishments. She stated apart from the human element of it this method was not cost effective, and the situation was still feeling the impacts of the pandemic.

Councillor Cuthbertson thanked NIHE representatives for the report and extended thanks to local staff. He referred to the boiler replacement scheme and asked what provision was made for what now is classed the 'working poor' especially those who do not meet the criteria for affordable warmth. Councillor Cuthbertson said he was glad to hear the tendering issues had been sorted out and asked if there were potential dates for works commencing. He also sought clarity about investment into grounds maintenance as some areas grass was becoming a nightmare and thus it was important to have contracts ready to go early in the season.

In response Ms Long said that the NIHE would be resubmitting a bid regarding the boiler replacement scheme. With regards to planned maintenance she said the NIHE had allowed contractors to walk away as many could simply not deliver due to the high increases of cost and for this reason the NIHE had not pursued the matter in court. She stated they had retendered and those whose planned maintenance had been delayed would be commencing and the NIHE would be giving times, dates but sometimes goalposts had to shift but they endeavoured to keep all on programme.

With regards to comments in relation to grounds maintenance Mr McCartan advised that the wet spring followed by a warm spell had brought on a growth spurt and at times grounds had not looked good, but contractors had issues getting machinery

onto wet grounds. He also spoke of contractors finding it difficult to recruit skilled workers and concluded by advising that the contracts are not awarded on the number of cuts but the height the grass must be maintained at but acknowledged giving the weather throughout the summer if had been difficult.

Councillor Brown stated he had recently purchased his NIHE home and the process had been seamless and thanked staff for this. He then asked what they were doing to prevent mail drop homes and what they were doing about the non-payment of rents.

Ms Long said they had many homes and for this reason had resourced an investigation team if they suspect fraud and are themselves subject to audit by the NI Audit Office. She stated they had a robust system with high levels of public scrutiny but if tenants have concerns about eg 'mail drop' homes they can raise this. She advised that 75% of rent is protected by housing benefits thus it reduces rent arrears and that a balance must be struck as their income collection pays for investment. It was noted that many tenants are on low incomes and are greatly impacted by cost of living. She said that the NIHE are there to serve and if people find themselves in arrears, they should contact them. She said that often when they assist people in arrears, they discover they are eligible for other benefits and thus they encourage people to get in touch. Ms Long concluded that they do not evict unless it is a last resort.

Councillor Bell asked if the absence of the NI Executive was damaging operations.

In response Ms Long said they work with the Department for Communities and much business is ongoing but the most impact has been felt across the public sector by the budget. She said the NIHE has had significant reform and it is hoped to be able to borrow against income by 2025 but down the line it will be needed to have Ministers in place.

Councillor Mallaghan asked what was happening about home repair grants as he had made enquiry on behalf of a constituent to be told they are not available.

Ms Long stated they are not currently available, and this would be detrimental in the long run as if you under invest other issues occur. She encouraged reporting of all issues as they build statistics from which to seek solutions and in response to Councillor Mallaghan said she would check if his query had been logged.

Councillor McAleer referred to the boiler replacement scheme and the £610k spent 2022-23 yet only £13k in Mid Ulster and said was this the case as it would only be 2%.

In response Ms Long said this would be correct and emphasised that the boiler replacement scheme was demand led and people needed to apply and meet the criteria. She said if there was more could be done to promote it within Mid Ulster the NIHE would be happy to engage.

Councillor F Burton raised the issue of pruning of trees and asked if there was a better way to monitor these works. She also spoke of a particular case were a lady

needed to move accommodation due to a family tragedy in the home and sought clarity as to whether there was a policy in such situations.

Ms Long advised she would speak Councillor F Burton directly about the latter instance. With regards to grounds maintenance Mr McCartan said that maintenance inspections were carried out on a regular basis but giving the size of the district it is more often reactive and, in such circumstances, issues are addressed quickly.

Councillor Wilson asked if the NIHE had many properties that could be brought back into stock and also in relation to grounds maintenance he said Council encourages areas to take a pride and enter best kept competitions but at times grass is cut and left lying and subsequently blows all over the place.

Ms Long said that as a landlord NIHE had very few void properties and when approached regarding resettlement schemes such as Afghanistan and Ukraine refugees they could offer no housing. She further stated that if they hold land that could be used for social housing, they release it. Mr McCartan advised that under 1% of NIHE stock is void at any one time. With regard to grass, he stated collection was not feasible but they do remind contractors repeatedly that areas should be left tidy.

Councillor McFlynn expressed concern about the increase in temporary accommodation and stated that often people are giving notice and then the property is let at a higher rate. She also welcomed figures in relation to housing benefit and expressed concern about the working poor and those in housing stress.

Ms Long advised it was not the remit of NIHE to regulate rents that that would be the department for Communities. She said there was a growth in homelessness and the NIHE give evidence of all to the Department. She stated that local housing levels remain static and said that due to the cost of living many households do get into rental difficulties and in such instances, they make an appeal for Housing benefit.

Councillor Monteith expressed concern regarding the evidence of danger regarding black mould and its impact on mental health and physical health of those in particular with breathing difficulties. He said the standard response tenants were receiving was it was their own fault, and they should open windows yet if there is mould the damp levels are generally twice as high as that permitted.

Ms Long said she would speak to Councillor Monteith directly and spoke of the recent Coroners report linked to the tragic death of a child in England due to mould. She said on the day of the report was issued NIHE embarked on a review and stated it was their first principle to keep tenants safe, warm and dry. She said it was also emphasised to staff if they see a problem even if it was not within their remit they should report and that if a child is living in a home with damp and mould, they took it very seriously. She said in some instances the NIHE do need to advise with regard to ventilation, but tests need to be carried out and the housing stock was aging.

Mr Kennedy advised that there was a damp and mould action plan, staff had been trained and they were identifying hotspots as if there is a cluster of homes in an area with similar experiences plans be put in place to eradicate. He said most damp and

mould issues were dealt with by response maintenance. Mr Kennedy advised that there was a specialist team used for in-depth investigations and whilst there were several eradication programmes there was none in Mid Ulster. He said if Members became aware of issues to report through the local office and he would send teams down.

Councillor Monteith said he accepted what was being stated but spoke of one tenant a single mother and a child who had been told for four years the damp was her fault. He further spoke of a fine fur on top of clothing and people blamed for not opening windows. He said that people were now going to hospital consultants and nurses to endeavour to get the NIHE to take it seriously.

Ms Long said she would follow up directly with the member.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy thanked the Ms Long and the team for their participation.

The Chief Executive thanked the team for the presentation and said Council had lobbied and supported the review of the NIHE and looked forward to new build schemes in the district. He said Council was up for pilot schemes and would endeavour to do all it could to help alleviate the chronic need for housing in Dungannon and across Mid Ulster.

*Representatives of Northern Ireland Housing Executive left the meeting at 8.12 pm.*

## **Matters for Decision**

### **C191/23      Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Special Council Meeting held on 25 September 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

**Resolved**      That the Minutes of the Council held on Monday 25 September 2023 (SC011/23 – SC014/23 and SC016/23 transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

### **C192/23      Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Council Meeting held on 28 September 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Groogan  
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

In response to Councillor Kerr’s query regarding the letter sent to Electric Ireland, the Chief Executive advised that the letters were emailed on 6 October 2023 and to date no response had been received.



**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 28 September 2023 (C158/23 – C172/23 and C0185/23 transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C193/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Planning Committee Meeting held on 3 October 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Clarke  
Seconded by Councillor Varsani and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 3 October 2023 (P101/23 – P108/23 and P114/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, subject to the foregoing were considered and adopted.

**C194/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 5 October 2023**

Proposed by Councillor McLernon  
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

**Resolved:** That the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Thursday 5 October (PR161/23 – PR169/23 and PR178/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C195/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Environment Committee Meeting held on 10 October 2023**

Councillor Burton sought an update on the query regarding parking at Granville Industrial estate.

In response the Chief Executive advised that a synopsis regarding the parking situation at Granville would be provided to Members and if necessary, a DEA meeting held.

Proposed by Councillor Groogan  
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 10 October 2023 (E208/23 – E226/23 and E235/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C196/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Development Committee Meeting held on 12 October 2023**

Proposed by Councillor McNamee  
Seconded by Councillor McLernon and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Development Committee held on Thursday 12 October 2023 (D144/23 – D155/23 and D163/23) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C197/23 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Special Development Committee Meeting held on 16 October 2023**

Proposed by Councillor Quinn  
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

**Resolved** That the Minutes of the Development Committee held on Monday 16 October 2023 (D144/23 – D171/23 transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

**C198/23 Conferences, Seminars and Training**

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

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

**Matters for Information**

**C199/23 Consultations**

Members noted consultations received for attention of Council.

Councillor Gildernew drew attention to Department for the Economy: Consultation on Approach to 10X Technologies and Clusters and proposed that Council make a response which should highlight the wealth of manufacturing, innovation, knowledge and expertise within the district and request that Mid Ulster is kept central in regional economic plans. Note the closing date for the submission is 24 November 2023 as outlined in report should extension not be granted response be brought to Policy and Resources with delegated authority.

**Resolved** That Council make a response to Department for the Economy Consultation on Approach to 10X Technologies and Clusters. Note the closing date for the submission is 24 November 2023 as outlined in

report should extension not be granted response be brought to Policy and Resources with delegated authority.

## **C200/23      Correspondence**

Members noted update on correspondence received for attention of Council.

In response to Councillor McLernon's query regarding letter sent following July Council meeting to Southern Health Trust regarding respite provision for adults with complex needs the Chief Executive confirmed no response had been received to date.

Councillor McLernon requested that a follow up letter be sent seeking a response.

**Resolved**      That Council send a follow up letter seeking a response to letter forwarded to the Southern Health Trust to

(i) ascertain the issues around the service of Respite Provision for Adults with complex needs, not returning to a 7-day week as it was before Covid, and to see what Council can do to help resolve this, and return the much-needed service to full capacity; and

(ii) establish what the hindrances are and what is being done to overcome delays when care packages are being put in place for people ready to be discharged from hospital.

Councillor McConnell drew attention to correspondence from Department for Infrastructure in relation to the A5 Western Transport Corridor (A5WTC) scheme update. He said council should continue to do all in its power to ensure all is completed to allow the progression of the A5.

Councillor Mallaghan drew attention to correspondence from Department for Infrastructure in relation to 'Handling Correspondence related to Roads Maintenance Defects' and said it was deeply disappointing to ask elected Members not to contact them. He said if a broken streetlight was being reported then the online portal was fine but if you were reporting a major pothole, a fallen tree which is more important the portal was not fine. Speaking of local staff, he highlighted that they work hard and would report back but for the department to stop this line of communication was not acceptable. Councillor Mallaghan proposed to respond to the letter expressing Council's dismay express dismay and lack of regard for the role of elected members. He said that DfI were constantly reneging and whilst it was bad enough closing not dealing with calls from the public it was unacceptable to do this with elected members.

Councillor McConnell concurred and said that he had formerly worked in civil service dealing with freedom of information and to do this was a disgrace. He strongly voiced objection to it and said that online portal mainly issued a generic response. He seconded Councillor Mallaghan's proposal.

Councillor Wilson concurred with the comments and said that the comments were directed to elected members. He emphasised that members are the conduit to help constituents and he supported the proposal. He said DfI had pulled out of interagency meetings and whilst Council encourages housing estates and community groups to take pride and indeed better their area the non-attendance of DfI is a disgrace.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy concurred.

Councillor Cuthbertson said it is frustrating and it was regarding maintenance issues that Members can't gain a response. He said he had experience of the online portal being monitored out of hours,

Councillor McAleer concurred that the letter was dismissive of elected Members who were the first point of contact and often when you use the online portal you do not receive a response.

**Resolved** That Council send a response to Department for Infrastructure: handling correspondence related to roads maintenance letter dated 4 October to express dismay and lack of regard for the role carried out by elected members.

Councillor McAleer drew attention to the Northern Ireland Office response following letter sent regarding Lough Neagh. He said that absence of the NI Executive does not help and it was imperative that it was up and running again as nothing was being done to support the fishing industry on the Lough and whilst the NIO response was not surprising action was needed.

Councillor Quinn concurred with Councillor Mallaghan and said that the DfI did not appear to be too interested and referred to a recent site meeting at Ferry Road, Coalisland as well as a request submitted via the portal two weeks ago and to date there was no response. He said that the reduction of money being spent on maintenance was leaving roads in a dangerous condition. With regard to Lough Neagh he said that whilst even a functioning Executive could not fix the Lough the UK government could step in and do more but it appeared the Lough was a hostage.

Councillor Gildernew referred to the letter from DfI regarding the A5 (WTC) and said it was good to see an indicative date and await the report on the public enquiry. Ultimately as a resident she was only too aware of the lives lost and looked forward to completion of the road which would save lives.

Councillor Carney concurred with Councillor McAleer's comments.

## **C201/23 Notice of Motion**

Councillor Kerr moved the motion -

Councillor Kerr speaking on the motion stated that he had decided to submit the motion following the recent escalation of violence by Israel and its forces which had resulted in the deaths of Palestinians in their 1000s with the huge majority of them being women and children. He outlined that the nature of the violence is indiscriminate and not since 1948 had there been such a single shift of Palestinian people at which time over 750 k Palestinians had been forced from their homes. He referred to what all had witnessed in recent days and weeks where millions of people from Gaza city had been told to evacuate from the North to the South and how many families followed the advice but had still been bombed in south Gaza as a result of Zionist activities, he spoke of entire neighbourhoods being wiped out with little or no warning, continuing crimes against humanity on a daily basis with electric and water switch being off and the denial until recent days of aid by the Egyptian Government and United Nations which is but a drop in the ocean of what people of Gaza needs. He spoke of the United Nations announcement earlier in the day and said they needed 400 trucks per day and yet only a trickle had been allowed in. He referred to the Israeli bomb on the hospital which resulted in the deaths of 100s of people in one foul swoop. He stated that the American and British governments are presenting the Zionist version of events with little to no scrutiny. The version of events was default by Zionists and other evidence had come forward since the bombing. Councillor Kerr said this was but one of the many war crimes committed by the Zionist in recent weeks. The continued occupation of Gaza and West Bank has gone on for years. Councillor Kerr concluded that as a local authority Council should not give legitimacy to a rogue state which feels it can discriminate, murder, maim and steal off a different race and highlighted that over the last number of weeks Israel has bombed Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and West Bank.

Councillor Kerr then moved the motion:

That this Council resolves to contact the 26 County Foreign Affairs Office and request the immediate expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador due to the recent escalation of violence by the Zionist forces to the people of Gaza and Palestine.

Councillor Monteith seconded the motion.

Councillor Mallaghan said, "In 2021 as chair of this council I sent a letter to Simon Coveney Requesting the expulsion of the Israeli ambassador to Ireland. This was on the back of another violent barrage on the people of Gaza. As a party we have no difficulty in doing so when the circumstances are right and when it is in line with the wishes of the Palestinian people. Yesterday the Palestinian Ambassador to Dublin released the following statement."

'The Gaza Strip is facing a humanitarian catastrophe of unparalleled proportions. As of noon October 24, 2023, the Palestinian Ministry of Health officially declared the collapse of the healthcare system in the Gaza Strip. This catastrophic event leaves us with no choice but to demand an immediate international intervention.'

"The statement is crystal clear in terms of what is the priority for people are, the priorities are in the next motion which will be moved by Nuala.

We as a party have been in constant contact with the Palestinian Authority as well as Palestinian political parties and NGOs in the West Bank and Gaza ensuring our response is in line with the needs of the people.

At no Point thus far has a request come to the international community for this action. But it may come as the Palestinian people step through the different tactics they will deploy over the coming weeks and months. But when it happens it should be coordinated with the entire international community who are supportive of the Palestinian cause. Right now, those who seek the expulsion are in 2 groups: (i) In earnest they feel it is the right thing to do and that they don't feel Ireland should host the ambassador under these circumstances; and (ii) Some people are chasing the headlines which detracts away from the urgent priorities of the people in Palestine and that was clear from what we seen in Dublin this week.

Sinn Fein have been a constant ally of the Palestinians with our representatives visiting on a regular basis, often harangued by the Israeli Gov who decides who gets to visit. At our Ard Fheis next month, we will once again as we do each year host our Palestinian Comrades and work with them to further their cause for the freedom of their people. However, tonight I request that the mover of the motion consider postponing or deferring the motion until a time when in conjunction with the Palestinians and the international community we do this in unison to create the maximum effect.

This struggle belongs to the Palestinians', and we must support them in it. But they must lead that struggle and determine their own priorities. As things sit tonight, Chair, we will abstain from this motion. We will continue to work as we have done in the Dail this week to pass resolutions that gain support from other parties which has resulted in Ireland becoming one of the first countries in the world to call for a ceasefire."

Councillor Cuthbertson said "Chairman, we have had similar motions tabled to Council before and previous Chairs agreed that motions should be strictly focused on the district, so it is disappointing that you as Chair accepted the motions before us tonight. On the 7th October, As the news of the terrorist attack by Hamas unfolded and the worlds press were establishing what was happening, the reports over the following 24hours brought some very graphic, disturbing and horrific images. Children were butchered, and babies decapitated. One news reel reported on a young lady forced from her vehicle, taken captive, raped and murdered and then her naked body was paraded through the streets with people spitting on it. Hundreds of young people attending an outdoor peace concert, came under heavy gun fire and murdered as they tried to escape. Hundreds of Israeli women and children and others from a range of international countries were taken hostage. One young lady, Kim Damti, 22 years of age, with dual Irish and Israeli citizenship was murdered. Regrettably, we have seen, little to no acknowledgement by elected representatives and the Government of the Republic of Ireland of this poor lady on any news reports. Chair as this horrific terrorist attack was taking place it was sickening to see so many elected representatives, here in NI, immediately jumping on to social media, declaring support for such actions, those people should be totally ashamed of themselves. Many of these people did likewise over the sectarian, ethnic cleansing murder campaign by republicans here in Northern Ireland over the years, so perhaps we shouldn't be shocked or surprised. The true horror of what happened on the 7th October is still only being discovered, in recent days in a village close to the Gaza

border the burnt remains of 20 young children bound hand and feet with wire and burnt to death have been found. WhatsApp messages from the terrorists have been intercepted boasting about how many Jewish children and babies they murdered.

The DUP does not support any call for the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador in any country including the Republic of Ireland. It is shameful that at a time when many Israeli men, women and children were murdered in their homes, some seek to ignore their plight and indeed it is disturbing that there is no mention of calling for hostages, again men, women, children and babies, to be released by the terrorist group Hamas. This is beyond belief but perhaps is an insight into the mindset of both those who carry out and support these actions.”

Councillor Wilson said once again there was a motion to split the Council. He said that “This motion is so far removed from reality that it is almost impossible to respond to it. The member purposely ignores the atrocities carried out by Terrorist Hamas. Many of the horrific examples of what took place on October 7<sup>th</sup> inside Israel are among some of the most barbaric acts ever recorded. I place on record I, my colleagues and my party’s support for Israel to defend its’ borders and understand their undertaking to remove the blight of Hamas from Gaza entirely.

My party leader, a man with some experience of the horrors of war, has been very clear that there is an expectation that Israel will act within the recognised conventions in ensuring that innocent Palestinians are protected as much as is possible. However, the actions of Hamas in launching attacks from residential areas, schools and even hospitals, creates circumstances where it is they who are placing their own people in harm’s way – but that is what is to be expected from terrorists.

I think it comes as no surprise to everybody in this chamber that I and my colleague will not be supporting this motion.”

Councillor Quinn said that like others he had received telephone calls regarding the motion and the ongoing situation. He said that the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador could be the chink that is needed to waken people up to the ongoing situation. He stated he was uncomfortable with the wording of the motion but felt it could be supported if it was amended to:

That this council resolve to contact the Irish Government and request the immediate expulsion of the Israeli ambassador due to the recent escalation of violence in Gaza and Palestine.

Councillor Wilson on a point of order said it was his understanding if there is an amendment it must be presented in writing and circulated.

The Chief Executive said that the standing orders state that, but Council has taken amendments from the floor since 2014.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that had been the practise and he would accept the amendment.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy asked Councillor Kerr if he accepted the amendment.

Councillor Kerr accepted the amendment.

Councillor Monteith said it is important to send this message and that he had attended many campaigns calling on the Israeli Ambassador to be expelled. He said in no other country would the behaviour displayed by the Ambassador in recent days be tolerated. He said it was also important to note that the date line for this war did not start on 7<sup>th</sup> October but commenced many years ago through colonialism which started the real problem and has left a trail of destruction that cannot be ignored. Councillor Monteith stated that the reality is that the Palestinian people had been forgotten, he reflected on unrest and the movement of people in 1948, 1967 and the current onslaught of Gaza when people were told to move to the South of the area and then it was subsequently bombed by Israel anyway. He said people were moved from their homes with no guarantee of return and should they seek refuge in Egypt they may never be allowed to return. He said that Israel is using Hamas as an excuse to collectively punish Palestinian people and remove them from their homeland and reflected that on the West Bank which is removed from this conflict area over 100 Palestinians had been killed in the past three weeks.

Councillor Johnston seconded Councillor Quinn's amendment.

The Chief Executive clarified the amendment,

That this council resolve to contact the Irish Government and request the immediate expulsion of the Israeli ambassador due to the recent escalation of violence in Gaza and Palestine.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy called for a vote on the motion.

For	7
Against	13
Abstained	19

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that the motion had fallen.

In response Councillor Kerr said he could appreciate it was a divisive subject that there were many groups and organisation involved, many different angles on reporting and whilst he was disappointed the motion had failed hopefully all would agree what was happening was genocide.

## **C202/23 Notice of Motion**

Councillor McLernon moved the motion –

That this Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Israel; and calls for the provision of safe humanitarian corridors; and further calls on the international community to work towards a true and lasting peace settlement for the people in the Middle East.

Councillor McLernon speaking on the motion said, "The people of the world have witnessed a humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza – and have seen Israel unleash the weight of its military might upon the Palestinian people. What Hamas did on the 7 October was a war crime – it targeted innocent civilians in the most callous and inhumane manner.



But let's be clear - Israel has been committing war crimes not just in the past 2 weeks but virtually every single day for decades!

This indiscriminate mass slaughter of innocent men, women and children is carried out in full sight of the world and in full sight of international leaders who have failed and refused to shout, "Stop". But I am asking members here tonight to send a clear word to the Israeli government tonight, and the word is STOP!!

- STOP the Rockets
- STOP the bombing of Gaza
- STOP the blockade of Gaza
- STOP the war against the Palestine people
- STOP the occupation and the illegal settlements and end the apartheid!

We know all too well the pain and tragedy of colonisation, occupation and dispossession. Here on this island, we have known conflict and suffering, and we have known war. But we also know peace! And every day we still work to reconcile, to heal divisions and bring people together. Our own history now speaks powerfully to us. It calls on us to speak out, to act in defence of Palestine - it also tells us that we can, and must be a leading voice for dialogue, a just settlement, cease fires and peace.

As we debate this motion here tonight, the people of Gaza face annihilation. Entire families are being wiped out, hundreds of thousands are being displaced from their homes, and their schools, hospitals and vital infrastructure are being destroyed. They are now running out of food. They are drinking un-sanitised water in a desperate attempt to stay alive. They are blockaded on all sides and cut off from medical supplies, fuel and energy – and we need to see safe humanitarian corridors! Israel is now acting with impunity, discarding international law and flouting UN resolution after resolution.

As the people of Gaza cling to their very existence, I ask this Council in a unified voice, to call for an immediate and lasting ceasefire – and together call on Israel to end its bombardment of the Gaza and to stop the indiscriminating massacre. Collectively, we need to proclaim the importance of international law and the importance of dialogue as the foundation for lasting peace.

Councillor Gildernew seconded the motion and said, "The words "Israel has the right to defend itself" mean in practice, that Israel takes that right as a licence to bombard civilians and to bomb schools, hospitals and other civilian infrastructure. It has now been taken as a licence to enforce the displacement of 1 million people from one end of an open-air prison to another, to deny food, energy and medical supplies to a besieged civilian population and to deny them water and to ensure that children, the sick, disabled and elderly will literally die of thirst.

The Israeli regime has been facilitated and emboldened by the failure of the international community to act, over decades now, in defence of international law, and the most basic of human rights. That silence cannot continue – the inaction cannot continue! We must make the world listen and act now to bring the bombing to an end. As Councillor McLernon has pointed out, we know peace, and this year

marks the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Our peace settlement has created a new future for our future generations, but in Palestine, there is no peace process. Since the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 1 Palestinian child has been killed by Israel every 15 minutes! Gaza is facing human, social and environmental annihilation.

And yes, we mourn the terrible loss of Israeli lives on 7 October, but as stated here tonight, Israeli aggression against Palestine long pre-dates that awful day. Our children and grandchildren will speak of these days in the future - let's make sure we can look them in the eye when asked and say we did not stand by and fail to act!

Councillor Quinn stated, "Over the past few weeks we have all watched on with Horror as thousands of people have been killed in Gaza and Israel. The sheer number is quite hard to comprehend but to put it into context, the last two weeks has seen double the number of deaths that we experienced in nearly 40 years of conflict here. Those living in Gaza and Southern Israel must be living as close to hell as one can. On October 7<sup>th</sup> Hamas murdered hundreds of innocent civilians at a music festival, their only crime was that they were Israeli. This was a reprehensible action by Hamas, one that cannot be defended by any right-thinking person and was a War Crime by any stretch of definition. It echoes a similar attack in Croke Park over a century ago. They have taken hostages, murdered some and use others as human currency and continued to rain rockets down on innocent people in Israel.

The international community was rightly outraged at these attacks and got behind Israel and their right to defend themselves. This however is where the world took an even darker turn. For the past two weeks we have seen Gaza, described at best, as an open prison, bombed out of existence by Israel. We have seen men, women and children slaughtered in their thousands. Out of one side of their mouth the Israeli Government told all civilians in Gaza to flee to the south and on the other they ordered bombs to be dropped on those routes. They have talked about how evil Hamas are to take hostages, while they have held 2.2 million people hostage by cutting off their electricity and water supply. They have asked to the UN and EU to back them in their war against Hamas but have refused even the basic aid from getting into Gaza. They have threatened to block UN officials entering the country because they have dared speak the truth about the years of vile treatment the Israeli Government has shown the people of Palestine. We have seen the bombing of hospitals, the targeting of civilians and denial of basic human rights. The Israeli Government are committing new war crimes each day but getting away with because they are backed by the US and UK government.

The sight of Joe Biden hugging the Israeli Prime Minister while Palestinian mothers where hugging their dead children was disgusting, so too was the refusal of Sunak to call for a ceasefire to this conflict when asked this week in Parliament. The same US and UK governments that lecture us about proper government and society as they wilfully turn a blind eye to War Crimes in the middle east is nothing short of staggering. With no end in sight for this conflict, and yet more escalation on the horizon the international community must stand up and make their voice heard. I credit Leo Varadkar for taking the lead on this and calling out possible war crimes committed by the Israeli State.

Let's be clear, being pro-Palestine does not mean support Hamas and believing in an Israeli State it does not mean you support the Israeli government. The motion in

front of us tonight Chair is a good starting point, however I believe we need to strengthen its message and as a byproduct strengthen the voice of this council. We first need a ceasefire, that's the is number one. We need an end to the slaughter. That is in the gift of both the UK and US government to give. They need to put all their weight behind this message and Israel will listen. We need all those hostages released, there is no justification for holding innocent people, the fact that Hamas have done so show they are not fit to lead the Palestinian people. We need immediate talks to secure a two-state solution. This was agreed as the way forwarded but once again the international community has let the people of both Gaza and Israel down. And finally, we need an investigation into war crimes committed by both Hamas and Israel. The actions of the Israeli government and IDF have shocked the world, their actions must be laid bare to the world and punished for it so no state will follow suit. Hamas equally have committed a heinous crime and they too need held accountable and their leaders as well."

Councillor Quinn proposed the undernoted amendment,

'That this Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Israel;  
and

Calls for the provision of safe humanitarian corridors; and further calls on the international community to begin a fulsome diplomatic effort toward reaching a two-state solution to provide peace and security for the people of Palestine and Israel.

Further calls for the immediate and safe release of all hostages held by Hamas.

Supports a full International Criminal Court investigation of potential war crimes committed against people in Gaza and southern Israel.'

Councillor Johnston seconded the amendment.

Councillor McLernon said she would accept the amendment if two state was removed and instead read 'reaching a solution'.

The amendment now reads,

'That this Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Israel;  
and

Calls for the provision of safe humanitarian corridors; and further calls on the international community to begin a fulsome diplomatic effort toward reaching a solution to provide peace and security for the people of Palestine and Israel.

Further calls for the immediate and safe release of all hostages held by Hamas.

Supports a full International Criminal Court investigation of potential war crimes committed against people in Gaza and southern Israel.'

Councillor Black stated that he had an amendment and proposed the undernoted,

'That this Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Israel; supported by the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas; and calls for the provision of safe humanitarian corridors. Further, this Council calls on the international community to work towards a true and lasting peace settlement for the people in the Middle East.'

Councillor Robinson seconded the amendment.

Councillor Black said that they broadly agreed with the spirit of motion but felt that the amendment was important. He said, "everyone can agree the events on 7/10 were truly devastating and all are familiar with the news coverage and what has unfolded since has already been spoken on quite extensively. Hamas terrorists invaded several towns and attacked those attending a music festival all of which resulted in 1400 civilians being brutally murdered and many more injured and 200 people being taken hostage. This was the catalyst of what has unfolded since therefore the responsibility of recent escalation of violence in the Middle East sits squarely at the door of Hamas. As a result of these terrorist attacks, we believe that Israel has the right to defend itself and act against those who committed these terrible crimes against its people they have a responsibility to defend their citizens against barbarity. That being said, and what has been spoken of this evening we recognise thousands of innocent people are caught up in this situation. We urge the Israel government to ensure military action is targeted against Hamas and those responsible for this situation as Hamas are still holding Israeli hostages against their will these are not the actions of an organisation that desires a peaceful outcome. Therefore, we believe to have any de-escalation of military action Hamas must release hostages. Therefore, we feel we must table amendment. In the long term we wish to see a settlement that will be acceptable to all and allow peace to be restored to this most beautiful part of the world.

Councillor Black stated his motion remained.

Councillor Wilson said that he agreed with the sentiments of the original motion but found it more difficult to support the amendment. He said, "A true and lasting peace settlement for the Middle East is something that I and my party believe every right-minded person would hope may, one day, be achieved. Israel has a duty to protect its citizens and the right to go after those that carried out the mass murder of its citizens.

Israel, with the support of America, Egypt and others, has indeed allowed the creation of humanitarian corridors to get aid to those who have been displaced due to the horrific actions of Hamas in Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup>. As I said in my previous comments on Cllrs Kerr's motion my party Leader, a man with some experience of the horrors of war, has been very clear that there is an expectation that Israel will act within the recognised conventions in ensuring that innocent Palestinians are

protected as much as is possible. A statement both Councillor Graham and myself fully endorsed.

The unfortunate truth is that there are those across the Middle East who do not want a true and lasting peace, they wish only for the eradication of Israel and of every person living in Israel.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> October 2023 the European Union reconfirmed their statement of the 9<sup>th</sup> October 2023 calling for an immediate ceasefire and the release of all the hostages. Our PM also supports this stance and has called for Humanitarian corridors to be created to allow more aid to flow into Gaza. On a personal level, I find it very emotional to watch the suffering and the deaths, in particular of, young children on both sides Terrorist Organisations such as Hamas are committed to causing death and destruction, with no consideration of the repercussions for those they claim to represent. Any lasting peace in the Middle East starts with every country recognising and calling out those terrorist organisations who think nothing of raping, murdering and dismembering women and children. Any motion that calls for a true and lasting peace in the Middle East must start by calling out terrorists and their apologists.”

*Councillor Mallaghan proposed a short recess.*

*Council went to recess at 9.07 pm*

*The Meeting recommenced at 9.17pm*

Councillor Quinn said that following discussion and for the sake of unity in the chamber he would withdraw his amendment. He stated that he was disappointed and dismayed that all parties could not support a full criminal war crimes investigation and people would really need to ‘look at themselves’ in light of this.

Councillor Quinn’s amendment was withdrawn.

Councillor McLernon accepted Councillor Black’s amendment.

Councillor Mallaghan said, “When a country displaces an entire people, locks them up and seals the wall. When a country denies these people water and rations the food to 800 calories per day. When a country issues special permits for these people to come and go or if they are lucky, they can be given some meal mouthed work. On average 7 people share a room. The suppressor allows them to organise and have a fake authority and even have their own leader, but it is meaningless unless they succumb to their oppressor’s regime. The outcome of these disgraceful, disgusting conditions leads to revolt. The oppressed people organise and eventually plan and rise and overthrow their captor. And the result of that action is the brave men and women who take part in the revolt are removed from their families and executed.

Members this is how the poor Jewish People of Warsaw were treated during the Nazi occupation of Poland in World War 2. And today we see these same conditions imposed upon the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West bank. And the Context

Israel uses as a defence for using their iron fist is how their Ancestors were treated in Europe during the holocaust. However, I am sure any of those poor people who went through the worst genocide in living memory would be absolutely revolted by what is deemed the only democracy in the middle east. In fact, we hear exactly that on the media from Jews who want nothing to do with Zionism.

I think we have gotten used to outbreaks of violence in Palestine and Israel for all our lives. This council has discussed and taken action on numerous occasions, but on Saturday the 7<sup>th</sup> of October, when we learned of the violence imposed upon Israeli Citizens in their homes and at the music festival, I think we all were deeply shocked and saddened and realised that this was now on a new scale. I want to add my voice to the call for the release of the hostages and for the release of prisoners and children held by Israel without trial. Currently 1200 detained without charge. But members the backlash from Israel has been horrendous, egged on by unwavering support from world leaders including the EU, The US and the UK. The right to defend yourself does not extend to over 5000 men women and children killed in indiscriminate bombs fired from war planes.

If the war, as Israel calls it, is designed to destroy Hamas. Then why has over 100 civilians been killed in the west bank which is controlled by a more moderate Palestine.

If Israel is a democracy, then why does it hold captive 2.2million people who can't leave, who can't use their seaports, they can't fish their own water and their airport opened by Bill Clinton hasn't had a flight since 2001.

If it is a democracy, why does it continue to annex lands and allow Israeli citizens settle and forcibly remove its inhabitants. When this happened in Ukraine Joe Biden and Boris Johnston sent Ukraine weapons to defend itself, but in Israel Joe Biden and Rishi Sunak send Military support to assist this land grab. Israel is an Apartheid State. And the international community are beginning to turn. Those who sponsored the early onslaught are back tracking. The United Nations Antonio Guterres called them out and as this Genocide continues, we will see more support for Palestine from around the globe. Israel will not destroy Hamas all political observers acknowledge this reality. Israel is recruiting for Hamas. 50% of Gaza are under 18 and they will hold with them for their entire life the actions they will witness during this time. This is fertile ground for recruiting new fighters and the ingredients are there for another generation of violence and hate and destruction.

That is why now is the time for a ceasefire, humanitarian corridors and a real effort at achieving peace. It seems impossible, unrealistic and unachievable, and I'm sure international observers said that about this place. But with the right will of the international community, the right players leading the charge, perhaps once in a lifetime, The Longed-for Tidal Wave of Justice can Rise Up."

Councillor Johnston stated, "I am sorry our unionist colleagues did not agree with investigations into war crimes. There are no words that could be said in this chamber that would adequately express the horror of what is going on in Israel and Gaza. It seems quite surreal to witness such savagery against innocent people who have no meaningful influence on either the Israeli government or Ha mas.

As onlookers, unable to help in any meaningful way supporting this motion is confirmation of, I hope, our united horror at the senseless waste of life, and

frustration at the inability of the international community to bring about an immediate cease fire and our desires to for an end to this conflict with its long history of land grabs, displacement of peoples and brutal repression. Violence to counteract violence is never the answer. Those who are reckless with the lives of others deserve the strongest possible condemnation and later when this ends as it must, they must be tried for the war crimes that they have clearly committed.

There must be consequences for the deliberate bombing of residential areas, the abduction and the brutal execution of unarmed civilians, and the deliberate attempt to starve a people into oblivion. There must be a safe corridor established so that civilians can seek safety. The hostages must be released. These innocent people are not responsible for the actions of Hamas, any more than peace loving nationalists were responsible for the actions of the IRA, peace loving unionists for the actions of the UVF or peace-loving British people for the actions of their security forces. I urge the Israel government to cease fire and talk to its enemies.

I was struck by the elderly Israeli hostage who when released on Monday reached out to her captor and gripping his hand gently said 'shalom'. When we can unclench our hands and reach out to our enemy, peace can be the prize. We are proof of that. John Hume had a very simple view; you must talk to your enemy, even if they have killed many. Even if they have tried to kill you. On that point there is no alternative. Here we have often seen our communities divided over the Israeli/Palestinian crisis, where we seem to cling to that old ancient proverb 'the enemy of my enemy is my friend' I hope tonight we will unite on the side of humanity. We should also take a moment to reflect on how far we have come and how far human depravity can sink. It may not feel like it at times, but we are the lucky ones. No more will our children be pulled out of collapsed buildings. No more will we have our loved ones shot because of 'an accident of birth'. No more will militants decide what innocents will be sacrificed in their quest for revenge. We have come far and we must continue on that difficult but rewarding journey."

Councillor Varsani said it was an emotive topic and asked that for the following facts to be considered from a human approach. She advised that 50% of people in Gaza under 18 and that anyone over 75 will have lived through first Nakba/Catastrophe of forced clearances and plantation in 1948. She also stated that 31, 000 Palestinians killed/injured in 2018 versus 138 Israelis and that figures for past 20 years present similar ratios. Councillor Varsani said how would you feel considering the vast loss of life, the fact that there is little or no humanitarian corridors, that the equivalent of the Hiroshima bomb had been dropped on densely populated areas of Palestine. In Ireland there is 80 people per square kilometre but 8000 per square kilometre in Gaza. Councillor Varsani said if the Chamber could look merely from a humanity approach all would agree a cease fire is required as is food and water. She concluded that all should understand the horror on both sides.

Councillor Black said it was a very emotive topic and not all come from the same perspective, but he thanked members for supporting the amendment and concluded by saying what all did agree on was that a true and lasting peace settlement was needed.

Councillor Monteith stated that in his opinion the amendment is too one sided and said that both Hamas and Israel held hostages and proposed that the amendment to reflect this.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy stated that Councillor Black's motion was now the substantive motion and asked if he would accept the proposed amendment.

Councillor Black stated he would not accept the amendment.

Councillor Mallaghan asked if the motion read it supported the release of all hostages would it be acceptable.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy said across the district there was residents of every nationality and it was important that all had a voice.

Councillor Cuthbertson sought clarification as to what the motion would read.

The Chief Executive stated it would call for immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas and Israel.

*A further recess was called at 9.24 pm*

*The meeting reconvened at 9.41 pm*

Councillor Black thanked the Chair for granting the recess and said whilst everyone did not agree with all the sentiments made, morally all hostages should be released and if the motion read, 'all hostages should be released' hopefully all could agree. He proposed the motion read as follows:

'That this Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Israel; supported by the immediate release of all hostages; and calls for the provision of safe humanitarian corridors. Further, this Council calls on the international community to work towards a true and lasting peace settlement for the people in the Middle East.'

Councillor Monteith withdrew his amendment.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy asked if all Members would agree the motion or did they wish to vote.

All Members agreed the motion.

The Chair, Councillor Molloy declared the motion carried and thanked all Members for their contributions.

'That this Council calls for an immediate ceasefire in Palestine and Israel; supported by the immediate release of all hostages; and calls for the provision of safe humanitarian corridors.'



Further, this Council calls on the international community to work towards a true and lasting peace settlement for the people in the Middle East.'

Councillor McLernon concluded by stating, "I welcome the debate here tonight, and the contributions made by members. We all know what our history has taught us, and our call must be clear - an immediate, full, ceasefire and a decisive international intervention that leads to negotiations for a lasting peace settlement. Gaza must NOT become a graveyard for international law – we know which side we are on! We stand on the side of humanity, decency, universal democracy, and international law. And I hope here tonight, we will stand for peace, and support the motion.

*The live broadcast concluded at 9.42 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 Kerr  
Seconded by Councillor Black and

**Resolved** That items C203/23 to C209/23 taken as confidential business.

**Matters for Decision**

- (i) Council Confidential minutes of meeting held on 28 September 2023
- (ii) Planning Confidential minutes of meeting held on 3 October 2023
- (iii) Policy & Resources Confidential minutes of meeting held on 5 October 2023
- (iv) Environment Confidential minutes of meeting held on 10 October 2023
- (v) Development Confidential minutes of meeting held on 12 October 2023
- (vi) Document for Sealing – Boundary Rectification of Lands adjacent to Maghera Leisure Centre, Coleraine Road, Maghera (Ref: ENV001-0052)
- (vii) Document for Sealing – Sale of 24 Northland Row, Dungannon (Ref: ENV001-0084)

**C211/23 Duration of Meeting**

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 9.50 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.