

**Minutes of Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council
held on Thursday 10 December 2020 in the Council Offices, Circular Road,
Dungannon and by Virtual Means**

Members Present

Councillor McNamee

Councillors Ashton*, Black, Burton*, Clarke*, Corry*,
Cuddy*, Doris, Elattar*, Kerr, Hughes*, Kearney*, Milne*,
Molloy (7.03pm)*, Monteith, Wilson*

**Officers in
Attendance**

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Ms Campbell, Director of Leisure & Outdoor Recreation
Mr M Browne, Head of Tourism**
Mr Gordon, Head of Leisure**
Mr Hill, Head of Parks**
Ms Linney, Head of Community Development**
Mr McCance, Head of Culture and Arts**
Ms McKeown, Head of Economic Development **
Mr McKeown, ICT Support
Ms Grogan, Democratic Services Officer

**Others in
Attendance**

Deputation – Sharon Cassidy
Raising Awareness of Homeless Issues

Councillor Gildernew*
Councillor S McGuigan*

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

D194/20 Apologies

None.

D195/20 Declarations of Interest

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

Councillor Kerr declared an interest in agenda item 6 - Coalisland Community Food Bank.

Councillor Cuddy declared an interest in agenda item 19 – COVID19 Business Grants – Tranche 2.

Councillor Wilson declared an interest in anything related to Enterprise Agencies as Chair of Cookstown Enterprise Centre.

Councillor Monteith declared an interest in agenda item 19 - COVID19 Business Grants – Tranche 2 as family member involved.

Councillor Molloy entered the meeting at 7.03 pm.

D196/20 Chair's Business

The Chair congratulated Mr McCreesh on his recent appointment on becoming the new Chief Executive for Mid Ulster District Council. He said that he first worked with Mr McCreesh from he first became a Councillor in 1997 and that all members were aware of all the hard work he has put in the legacy Council and this Council and was held in the highest regard amongst members and staff and wished him well in his new role as Chief Executive and looked forward to working with him.

Councillor Kearney congratulated Mr McCreesh on his new appointment and wanted to say that along with Mr Anthony Tohill, former Chief Executive and other Senior Officers that they have guided Mid Ulster Council through the formative years and now it was an opportunity for the new Chief Executive to put his own stamp on the next phase especially now we were going into the recovery phase and wished him well.

Councillor Monteith congratulated Mr McCreesh on becoming the new Chief Executive and said that he looked forward to working with him.

Councillor Kerr also congratulated Mr McCreesh and said that he was passionate about trying to help the people of the Mid Ulster District area and wished him well in his new role.

Councillor Black concurred with everything that was said and passed on his congratulations to Mr McCreesh and said that he agreed with what Councillor Kerr said regarding his passion for helping the people of the Mid Ulster area and wished him every success for the future.

Councillor Cuddy concurred with all previous members comments and said that he had always found Mr McCreesh a very approachable Officer and hoped that all the good work continues and thanked him for all his efforts in the past and was confident that the place would be a lot better over the next 4 years.

The Chair referred to Agenda Item 17 – Seamus Heaney HomePlace and advised that the Head of Culture and Arts would be providing an update in relation to Seamus Heaney Open Ground Project.

Councillor Wilson said that he had been approached by a number of people regarding concerns relating to the state of the pathways around Lough Fea and felt that this site be given priority as it was the jewel in the crown within that area. He asked that this be done as a matter of urgency in the springtime or beforehand if the weather picks up.

The Chair concurred with member's comment and said as he regularly walked around Lough Fea he also witnessed the need for something to be done as the area was prone to flooding and asked that this be investigated at the first available opportunity.

D197/20 Deputation - Raising Awareness of Homeless Issues

The Chair welcomed to the committee Ms Sharon Cassidy, Raising Awareness of Homeless Issues to the meeting and invited her to address the committee.

Ms Cassidy advised members that she had started Help the Homeless campaign over two years ago which has grown immensely over that period of time. She said that approximately 30 people including Councillor Kerr slept out for 2 nights at the beginning of August at the front of Cookstown Courthouse to raise funds for sleeping bags for the homeless. The group raised over £16,000 and purchased over 1200 high quality, waterproof sleeping bags with the proceeds being allocated towards two charities in Northern Ireland – Newry Helping the Homeless and Helping Hands Belfast as well as Feed Our Homeless and Feed the People both based in Dublin.

She said that she had witnessed much underlying poverty with the COVID19 pandemic, with homeless in Ireland being an extension of poverty and there was a need to use every avenue to expose it as it was getting out of control. She advised that in Ireland statistics did not add up as it was indicated that 10,000 people were homeless, but in Dublin alone the charities were feeding between 600 and 700 people per night outside the GPO which included children, pregnant women, elderly and working men who go out to work each day on a building site and don't have a roof over their head and sleeping in a doorway with their boots beside them. During COVID so many people and families were in poverty and the problem was only going to escalate within the next 6 months.

She said the campaign started in her own kitchen and would really like some guidance as she really didn't know how to progress, but was aware that she would need to form a committee to bring this campaign to the next level. She advised that Councillor Kerr had put her in contact with a Good Relations Officer and had been in contact with her and hoped that if this committee was up and running that funding could be made available for premises within the Cookstown/Mid Ulster area. She said that she was aware that this was not to help the people of Mid Ulster area at present but hoped that going forward that this would change and help those in the area also as she was currently helping a local Charity in Cookstown called Halo Helping Hands who help families in the Mid Ulster area and she hoped to get them items of food and toys for their toy appeal also.

The Chair thanked Ms Cassidy for her impressive presentation and said that she was doing tremendous work and to raise funds for 1200 sleeping bags was unreal. He said that it was scary to hear that between 600 and 700 people had to be fed each night in Dublin and from the outside no-one realises that this kind of thing was going on. In referring to the Good Relations Officer which she was liaising with, he said that he was confident that this Officer would help Ms Cassidy progress in trying to achieve her aim of acquiring a premises and help form a committee.

Councillor Kerr thanked Ms Cassidy for her presentation and for all that she had achieved this last number of years on highlighting her ability to generate funding towards the homelessness which was something she was passionate about. He said in this given time there were thousands of people without a home or a roof over their head which was a

basic human right and the figure Ms Cassidy outlined was alarming. He said that people trying to emerge from COVID would bring additional hardships relating to mass redundancies and people losing out on income and uncertain futures which lay ahead for many people. He said that he was part of Ms Cassidy's successful campaign which she organised in August for a sleep out to raise funds and hoped that this could become an annual event and was glad to see discussions taking place between Ms Cassidy and Council Officers and hoped that this would progress in the New Year.

Councillor Doris thanked Ms Cassidy for her informative presentation and commended her work in trying to help others in desperate need. She said that there was no doubt that this year has been difficult for many people and have to say that there was a stigma around homelessness as this year she had seen literally people potentially losing their homes over COVID and agreed that it wasn't the peoples fault. She stated that she had previously lived in Dublin and found it hard to source accommodation and in the end shed had to move away from it as she couldn't afford the rent asked or a room in a shared house with 4 or 5 other people.

She said that from 2017 she had been lobbying for support for victims of domestic abuse as she had come across a horrific case and tried to get a woman and her child accommodation through the Housing Executive only to be told that she didn't have enough points. She felt annoyed that she couldn't get her a home and was unable to help the woman in which she deserved, but through Women's Aid temporary accommodation was sourced thankfully. She said that last year alone there was over 80 women and children turned away from Women's Aid because there was nowhere for them to go and found that everyone was quick to judge a woman and say why she hasn't left the abuser, but questions had to be asked where she could go or whether she could afford the rent, near her children's school or beside her job and felt that the stigma around homelessness was something that had to be changed. She advised that she was having meetings with Women's Aid and may be worthwhile for Ms Cassidy to touch base with them as meetings were taking place with Minister Carál Ní Chuilín to try and change the housing points system with the Housing Executive and was aware that there was going to be a huge overhaul on that.

Councillor Doris said if there was anything Ms Cassidy wished members to do or any suggestion to reach out to the Council and wished her well in her endeavors for the future as she was doing a tremendous job.

Councillor Corry also commended the work being carried out by Ms Cassidy and said that Councillor Doris had referred to some of the work being carried out by Minister Carál Ní Chuilín and today she had raised the issue of homelessness and for the rights of support, the rights of safety and the right to a home and hoped that the plight of homelessness would be addressed as a policy was being currently worked upon.

Ms Cassidy thanked the committee for allowing her the opportunity to speak and said that she just loved helping people and hoped to continue doing this in the years to come and would also like her 5 boys to carry on her legacy.

The Chair thanked Ms Cassidy for her tremendous work ethic and said there was total support for her campaign from members tonight. He told her if she needed any guidance or support to contact Officers or Councillors who would be only too willing to provide any assistance they could.

Ms Cassidy left the meeting at 7.19 pm.

Matters for Decision

D198/20 Draft Response to the Department of Education – Consultation on Special Educational Needs (SEN) Regulations and SEN Code of Practice

The Acting Chief Executive presented previously circulated report to agree the draft response to the Department of Education - Consultation on Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice.

Councillor Corry said she welcomed the consultation and thanked Officers for their input of work. She agreed with what the Chief Executive had said and the point made within the report that there needed to be Learning Support Coordinators (LSC), should be within senior management teams of the school and the need for support within that team, with all teachers being trained in Special Educational Needs (SEN). There was also the need to reflect the timeframes and the length of time for support needs to be correct also to compare to see if there was significant gaps there which still needs campaigning.

Councillor Monteith said he welcomed the report as it was an issue all members would be aware of on a continuous basis regarding many parents in the area having major concerns. He felt that this may be something that this Council could progress on behalf of our residents in the area, but not just respond on this consultation, as there was a need to be seen as being proactive on other issues like poverty etc. He suggested that it would be beneficial for the Council to take a lead role in as there was a good mix of urban and rural perspectives and this could be put into place. He felt the biggest issue would be the waiting game which goes on and as a board of governor he felt that one of the most frustrating things for him, but more importantly for families was the restrictions on children each school can refer to a psychology service and this was just a crazy scenario where a monetary figure was placed on each school on the amount of children that could be referred and felt that this was no reflection on real life for families and young people that need support.

He said that within the last few days, figures for the six counties revealed that there were 67,000 school children with SEN needs, which was one-fifth of the scoping population and only 19,000 children has statements which was stark figures. In referring to CCMS, he advised that although he wouldn't be a massive supporter, in fairness they had produced a report in the last week or so, but the most important thing within the report and quoted to the committee their statement as it was something that everyone was trying to come across and stated CCMS stated "*the need to move away from a culture where everything must be fought for to one which assumes service as a right*" and said that this should not be the case that parents of children with special needs have to torture, email, phone Councillors, phone schools and torture teachers in order to get the educational rights their child is entitled to. He said that this needs to be the mindset towards Special Needs provision and parents shouldn't have to fight for this as this should be a right and something that needs to be strived for. The referred to the umpteen reports produced and advised that even the Audit Office produced a report which outlined a very damning situation in September and said that the chamber could be filled with the amount of reports which have been produced on problems relating to SEN provision and there was a need for urgent action now. He concluded by saying that the quote by CCMS was very apt as

this was a right and not seen as a battle for families to get the correct provision for their child.

Councillor Kearney said as a former Principal it was a burden he carried for 33 years and many other of his colleagues also and commended Officers for the excellent report as it was very timely and very well researched. He said that it was time for this service to be overhauled as it was outdated for decades and there was a need to provide teachers with proper training and resources and less red tape as so much was sent to schools that it turned the teachers off. He said that people were waiting for the 5 stages now becoming 3 which would be a very positive step as there would be less red tape. He advised that he still kept in contact with teachers especially teachers in smaller schools and they have put their hand in their own pockets and paid for psychologists to move the thing forward, so this was where education was at the moment. This year children with Special Needs have had a very tough time during the period of lockdown and said that during his time he wished there was a Council which took a stand as we have to stand up for a community and commended that. He said that he would like to propose the recommendation.

Councillor Kerr seconded the recommendation and welcomed what Councillors Monteith and Kearney had said as it was extremely frustrating for parents and anything that the Council could be to assist moving this forward would be greatly welcomed.

Councillor Burton agreed with previous comments and said that in rural schools parents were fighting and arguing in trying to get their child the education they deserve. She said that 9 times out of 10 a child with special needs was sent miles away from their home to a specialist unit which can be very unsettling for a child with autism. She felt that there was a need to look at these concerns going forward.

Proposed by Councillor Kearney
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to agree Draft Response to the Department of Education - Consultation on Special Educational Needs (SEN) Regulations and SEN Code of Practice.

The Chief Executive advised that as this issue was a critical part of the Community Plan that it would be beneficial for a meeting to be convened with Department of Education Officials on concerns raised tonight.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to convene a meeting with Department of Education officials who are responsible for the designing these of regulations, implementation and resourcing and invite any interested member who wishes to attend.

D199/20 Community Development

The Head of Community Development presented previously circulated report to update members on the following:

- Community Support – proposal for additional DFC Food Funding
- Peace IV – to note the Peace IV update
- Good Relations and support to the East Timorese Community
- Community Support Funding and Fivemiletown Community Annex
- Community Planning - Proposed Community Forum
- Community Development – To note the update

(i) Community Support – proposal for additional DFC Food Funding

Proposed by Councillor Kerr

Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the proposal for additional DFC Food Funding support (£90,000), pending confirmation and letter of offer.

(ii) Peace IV – to note the Peace IV update

Note update.

(iii) Good Relations and support to the East Timorese Community

Councillor Molloy said that he welcomed the report and that engagements have been very good to date, unfortunately he had missed the last one but there has been a number of issues which had been raised and these were being worked through. Issues around passports was becoming a critical issue due to possible renewal for some of the community. He has become aware of consul support in Manchester where residents can travel, unfortunately this remains difficult for local residents with out of date travel documentation and felt that some kind of letter of comfort being in place to support travel would be beneficial in those circumstances.

Councillor Monteith concurred with Councillor Molloy and stated that engagement was key at present. In referring to the letter of comfort advised that the situation of COVID pandemic meant that an agreement was implemented by government here that driving licenses would be valid until a certain point and felt that the quickest, easiest way at present would be the a representative on behalf of the East Timorese community approach these authorities who deal with these documents as this would take a lot of pressure of them and result in a good long lasting relationship between the Council and the East Timorese community.

Councillor Cuddy agreed with previous comments and said that the East Timorese was a large community in Dungannon which provided a large scale of energy to the town and was good to reach out to them and provide any help we can and agreed that it was good to continue the good relationship between Council and them.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to agree the proposals of support to the East Timorese Community.

(iv) Community Support Funding and Fivemiletown Community Annex

Note update.

(v) Community Planning - Proposed Community Forum

Councillor Kerr advised that it is good to get as many groups involved as possible and to propose that this be advertised in our social media and other local outlets or the most appropriate way there was. He was aware of great groups in Coalisland like Friends 2 Talk and Mid Ulster Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy would may be very interested in an initiative like this. He asked that consideration be given to the appropriate advertising methods so other organisations were made aware of it and the consideration of it being on an annual basis.

The Head of Community Development advised that one of the things which was done was to have all the community groups on the community database and then any of the meetings which will take place will invite the groups from this to meet with the relevant DEA members.

Councillor Corry in referring to the DEA meetings enquired if this would involve the smaller community groups rather than the main ones which were mentioned.

The Head of Community Development advised that the larger strategic ones were the ones that would be brought together as strategic support agencies, but DEA meetings would be held for all the smaller groups who members would have regular interaction with.

Proposed by Councillor Corry
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to agree the new community group engagement process.

Councillor Monteith advised that he had received an email regarding healthcare and its provision and the anticipated closure of the Valley Nursing Home in Clogher. He said that he had been approached by concerned family members of a resident of the Home regarding the issue and content of the email and felt it would be appropriate for Council to write to Southern Trust on their processes as there were significant concerns around this and would dispute that families have been kept informed on proceedings.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to write to the Southern Trust in relation to concerns relating to the process re the Valley Nursing Home in Clogher and that all legal requirements and protocols have been adhered too.

Councillor Cuddy said that he would totally agree with Councillor Monteith's comments as he had also been approached by the same family and felt that a proper process should be followed.

Councillor Burton advised that she had been working behind the scenes on this issue also and there has been real concerns for some time. She said that this was a Home which served the community and the powers that be have to make sure that it was up to the mark to provide care for the vulnerable residents that should be cared for in the way they should be and wanted to make sure that this was the outcome here because we don't want to lose this provision from this rural area.

The Head of Community Development in relation to the earlier issue in terms of community support said if members were happy that Fivemiletown Food Bank would partner Hope for You for taking forward.

D200/20 Community Development – All Ireland Health Campaign

The Head of Community Development presented previously circulated report and advised members that at the Special Meeting of Development Committee on the 29th October, it was recommended that Council agree, in principle, to support the campaign for an All-Ireland National Healthcare Service. The matter was to be brought to the next Development Committee meeting for consideration, once members had an opportunity to read the report.

Councillor Monteith said that he hoped that this would be here last month but was good to have the presentation in front of members tonight and may be something that officers could try and ensure that emailed copies of presentations be forwarded to members in advance of the meeting as it was sometimes difficult to see or hear the virtual presentations on the night. He said that the case was well made on the night where a good discussion ensued and felt that there should be no barrier and a sensible approach for the provision of adequate healthcare for all the people of Ireland and proposed to go forward with the recommendation.

Councillor Kerr seconded the proposal for an All Ireland NHS, which was an aspiration as there was a need for a new innovative system for all of the people on this island as this was clearly demonstrated through the pandemic this year. He said that in the 26 counties he often heard of people paying for health but as a socialist he believed that access to free healthcare should be from the point of entry to discharge and should be based as a human right. He said that universal healthcare should be what it was and no privatisation should be allowed and referred to the comments he raised at the last Development Committee regarding the documentary directed by John Pilger on "The Dirty War on the NHS" where Tory and New Labour governments were trying to dismantle NHS and treat people as a commodity.

Councillor Black said that he could understand why Republic of Ireland citizens would be keen to progress this campaign when they look to Northern Ireland and see the benefits we have in being able to access the NHS and whilst no perfect, it was important that people do not lose sight of the great organisation that the NHS is and when Mr Redding himself was delivering his presentation, he acknowledged that many in the Republic of Ireland would look onto our system with admiration. He advised that there were many incidents of cross border co-operation currently and recognise the benefit that this could bring and he would agree that co-operation with our nearest neighbour was in the best interest of all our people, however there was a difference between co-operation and full integrated health system and didn't think that reinventing the wheel for an All Ireland Healthcare system was the way forward or the best use of our energies. He believed that

such a step would undermine the NHS and the benefit that this brings to the citizens of Northern Ireland as being part of the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland parties has agreed to work together to address the recommendations of the Bengoa Report, so his party believes that the direction of travel should be for the Assembly and Executive to work together and build upon the great system that we have already have for the benefit of all of the citizens of Northern Ireland rather than pursue the path as outlined in the recent deputation and the subsequent report before members tonight.

Councillor Doris said she didn't know what Councillor Black was referring to in terms of the NHS and would agree it was a great model, but only a great model when it was properly funded. She said that there were two broken healthcare systems in Ireland and this was what the issue was and that an All Ireland Healthcare system just makes sense as during COVID a lot of lives were lost because the two healthcare systems were unable to share information on the two sides of this Island.

Councillor Wilson advised that committee that when Sinn Féin had the health ministry of healthcare they didn't pump the money into the system. He said that this Council needed to look at what their competences really were because the last time he looked healthcare was the responsibility of Stormont and the Ulster Unionist Party had long been in favor of cross border co-operation and being good neighbours, but these proposals do not take into account several very fundamental realities. He stated that there were two different countries on this Island and two very different health systems as a result as Northern Ireland was served by the United Kingdom's National Health Service and the Republic of Ireland had chosen a very different path in terms of healthcare and all political campaigning in the world cannot change these realities as one of the greatest benefits of the UK is the National Health Service and one of the least attractive benefits of the Republic was the lack of it. It is thanks to the fact that we are in a position to be part of the UK and Northern Ireland was able to benefit from the UK's position of the world's fifth strongest economy in addition to the huge economic benefits this brings and in health terms this allows people in Northern Ireland to share the access of UK's PPE stock and also this week the share of the vaccine for the COVID19 away ahead of our neighbours in the Republic of Ireland but hoped that everyone would get the opportunity to vaccinate within their own countries. He said that people were glad to see co-operation with the Republic which already takes place with regards to Cardiology, but this was very different calling for a single system from Cork to Coleraine and was not for us in Northern Ireland to dictate to the people of the Republic on what type of healthcare they should have or can afford as this was entirely a matter for them alone and has been since 1921. He advised that the Ulster Unionist Party was very clear that they would not be party to any efforts that risks the National Health Service as it was far too important to play politics with and therefore would be opposing it.

Councillor Cuddy said he completely agreed with Councillor Wilson as there never was enough money for any sector especially healthcare which was so important to us all. In referring to the healthcare systems advised that the NHS in Northern Ireland was certainly not perfect but was closer to where we all want to be. He felt that this should be more about the people of Republic of Ireland trying to change their direction regarding healthcare and investing more money into the system. He said that we are as close as we were currently going to be with the funding available and there was a need to realistic as nothing was perfect and the need to lobby for more funding to make the NHS a better system to meet the needs of the changing population as nothing stood still and new diseases arising like COVID this year. He said that the Republic of Ireland had a bigger

job to protect the people they represent, but there was a need for Councillors to look after the people they represent especially the people of Mid Ulster and he wouldn't be agreeing with the proposal either.

Councillor Kearney advised that the committee was only after having a discussion regarding crisis in Education and felt that this was only a worthy idea and consideration and surely if the pandemic had taught people something, that there was a need to work closely together for the better.

Councillor Molloy advised that there were two tiers regarding health on the Island, but was not North and South but more the case of who can afford healthcare and who cannot regardless of what system it was as this was evident on a daily basis due to the long, long waiting lists on both sides of the Island. A good example of this was Cardiology as this could indicate what an All Ireland Health Service could look like and eliminate some or all the costs to provide Centres of Excellence across the Island and made a lot more sense and his party would be supporting the recommendation.

Councillor Elattar agreed with Councillor Molloy and didn't see the report as something that was going to happen overnight and more of an aspiration that was there for an All Ireland Healthcare Service and as someone that works within the NHS, she didn't see this report or proposal demeaning or taking away from the NHS. She said that it was absurd that it was a fact that there were two health services running in a country of this size and population with a lot of money being wasted between the two healthcare services and it was evident already with other things done in co-operation that things were working well and sees this as an aspiration and something to move towards and she would definitely be supporting it in the fact that hopefully it would make health care better for the people on this Island and not just for the people who could afford it.

Councillor Clarke agreed with comments and referred to Councillor Elattar comment about needing a better healthcare system in the North and South and agreed that there was a two tier system in both areas. He enquired what the life expectancy was in each area and it was his understanding that it was much longer in the South and felt that this was the proof of the pudding.

The Chair put Councillor Monteith's proposal was put to the vote:

For	10
Against	5

Councillor Monteith's proposal was carried.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to agree to support the All Ireland Healthcare Campaign.

D201/20 Economic Development – OBFD

The Head of Economic Development presented previously circulated report to provide an update on key activities and sought approval for the following:

- (i) Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce (Jan-Dec 2021)**
- (ii) Collaborative Digital Transformation Business Programme**

Councillor Wilson enquired if Councils were approached to collaborate together.

The Head of Economic Development advised that through the European Regional Development Fund where Council's would normally all bid in for their Business Programmes in which Invest NI would normally be the administrative body and they would be willing to co-fund the programme if one could be found along with the Council's and European money. She said as Invest NI were the administrative body responsible for the European funds.

Councillor Wilson thanked the Head of Economic Development for her update but said he had a concerning issue that he wished to iron out and enquired if Invest NI were asking the Councils to collaborate and put in for a programme they were tendering for and running, then how does this square up with the Conflicts of Interest.

The Head of Economic Development advised that this would be a programme that an elite Council would take forward if consensus was agreed from collaborative Councils if members were in agreement that this would be delivered like the rest of the programmes and seek to find a lead Council for it with Invest NI having the same role as with the rest of the other programmes which they work on regularly.

Councillor Wilson said he appreciated what the Officer had said but his question was that if the Council was approached by Invest NI to collaborate with all the other Councils to collaborate for a programme they were running and delivering and seems to him that it looks like this Council going to another Council stating that they run the tender and then they would be successful and he just wanted clarity as it was unclear to him.

The Head of Economic Development advised that this would be run exactly the same as we would be tendering for it and if we put our bid in for potential programme and how we wished for it to be developed similar to the rest of the other programmes, then they would be asked to come forward with match funding. She said that this Council would also be bidding for the European funding and match funding from Invest NI and would not be done in any different kind of way than the other funding as each Council had been allocated indicative funding each Council get for each programme. She advised that there was still funding left over from the Regional Development Fund and this was a way for them to use the money to involve all the Councils and give them a benefit as there wouldn't been enough money for each of the Councils otherwise. She stated that there was £600k in the pot and Councils had been asked to collaborate to receive a share of the funding.

Councillor Wilson said that he would have concerns regarding a company approaching the Council to tender along with others for a programme they have received the money for delivering and asked what was to stop a challenge coming into the programme from the FE Colleges. He said that he had no issue as it was only for £820 but just wanted clarification on the governance.

The Chief Executive advised the member's query was very valid, but the difference was that there was no profitable rationale to Invest NI as they were coordinating a group of 11 Councils to come together to submit a bid for mutual benefit to the businesses who avail of the programme. He stated that this wasn't a commercial tender but more of a public sector collaboration of Councils and a Government Agency and whilst what Councillor Wilson had said was true, this was probably the sign of the future and working together across

Economic Development, Infrastructure and Health on these types of collaborative arrangements and had to be the way forward if and when the European Union goes in 18 months, there was a need to collaborate together to maximise resources in order to achieve any sort of an impact. He said that he could see where Councillor Wilson was coming from but couldn't see any Conflict of Interest or neither would Invest NI otherwise they wouldn't be invited the 11 Councils to get involved.

Proposed by Councillor Doris
Seconded by Councillor Kearney and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that approval be granted to:

- (i) **Renewal of Membership with NI Chamber of Commerce**
Mid Ulster Council's annual Corporate Membership Renewal with NI Chamber of Commerce, costing £2,500+Vat for the period of 1 January to 31 December 2021
- (ii) **Collaborative Digital Transformation Business Programme**
The development of the Collaborative Digital Transformation Business Programme and provide a contribution of £820 towards technical assistance costs to prepare a comprehensive bid to Invest NI.

D202/20 Lease of Lands at Murley Road – MUDC – Blessingbourne Estate

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report and sought approval for the following:

- (i) To enter into an agreement with Blessingbourne Estate to lease lands on the Murley Road, Fivemiletown.
- (ii) To extend the current Mountain Bike Trails lease agreement with Blessingbourne Estate to include the walking trails.

Councillor Burton proposed to proceed with the recommendation due to the length of time that this footpath had been lobbied for by the residents of Fivemiletown and a real safety issue. She said that this concerns had been raised from 2005 at every opportunity with Road Service and was happy that funding and agreement was got from Blessingbourne and for us to maintain the walkway was a small price to pay for something that was really welcomed by the community.

Councillor Cuddy seconded the recommendation and stated that it was a good project but enquired if there was a requirement for the Council to go back to LPS to seek approval or was it a case of carrying on.

Blessingbourne Estate have indicated that they have enough lease agreements with the Council and the amount of money being suggested, they are not particularly interested in opening up new leases in relation of any new additional lands as they would see our products as partnerships on what was available in Fivemiletown in relation to Round Lake, Walking Trails and Mountain-bike trails as being galvanised by taking this approach to provide a viable tourist attraction.

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation advised that if the Council was going ahead with the actual lease of the lands in terms of the monetary value then we would

have to go back to LPS, but because it was now a maintenance issue being entered into and there is no call to go back to them on that matter.

Proposed by Councillor Burton
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that approval be granted to:

- (i) Review current lease agreements with Blessingbourne Estate, Fivemiletown.
- (ii) The lease of lands on Murley Road from Estate to facilitate improved public access to the Round Lake.
- (iii) Amend current Mountain Bike Trail lease agreement to include the addition of walking trails including liability, management and maintenance.
- (iv) Cover all reasonable legal costs incurred by the other party.

D203/20 Mobile Catering Concessions

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report and sought approval to procure mobile concession Grab & Go catering services at selected council owned/managed venues and public Parks.

The council are proposing to offer mobile catering contracts across significant footfall venues, sample locations as listed, subject to amendments.

- Dungannon Park
- Ballyronan Marina
- Railway Park
- OM Dark Skies Park/ Davagh Forest
- Knockmany and Pomeroy Forest Parks
- Lough Fea
- Brantry Wood Trails
- Round Lake, Fivemiletown
- Coalisland Canal
- Glenone Riverside Trail
- Washingbay Wetlands Park
- Hill of The O'Neill, Dungannon
- Meadowbank, Magherafelt
- Fairhill, Cookstown
- Drum Manor
- Polepatrick
- Walled Garden, Maghera

Councillor Wilson advised that there were two carry out food establishments located at Fairhill, Cookstown and wouldn't be confident that a mobile catering unit would be wise choice at this location and also referred to Drum Manor and asked if the Council had the right to allow someone to operate at this location or was it still within the remit of Forestry Service.

The Head of Parks advised that the Council had a lease agreement in relation to the carpark and the footprint of the playpark at Drum Manor. In relation to Fairhill, he stated that these were sample sites with regards to identified footfalls to the site and where the

service might well be welcomed in relation to the facilities which were currently there as it was extensively used by families due to the play facilities.

The Chair said he would also have concerns about mobile catering units being located at places close to local traders in urban areas as it would cause competition to established businesses and would be more suited to rural areas like Davagh.

Councillor Monteith said that he would have similar concerns and appreciated that the list circulated to members tonight were only samples but felt there needed to be a lot of deliberation given to possible concerns before agreeing to this proposal i.e. timescales on hours of trading and the management around the sites. He felt that there was a need to look at the risk for the potential litter and the management of sites approved and asked where the responsibility lay and asked where the provider would be responsible or the Council. He referred to these sites and parks and said that there was the potential for anti-social behavior as people could congregate for the fast food element and not for the recreational aspect and asked that careful consideration be given around the management and timescales of the site before agreeing to the proposal. He asked that a report be brought back to the next committee on concerns raised before a decision was made.

The Head of Parks advised that consideration would be determined on the terms and conditions within the catering agreement and the successful applicant would have to sign up to terms which would be suitable to the park or location including trading hours. He said that it would be up to vendors to be responsible for their base and if other factors like litter would be part of that agreement to make sure that it wasn't a burden on the Council to clean up after them. He referred to the locations and if it was deemed that there was a Conflict of Interest in relation to a Vendor then these sites would not be made available.

He advised that there had been some general enquires received from the public regarding facilities at more rural forestry locations and at some locations where there were previous catering concessions, unfortunately not operational due to the restrictions in place and advised that these would be done with a timeframe to allow for the more established businesses to resume trading when the time arises. He said that he took on board member's comments and concerns raised.

Councillor Black sought clarity on a financial figure for the rental figure and what it was envisaged that it would generate and sought clarification on whether this was an annual income across all sites and asked where the figure had come from and what was it going to be benchmarked against.

The Head of Parks advised that these would be collective figures as in the past ice cream vendors in the legacy Council generated £1,000 plus to the rent offered which was quite achievable. He said that this wasn't about generating income but more about providing some of the services which are currently missing at present as an interim provision and this figure would depend on the site.

Councillor Kearney said he now understood that there was both urban and rural settings and referred to Glenone Riverside Trail which was very rural but has huge footfall. He advised that he had been approached by some people indicating that this would be worthwhile and a degree of interest shown as it was a very popular as it's along the River Bann.

Councillor Molloy advised that some good points had already been made but was wondering about sites on Council owned property as this would make it less attractive to get tenants and how was this achievable when we have our own facilities.

The Head of Parks advised that consideration would be given to a 12 month contract with this being reviewed thereafter. He stated that a clause could be incorporated into the contract advising of termination depending on when we wish to go ahead. He advised that there had been a number of queries received about potential rural sites.

Councillor Burton said that she would be supportive of this initiative and believed that many businesses were curtailed and this would be an opportunity for the Council to get it right. She said that Brantry Lough was a prime example where this type of mobile catering would be beneficial as there wasn't a shop within a 6 mile radius and a huge footfall and would be welcomed. She said that going forward that some of the events like the huge one that's annually held each August in Dungannon Park should be looked at due to the extortionate costs for food prices, which was unacceptable for families and our elderly people.

The Head of Parks advised that the nature of the proposed provision for mobile catering would be coffee and Grab and Go convenience options, not a food establishment.

The Chief Executive stated that there was enough clear direction for the Head of Parks to consider and agreed that the Council didn't want to cause direct competition by taking the business of established businesses. He said that this would be the case for Fairhill and Coalisland Canal and other locations as there were numerous shops nearby but this would be a benefit to rural areas for families and he would be happy for the Head of Parks to progress the rural aspect of the issue.

Councillor Monteith said that it was a good idea but would still be reluctant to put his name to something that may turn to mayhem after 6 weeks within a 12 month contract. He said that one size doesn't fit all and this would be the case here and would be more comfortable for a report to be brought to the next committee on the proposed sites and how they could be properly managed and timescales.

The Chair agreed that more work could be done around this matter.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that a report be brought back to committee on concerns raised relating to the management before approval be given to procure mobile catering concessions for Grab & Go services across selected Council owned/managed venues.

Matters for Information

D204/20 Minutes of Development Committee held on 12 November 2020

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 12 November 2020.

Councillor Doris sought an update on Drumcairn and Altmore Forest initiatives.

The Head of Parks advised that Drumcairn and Altmore were 2 of the 3 sites which were going out to quotation as previously agreed for the development of scoping studies and project plans. This documentation was almost complete with the quotation being issued before Christmas and a return date by 18 January 2021.

Councillor Monteith referred to item D176/20 Community Development Report regarding the issue of Medical Hubs, Oakridge and GP Provision and said that last week it was reported that the Trust were not in a position to provide answers. He suggested that a meeting be sought to raise issues as there were ongoing works around the bypass and driven along by committees of this Council and felt that issues around these needed to be given priority also.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that a meeting be sought with the Southern Trust on concerns relating to Medical Hubs, Oakridge, GP Provision and other strategic health issues in Mid Ulster area.

D205/20 Business & Communities External Investment Leverage Report 2019/2020

Member noted update on the external investment leveraged by the Business and Communities Department to support Council priorities in 2019-20.

D206/20 Economic Development – OBFi

Members noted updates on the following matters:

- Coalisland Town Centre Forum Minutes 12.10.20
- Mid Ulster MEGA (Manufacturing and Engineering Growth & Advancement) Network
- DAERA (TRPSI) Rural Business Development Grants Scheme 2020

D207/20 Project Stratum Update

Councillor Clarke advised that there had been a joint meeting between the working groups on Project Stratum during the week and felt that a number of figures need to be looked at within the report brought tonight. He said that in 2018 it was established that there were approximately 98,000 premises needing intervention and now it was down to 79,000 resulted in nearly 20,000 addressed. He said that when he thought about the discussions which had taken place he wasn't happy at all because at the time of the intervention and the proposal of £150m plus the £15m from DAERA making it £165m for this project, Fermanagh & Omagh and Mid Ulster were the two worst Councils for the percentage of people to connect to fast broadband. He said that this proposal says that they would improve it massively in these two areas and across the board, but there was still approximately 340 addresses in Mid Ulster which will not be serviced and 612 in Fermanagh and Omagh out of a total of 2,500 across the six counties, resulting in 40% of those which will not be serviced.

He said that given the figures that were given originally as 98,000 and now 79,000 and at that time and were given number something similar which was to be excluded, so he said he was concerned that the Council were not getting bang for the buck because this project was being delivered through Fibre and this company were already on the ground and they were proposing 1,600km per quarter which means that in the Spring quarter, they reckon that they would be passing 4386 customers who would be able to connect at that point and the cash flow already coming in. He said that on Tuesday night there was too many people congratulating on this great project but not a great project for those people who have missed out and wondered how these figures worked as £165m project based at that time on the 98,000 and now 79,000, felt that full coverage should be evident.

He said that one thing that drew his attention to it was one of the biggest investors was pension funds and it was his thought that these look to get guaranteed good returns in short periods of times and his feeling was that they must be getting from here. He said that we had enough examples over the recent period of where the public purse had been drained to put millions into individuals pockets and would not like to be ever associated with projects like Project Stratum if it delivered the same as there was no clarity on what sort of margins were in this and massive profits for this company but yet there was going to be substantive amount people left out of the circle and this needed investigating. He said if it was made known where these addresses weren't going to be covered could we discover how much it would cost to cover them and this would be absolutely wrong that this was the case, yet the company which was awarded the contract walks away with millions as a result.

He asked that a Broadband Working Group be arranged for the start of the year with proper information and this be investigated further as it wasn't as good as it looked and wouldn't be happy with the situation. He requested that maps be produced as there wasn't a clue with the knot spots were going to be and there was need for accurate maps and information because they can advise what they were currently doing and what they intended to do next but they cannot say what they were going to do at the finish. He concluded by saying that he would not be happy to leave people behind because if they weren't going to be covered now, then when were they going to be covered and if they were going to be covered by some sort of service like satellite or wireless, the costs and quality of service not there and felt that the people with a telephone would be the most disadvantaged as they would be the most remote and paying more costs for an inferior quality service.

The Chair agreed that there was a lot to think about and would be some work for the Broadband Working Group in January.

Councillor Kerr advised that Wi-Fi was very much needed as this was very evident this year during the pandemic and people having to adapt through working from home. He said that a lot of people had been in touch with him regarding issues relating to inadequate broadband and Wi-Fi provision for children and school work and many areas within the Torridge area which were affected. He asked that it be investigated that a mechanism be put in place for Councillors to enter address details into a database so they can provide any help they could to constituents as it indicated within the report that 2,500 people were in the white list and postcodes which were meant to be guaranteed under Project Stratum and he would be afraid to provide a commitment to his constituent when this was not the case. He asked that a mechanism was in place where a Councillor could add an address to get more clarity for constituents.

The Head of Economic Development agreed with Councillor Clarke's comments and said that there was no enough information provided on the breakdown on where these areas area, map was available but not clear at all and information being drip fed which was not good enough and was pointless sending it out. In relation to the 2,500 premises which were out of scope, they said that they would be trying to source additional funding for them but cannot confirm it would be Fibre and don't want to be in a position of having a phone line or satellite and if we don't press for Fibre then these households will never see it. She said that this was the responsibility of the Department but they were indicating that they would need between £10m - £15m to cover the 2,500 households and agreed that they should be held to account and the Council would continue to do that. She agreed that it would be beneficial to hold a Broadband Working Group in the New Year.

In response to Councillor Kerr's query in terms of the addresses, she advised that if there were addresses that still were not getting a service to the equivalent to 30mb superfast broadband then the Council would need to know about it. She advised members that there was a website address which was in the report <http://hyperfastni.com/> which was the new address for Stratum and as of January they would be putting a postcode checker on their website so anyone can tap in their postcode and can see if you were in a white area and when you would anticipate to get it, a timeline and whether a person was eligible to get it within the timeframe outlined within the report. Stratum were stating that the other households which were dropped off which Councillor Clarke alluded to of 20,000 being knocked off from the original study and when they were questioned on that, they indicated that those households would be now receiving it from other providers, so the question would be where the other providers were at and how many households would be affected within Mid Ulster of the 20,000. She advised that she had spoken to them in advance of this meeting on concerns and they advised that this was subject to confidentiality and confidential clauses that they couldn't release and said that she most definitely wouldn't be happy leaving the situation there.

In response to Councillor Kerr's suggestion about relaying the website address to Councillors, the Head of Economic Development advised that this would be emailed to members.

The Chief Executive concurred with Councillor Clarke and said that there was still a lot of work to be done and the meeting on Monday night was excellent because it made very clear to the Fibrus and the delegation that Fermanagh & Omagh were not accepting second best, but it has to be said on what was being proposed was a massive benefit to this part of the world. He said although there were limitations and concerns, the Head of Economic Development and himself had been fighting this cause along with members for the last 10 to 15 years and off the premises which were going to be impacted by the 30mb, 21% was in Mid Ulster, 27% were in Fermanagh & Omagh and nearest to that would be Newry & Mourne with 16%. He advised that Mid Ulster was second at the top of the list and we deserve to be as we had the worst broadband and we should be thanking Fibrus as it was greatly needed and welcomed with 94.4% of all our households being able to get a minimum of 30mb, but we will not rest until the other 300 houses by some mechanism are equally supplied. In referring to the Growth Deal discussions, members have already made it clear on the technology and picking up the gaps was what the Growth Deal was designed to do, so no house would be wanting in any shape or form and agreed there was a lot of work to be done but there has been a lot of progress made.

D208/20 Sports NI Corporate Plan Consultations.

Members noted update on Sport Northern Ireland Draft Corporate Plan for 2020 to 2025 and associated consultations.

Live broadcast ended at 8.41 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items D209/20 to D215/20.

Matters for Decision

- D209/20 Department for Communities Access and Inclusion Programme 2020/21 additional projects
- D210/20 Seamus Heaney HomePlace Library Refurbishment Tender Report
- D211/20 Seamus Heaney Trails Update
- D212/20 Drum Manor Play Park - Inclusive Play
- D213/20 Covid19 Business Grants – Tranche 2

Matters for Information

- D214/20 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 12 November 2020
- D215/20 Contract Performance Review: Transform Programme

D216/20 Christmas Greetings

The Chair wished members a very Happy Christmas and New Year and said that he hoped that next year would be much better.

D217/20 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 9 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____