

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 15 December 2022 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means

Chair Councillor Corry

Members Present Councillors Ashton, Bell*, Black, Brown*, Buchanan, Burton, Clarke, Colvin, Cuddy, Cuthbertson, Forde, Gildernew*, Glasgow, Kearney, Kerr, Mallaghan, Martin, N McAleer*, S McAleer, McFlynn, B McGuigan, S McGuigan, McKinney, McLean, McNamee, D McPeake, S McPeake*, Milne*, Monteith, Mullen*, Oneill, Robinson, Quinn*, Totten* and Wilson

Officers in Attendance Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Ms Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env)
Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities and Place (SD: C&P)
Ms Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development Strategy and Performance (SD:ODSP)
Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E)
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance (AD:ODSP)
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD:CSF)
Ms Kate Keys, Marketing and Communications Manager
Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

The Chair, Councillor Corry 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.

C243/22 Notice of Recording

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

C244/22 Apologies

Councillors Elattar, Graham and Molloy

C245/22 Declarations of Interest

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

C246/22 Chair's Business

The Chair Councillor Corry speaking on behalf of the Members and Officers of Mid Ulster District Council, extended condolences to colleague, Councillor Meta Graham on the sudden passing and burial today of her husband, Lawrence. The Chair stated that any bereavement is difficult, and even more so when it comes at Christmas. The Chair said that everyone's thoughts and prayers are with Meta, their children Christopher, Lauren and Jodie, and the wider family circle.

Councillor Glasgow thanked the Chair for her remarks and said that Lawrence's death was a tragedy and the number at the funeral was testament to the person he had been and the fact that the Minister conducting the funeral had also highlighted Lawrence's dedication to Meta, his mother and children and grandchildren. He concluded that that the family was in the thoughts and prayers of all.

Councillor S McAleer on behalf of the SDLP extended sincere condolences to Meta and commented that she had come to know her well and it was clear she was from a strong family unit.

Councillor Burton on behalf of DUP extended condolences and spoke of how vexed she had been at this sudden bereavement which was particularly poignant for the family at Christmas. She too spoke of the funeral and the number of people who had attended paid tribute to the person Lawrence had been. Councillor Burton concluded that Meta, her family and Lawrence's mother Lily would be in their thoughts in the days and weeks ahead.

Councillor Kerr expressed condolences to Meta on her sad loss stating that she and her family were in his thoughts.

Councillor Monteith concurred with previous comments and extended sympathy to Meta and her family.

Councillor S McGuigan on behalf of himself and Sinn Féin extended sympathy to Meta and the Graham family.

Councillor Gildernew on behalf of his wife Geraldine and himself extended condolences to Meta who he said is a lady and heartfelt prayers are with her at this sad time.

The Chair, Councillor Corry turning to Council events said that a highlight for her in recent weeks had been the return of Christmas Lights Switch On events. She said thousands of residents across the district attended the events following the keenly felt two-year absence. The Chair commented that the lights have certainly brightened up town centres.

The Chair spoke of her pleasure at the start of December to host Mid Ulster District Council's very first Chair's tea dance at the Burnavon in Cookstown which had been a great success. She also spoke of meeting the new Lithuanian Ambassador and representatives of the Lithuanian community who have made Mid Ulster their family home. Reflecting on 'A Christmas Tale' event organised by Baltic Together the Chair highlighted that it is fantastic to see the diversity in Mid Ulster and to once again have events to bring people and families together especially over Christmas.

The Chair, Councillor Corry said that whilst most look forward to resuming normal celebrations and meetings again with family and friends, all should be mindful that Christmas isn't a time of joy for everyone, and some people find it the most difficult and challenging time of the year, including those who have lost a loved one, are in poor health or struggling financially. She concluded that if everyone give extra consideration to the plight of others who are struggling or in need at this time and carry out one small act of kindness to potentially make someone's Christmas, whether this is to visit an elderly neighbour or make a donation to the local food bank, it could make a real difference.

Councillor Kearney shared that Mr Martin McKay a native of Upperlands, now residing in Belfast had been named International and overall 2022 EY entrepreneur of the Year. He highlighted that Mr McKay started a company which had devised software to help people with dyslexia, text help, which had been launched in 1996 after his father had suffered a stroke. He told of how it was used by 50 million people around the world and that the company employs 350 locally and has offices in Boston, Sweden, Australia and Norway. Councillor Kearney said Mr McKay had indicated he would like to contribute back to the area where he had been educated and that the best way to move forward with this was perhaps through Labour Market Partnership/MEGA.

Proposed by Councillor Kearney
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Corry and

Resolved That Council

- (i) send a letter to Mr Martin McKay named International and overall 2022 EY entrepreneur of the Year; and
- (ii) make contact with Mr McKay to explore options as to how he could become involved and make positive impact for example through Labour Market Partnership/MEGA.

Councillor Kerr drew attention to the rescheduled Ulster Final and said that he would extend best wishes to Galbally GAC in the final and hoped that they emulate Stewartstown by bringing the trophy back to the district.

Councillor Kerr drew attention to the Education Authority funding cuts and the impact they would have on Coalisland Youth Service at which staff levels and services would suffer. He proposed that Council seek an urgent meeting with the Education Authority calling on them to reverse the decisions.

Councillor B McGuigan said that these cuts impacted across the district and like Councillor Kerr he too could name particular youth services which would be hugely

impacted in Ballinascreen and Maghera. He said the situation looks bleak and there was no doubt to the massive gaps in funding being incurred.

Councillor Monteith seconded Councillor Kerr's proposal and said the proposal should be widened out to include all groups impacted across Mid Ulster. He said he was a former staff member of Dungannon Youth Club and in speaking to them the impacts would be dire. He said that in one drop in event last night 75 young people had been in attendance, the impact of the funding cuts would mean numbers had to be restricted to 35. Councillor Monteith said that conversations needed to take place with the organisations as soon as possible as this was happening now and even a zoom meeting would get things started! He said that the organisations have to plan budgets and if the cuts continue the viability of services would be under immense strain.

Councillor S McGuigan concurred and said in speaking to Dungannon Youth Club leaders the stark reality was a 20% initial funding cut which would impact both staffing levels and programmes. He said discussion needed to take place and the Education Authority needed to reconsider support proposals.

Councillor Quinn speaking with regards to Ogras in Coalisland said it is not just the Education Authority cutting funding but every sector and he would fear for the organisations and the vital role they play in the community especially the Halloween events. He said that Coalisland would not be half the town that it is without the impact of the Youth Centre and he would be happy to support the proposal and would concur with its urgency.

The Chair, Councillor Corry concurred with all who had contributed to the debate and said that she too worked with local youth services and was aware of the impact the cuts would make.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

Resolved That Council

- (i) seek an urgent meeting with the Education Authority to discuss the forthcoming funding cuts which will adversely impact youth services in the district;
- (ii) engage with groups across the district impacted by the forthcoming funding cuts.

Matters for Decision

C247/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in "Open Business" at the Council Meeting held on 24 November 2022

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 24 November 2022 (C223/22 – C235/22 and C242/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

C248/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 1 December 2022

Councillor Cuddy drew attention to the recent meeting of the Transformation Working Group and stressed the importance of keeping up the momentum and exploring ideas especially in light of the current economic climate.

Proposed by Councillor S McAleer
Seconded by Councillor Gildernew and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Thursday 1 December 2022 (PR226/22 – PR237/22 and P249/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

C249/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Environment Committee Meeting held on 5 December 2022

Councillor McFlynn drew attention to E285/22 Off Street Car Park: Accessible Parking and said she welcomed the strategy, the pilot project in Magherafelt but wondered if Council should perhaps include more than three spaces for accessible parking.

Councillor Kerr drew attention to E287/22 Bus Shelter Update and advised he had been contacted by constituents who were stating that the size and design of current bus shelters at some locations were inadequate as there was insufficient room for all those waiting on a bus especially in adverse weather conditions. He proposed that a report be brought to a future committee meeting regarding the design and size of bus shelters.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

Resolved That a report be brought to a future committee meeting regarding the design and size of bus shelters.

The Chief Executive in response to Councillor McFlynn’s query said that the number of accessible spaces had been considered and the officer recommendation and subsequent decision of committee met recommended guidelines.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor B McGuigan and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Monday 5 December 2022 (E277/22 - E296/22 and E308/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

C250/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Planning Committee Meeting held on 6 December 2022

Proposed by Councillor Brown
Seconded by Councillor D McPeake and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 6 December 2022 (P144/22 - P150/22 and P156/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated were considered and adopted.

C251/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Development Committee Meeting held on 7 December 2022

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Development Committee held on Wednesday 7 December 2022 (D185/22 - D199/22 and D205/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C252/22 Conferences, Seminars and Training

The HoSS&E sought approval for the previously circulated report on conferences, seminars and training as outlined in Appendix 1 of the report.

Councillor Kearney drew attention to the SOLACE/NILGA conference and encouraged officers and Members to attend.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

Resolved That approval be given to submitted requests for conferences, seminars and training as outlined at Appendix 1 to the report.

C253/22 Civic Recognition Requests

The HoSS&E sought approval for the previously circulated report on civic recognition requests from Members, in line with the stated Council Policy, and as detailed within the report at Appendix A.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr

Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That approval be given to submitted requests for civic recognition detailed at appendix A as outlined in the report.

Matters for Information

C254/22 Consultations

Members noted consultations received for attention of Council.

Councillor Mallaghan drew attention to the Northern Health & Social Care Trust Consultation: Working with you to Transform Acute Maternity Services and proposed that Council make a response. He stated that it should be referred to relevant committee and said that with changes to Causeway Hospital all should be mindful of additional pressures on the services in the district.

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

Resolved That Council respond to Northern Health & Social Care Trust: Working with you to Transform Acute Maternity Services: Closing date 3 March 2023

Councillor Corry said that all were aware of current pressures.

C255/22 Correspondence

Members noted update on correspondence received for attention of Council.

Councillor Kerr drew attention to the response from the Northern Ireland Office in relation to the Noah Donohoe case. He said whilst it was not surprising it was disappointing that all relevant material and information was not being made available to the legal team. He concluded that it was his hope that someday Noah's family would know the truth.

Councillor Monteith drew attention to the response received from NI Water regarding the telecommunications mast on Castlehill. He said the letter was disingenuous and he felt they were simply trying to conclude discussion. Councillor Monteith proposed that Council seek a meeting with NI Water to discuss the mast. He said that even if the mast had to remain on the site it did not have to be on the monstrosity that is currently situated on the hill. He said there was alternatives such as at the capped reservoir that they refuse to let go to Council. He said the reservoir site should be explored as an alternative for the relevant telecommunications and in his opinion the decision was monetary based. He said NI Water should not simply be ignoring Council and reiterated his proposal that Council seek an urgent meeting to engage in meaningful dialogue.

The Chair, Councillor Corry seconded the proposal and stated that Council had tried to engage with NI Water to find a way forward.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Corry and

Resolved That Council request a meeting with NI Water to discuss the visual impact of the Telecommunications Mast located at Castlehill, Dungannon.

Councillor Colvin drew attention to the response from Department for Infrastructure regarding delays in responses to planning applications. He said the letter was somewhat amazing as it acknowledges the responsibility to respond within a timeframe then blames Council for using a standalone system yet the problem is ongoing prior to that. Councillor Colvin then concluded that the letter pointed out that a meeting would not be helpful. He stated that his comments were an observation but he felt the letter was inappropriate.

Councillor Mallaghan referred back to the issue concerning the telecommunication mast and acknowledged that the response was negative. He suggested that as well as requesting a meeting Council should make the request to make a presentation to the NI Water Board.

Councillor Monteith seconded the proposal

Proposed by Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

Resolved That Council request to make a presentation to the Board of NI Water.

C256/22 Notice of Motion

Councillor Kerr moved the motion

This Council recognises the current cost of living crisis facing our community with health workers, including nurses, now taking industrial action. This Council commits to continuing its engagement with local workers and trade union representatives on their concerns.

Speaking on the motion Councillor Kerr said it was self explanatory and spoke of how many workers had been forced to strike action and now it was health care workers. He told how he had engaged with staff on the picket line and shared how they felt degraded working for so little and how they could not afford to heat their homes or buy food. He reminded Members how they had been clapped during the pandemic but clapping did not pay the bills. He said a below inflation pay rise was no use and whilst politicians say they are on their side many were not. He said the motion is a sign of solidarity and Council should invite them for presentations. He concluded reminding Members that the Communication Workers Union would be holding another picket on Christmas Eve and called for all to support them.

Councillor Monteith seconded the motion and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor D McPeake supported the motion and said he knew well the benefit of trade union membership and had been a shop steward for 15 years. He spoke of the recent industrial action in Council and how through negotiation matters had been brought to a successful conclusion and emphasised the importance of union negotiations. He shared that his wife who is a care worker, his party colleagues and himself had supported the recent strike action. He also reminded Members that 'eaten bread is soon forgotten' and spoke of the work of health care staff throughout the recent pandemic.

Councillor Monteith said that the motion was self explanatory and emphasised the importance of Council supporting all workers in getting their message out as main stream media focused on big business and often let the ordinary workers down. He said that the labour market is broken and that work does not pay which was a major problem within the capital system. He stressed the importance of supporting workers to get the best deal and it was disappointing that many still do not support trade unions. Councillor Monteith thanked those who did support striking workers and said that the Department of Health and other government agencies had to engage to resolve disputes as Council itself had to do. He spoke with contempt of those who tried to accuse striking workers of driving up inflation when in fact the economic crisis had been created by the political and financial elite. He concluded that it was not a crime to ask for a decent wage and people should not be forced to take second jobs and it was only those who were not impacted by the crisis would come out with such nonsense. Councillor Monteith said that Council had always given its voice to industry and now it was time to support the workers.

Councillor Quinn spoke of his engagement with health workers who had to stand in freezing conditions and how he had been struck with their determination and resolve. He said he was ashamed that they had been failed by politics, the Northern Ireland Executive and the Secretary of State. He said that those on strike were not asking for the earth but a fair pay to enable them to feed their families, heat their homes and drive to and from work, that the situation should never have reached the stage that it is at and the Secretary of State needed to intervene. Councillor Quinn spoke of how recently he had had a loved one in hospital and the wards were understaffed, oversubscribed and yet the staff were doing their outmost for everyone and were often subject to abuse. He concluded that the strike was about pay, conditions and the deteriorating health service and that the SDLP would support the motion.

Councillor Wilson concurred with previous speakers and said he too believed nurses and health sector workers deserve a pay rise and affordable living conditions. He said the biggest issue appeared to be that the government said the door is always open but the reality is it is not open to the nursing profession. He appealed to the government to work with the nursing profession to find a way forward. Councillor Wilson spoke of listening to a radio programme where it had been said by health professionals that the problem had started 10 years ago when the DUP, SF and Alliance parties had all voted to cut health spending. He also highlighted that nurses and health care workers and to pay car parking charges which ranged from £5 per day upwards and this was additional spend out of salaries.

Councillor Wilson proposed that Council lobby for free carparking for health care workers.

Councillor McLean said he would not get into party politics that the motion spoke for itself and the DUP would support it.

The Chair, Councillor Corry asked Councillor Kerr if he accepted the addition to them motion proposed by Councillor Wilson.

Councillor Kerr accepted the addition.

The Chair, Councillor Corry reiterated that health care workers worked at the cold face during covid, saved lives and a daily basis and she would send solidarity to them especially at this time.

The Chair, Councillor Corry declared the motion as undernoted carried:

This Council

- (i) recognises the current cost of living crisis facing our community with health workers, including nurses, now taking industrial action. This Council commits to continuing its engagement with local workers and trade union representatives on their concerns; and
- (ii) lobbies the Department of Health in order that health care workers receive free car parking at hospital sites.

Councillor Kerr thanked Members for their support and said he was glad the motion was carried unanimously. He concluded that health does not discriminate in any way be it religion, colour or sex.

C257/22 Notice of Motion

Councillor Mallaghan moved the motion

This Council is deeply concerned that the £600 energy support payment due to people across the North of Ireland who are enduring severe cost-of-living pressures has not yet been made, despite DUP assurances it would be paid in November.

Notes that as a result of the DUP boycott of power-sharing, responsibility for delivering this payment rests with the British government.

Is further concerned that as temperatures drop and winter deepens many families struggling to pay soaring energy bills will have budgeted for this payment being made before Christmas as promised.

And therefore calls on the British government to urgently provide clarity on the delivery of the payments, it is well past time that these were delivered with no more broken promises.

Speaking on the motion Councillor Mallaghan said, "In August Conor Murphy and Gordon Lyons met the treasury to push for this payment to be released. Following the meeting Conor Murphy raised concerns that this payment which is a devolved issue would not be paid on time due to a lack of an executive. Following this East Belfast MP Gavin Robinson then on BBC Radio Ulster gave a cast iron guarantee that the payment would happen in November. He stated that the British government would deliver this and where best placed to do so. It is a fact that across these islands administrations have delivered these payments. The only households not to benefit from a cost of living payment are those from households here in the north of Ireland

Today in Cookstown £600 will buy about 573 litres of oil and speaking to a local supplier today the litre price is expected to raise by 7p over coming days. The average home here will use 1800 litres over the course of the year. So that goes to show the value in this payment and what it means to people in a cost of living crisis. In fact most people who are struggling will have reduced that 1800 figure dramatically due to the other mounting costs in food 20%, road fuel by 38%, the average mortgage will rise by £300 per month based on bank of England interest rates hikes as people come to the end of their current deals. Today on the rate increased by a further 0.5% crushing the ability of normal home owners to pay their mortgage and it punishes local businesses who will see their costs rocket and their ability to grow severely hampered by the high price of borrowing.

It was inevitable that interest rates would go up eventually however the Kamakasi antics of the United Kingdom's shortest serving PM expedited that case sinking United Kingdom finances in the most rapid fashion seen in modern history. Liz Truss was the DUP's favourite in what became the selection of a UK prime minister by 24 percent of the UK population with absolutely no mandate from the people to instigate the nonsense trickle-down economics unfunded and designed to top up the rich by taking from the poor.

Tonight I presume and expect to hear lots about the protocol. And while it will be interesting to hear what has to be said about that matter it has absolutely nothing to do with the ability to get into Stormont and deliver for the people who live here. Why don't those who are upset with the negotiated settlement by the British government boycott Westminster. The place where the deal was done and voted for. In fact and I quote former DUP leader Arlene Foster "this is a new era in the relationship between the UK and the EU", furthermore she said people here would "maximise the opportunities the new arrangements provide for our local economy".

The boycott perhaps the DUP really should consider is a boycott of the Conservative Party. At every moment and at every opportunity they have been thrown under the bus. Possibly a Wright bus who knows. It happens so often it's hard to keep up and it appears to me like the old saying goes that when your waiting for a bus they all come at once and the double decker route master this time will be driven by none other than this month's UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. Yes the protocol legislation paused in order to allow more time to negotiate with the world's largest trading block the EU. So let's get back to Stormont so we can help assist our most in need, so we can agree a package for our nurses and put a plan in place to help all those people

sitting waiting for a domiciliary care package. Let's work together so we can support our teachers and our schools. Let's get back to creating apprenticeship opportunities for our young people. Let the assembly return so we can figure out how we can assist organisations who will lose their ESF funding and keep them delivering their fantastic services. Let's get our MLAs back to figuring out how they can pass a budget that can give our public services the certainty to plan for the future. This effects our doctors, our libraries, our infrastructure. It effects our Council budget on whether we have a good allocation of rates support grant. Let's get that £600 out to those people who really need it. Those households in Pomeroy or Cookstown or in Bellaghy or Fivemiletown who can see the condensation on the window and the mould begin to grow in the corner of the coldest room.

Stormont didn't create the protocol, Stormont can't fix the protocol and it can't get rid of it. It can't fix all of our problems, however at least with local ministers and MLAs in place they can create programmes and prioritise spending to suit our place and our people. The DUP may think its friends are in London, they are not your friends. However you have willing partners here, on this island who will work with you to make the lives of our people better."

Councillor Bell seconded the motion and stated like his colleague in talking to constituents he was constantly hearing how people were struggling with higher mortgage rates and meeting everyday costs. He said that poverty is not selective and doesn't care about the protocol or sovereignty and concluded that the economy needed to move out of low incomes.

Councillor Ashton said, "Well what can I say, you would know there is an election on the horizon, I have lost count on how many times I have heard DUP mentioned by the proposer, instead of focusing on the hardship our residents are facing with the huge increase in energy costs, Sinn Fein are more interested in attacking the DUP. It would be of more benefit for all the political parties to press the Secretary of State to make these payments rather than political point scoring. Back on 29th September it was the then Prime Minister that told the BBC that the payments would be available in November on the same terms as the rest of the UK. The Government need to get on with the payments, it's not the devolved institutions in Scotland or Wales delivering it so there should be no difference made in Northern Ireland. There are no excuses of why this money cannot be delivered, the funding and the systems are in place. The Utility Regulator has worked in good faith to create conditions to make this happen. We can sit here tonight and go on about no executive but the absence of an executive is only an excuse. These payments have been paid directly by the UK Government to households in other regions of the UK, Northern Ireland is very much a part of the UK and should not be treated any different. The reality is the UK Government should not be using the £600 energy payment as some sort of punishment for the DUP honoring our mandate to deal with the protocol. The UK Government are quite content to push through identity and language legislation and the commissioning of abortion services at speed but when it comes to delivering much needed support directly into homes, support that would make such a difference to households this winter they choose to sit on their hands.

If the secretary of State believes that he is going to weaken the DUP position on the protocol he is greatly mistaken. The Protocol is continuing to have a destructive

impact on political, constitutional and economic life in Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State would do well to focus his efforts on resolving this matter so that the power sharing institutions can be restored. Only then will the DUP be back around the Executive table. The sooner Sinn Fein and the Secretary of State realise that the sooner this Country will have an Executive.

I challenge the Members here tonight are we interested in party point scoring or are we interested in actually getting this money delivered. And on that I am presenting an amendment to the motion”:

“This Council is deeply concerned that the £600 energy support payment due to people across Northern Ireland who are enduring severe cost-of-living pressures has not yet been made. We are concerned that as temperatures drop and winter deepens many families struggling to pay soaring energy bills will have budgeted for this payment being made before Christmas as promised. And therefore writes to the Secretary of State to urgently provide clarity on the date and delivery of the payments and invites the Secretary of State to visit Mid Ulster Council to engage with members on the pressures households are facing”

Councillor Black seconded the amendment.

The amendment was tabled to Members and displayed for virtual attendees.

Councillor Wilson then stated that “The delivery of an energy strategy, which has now only been published includes anti-poverty and fuel poverty strategies. While I welcome the programme of cavity wall insulation were it is estimated that 35% of heat escapes through poorly insulated cavity wall and 25% through poorly insulated roof space. however, had we a devolved Government during 2017-2020 this work could have been much further progressed. These are only some examples of work that could have been far more advanced during the 3 years Stormont was previously pulled down by SF. It was wrong then, it’s wrong now and it is the people we are elected to represent who are adversely impacted.

As my colleague Andy Allen said lately that the U.K. Government need to urgently intervene. Electricity companies could move quickly to deliver the original energy scheme of either a direct credit for those with credit (monthly or quarterly) accounts or the top-up draw down for those with pre-payment amendments similar to that being delivered in other parts of the United Kingdom. To date, they have been able to avail of £66 in October, further £66 in November, with payments of £67 available in December, January, February and March. He has called for a round table discussion with energy providers, the utility regulator, third sector charities (Bryson Charitable Group, Advice NI and National Energy Action) to push for support for households and movement on the support from the U.K. Government.

It is a complete failure that, while households across England, Scotland and Wales have been receiving financial support since October, the Government at Westminster is still debating how and when equivalent support will be delivered to Northern Ireland households. As temperatures continue to drop, families throughout Northern Ireland - many who were expecting support to arrive last month - are

struggling to heat their homes or put food on the table with many having to ration food, electricity and heating. It has already been highlighted that local energy companies have indicated that they can deliver the original scheme to every household with an electricity account - a model that seems to no longer be preferred by Westminster – I have no idea why they have changed their mind at the 11th hour although with this Secretary of State I don't think he knows if he's coming or going.”

Councillor Monteith said that the current week had been a bad week one for many households as winter took hold so did cold reality. He said the queries he had received were weighted against people affording their homes and subsequent costs and anything that Council could do to put pressure to get the £600 paid should be done. He concurred with Councillor Ashton that it is within the government to do so but you have to want to solve a problem for it to be solved and currently the situation was toxic and the hold up in the payment showcased how the people in the six counties are continuously treated that is with utter contempt! He said that ‘Tweedle dee and Tweedle dum’ would not make a difference to the charade called Stormont that had been ongoing for over twenty years. He said that the constitutional issues was the country needed unification and political dramas needed to be a thing of the past. He said whilst he did not support all the sentiments of the motion he supported its ethos.

Councillor Kerr echoed Councillor Monteith's comments and said that to relieve the pressure on the working class a socialist republic with free health care and education was required. He said he supported Councillor Mallaghan's motion for financial intervention. He said he had no faith in Stormont and highlighted that it had recently rejected a Trade Union Act thus highlighting how anti working class it is; and had also rejected a rent freeze. He said that intervention was required and concluded that Stormont in his opinion was not working class friendly.

Councillor Quinn said prior to the meeting he had looked at the history of the former Dungannon Council and reflected on the Mayors throughout the years and wondered what they would think of the debate taking place. He said the delay in the £600 payment was a huge blow to many families who had budgeted to the last penny having been told they would receive the payment. He said the people had been abandoned by the DUP and also the British Government who had ensured people living in England, Scotland and Wales had received their payments and said that those living in the South of Ireland had a raft of support programmes in place. Councillor Quinn said if the Assembly had been in place people in the north would have had a better chance and it was the DUP causing the problems. Councillor Quinn concluded that the reality of the delays was that people were cold and hungry that the British Government had neglected them and the people on the island of Ireland needed a better future.

Councillor Cuthbertson said it was worthwhile to point out whilst talking about a 32 county state with free health care the current republic did not have free health care and the price cap on electricity was thanks to the British government. He agreed that people were in need and there was not excuse for non payment when colleagues in Westminster had lobbied for it. He concluded that people needed to be mindful in saying there was no support as this was ridiculous and it would be interesting to see what rates setting would bring.

The Chair, Councillor Corry asked if Councillor Mallaghan accepted the amendment posed by Councillor Ashton.

Councillor Mallaghan did not accept the amendment as he said it changed the issue as to why the payment was stalled alluding that it was due to the absence of devolved government.

The Chair, Councillor Corry put the amendment to vote

FOR	14
AGAINST	21

The Chair, Councillor Corry stated that the amendment had fallen.

Councillor Wilson proposed an amendment:

“Notes with concern that during the 3 years Stormont was collapsed previously (2017-2020) vital work to tackle the root causes of poverty were severely inhibited. Acknowledges that as a result of the latest boycott to power-sharing, responsibility for delivering equivalent support rests with the government.”

Councillor Glasgow seconded the amendment stating that the protocol is the major topic and that the UUP had warned about this. He reflected that it was somewhat bizarre that the DUP want out whilst Sinn Féin want in, he also acknowledged the reference to the fact that Stormont had collapsed previously the impact of which was still being felt. Councillor Glasgow spoke of a BBC Programme reporting on loansharks targeting vulnerable people, lending them money then charging extortionate interest rates. He said a way forward was needed urgently as whilst £600 would not go a long way it would be a great help to many and point scoring between parties was not going to help.

In response to the Chair, Councillor Corry question Councillor Mallaghan stated he did not accept the second amendment.

The Chair, Councillor Corry put the amendment to the vote

For	5
Against	22
Abstain	7

The Chair, Councillor Corry stated that the amendment had fallen thus the substantive motion was that moved by Councillor Mallaghan.

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

For	21
Against	6
Abstained	7

The Chair, Councillor Corry declared that the motion was carried.

Councillor Mallaghan thanked those who supported the motion and had the desire to have the payment made to the people. He thanked those who put their principles to one side to support it. He spoke of the Secretary of States visit to the district when he had heard from businesses that statistics showed that the protocol worked for the six counties, that it was easy for larger companies to employ people to deal with it and said it was his hope that matters concerning it would get sorted.

The live broadcast concluded at 8.22 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 B McGuigan and

Resolved: That items C258/22 to C264/22 be taken as confidential business.

Matters for Decision

- (i) Council Confidential minutes of meeting held on 24 November 2022
- (ii) Audit Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 29 November 2022
- (iii) Policy & Resources Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 1 December 2022
- (iv) Environment Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 5 December 2022
- (v) Planning Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 6 December 2022
- (vi) Development Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 7 December 2022
- (vii) Document for Sealing - Brocagh & District Council Regeneration Group (BADGER) to Mid Ulster District Council CLC001-0025

C265/22 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.30 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.