

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 1 December 2022 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor S McAleer, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Buchanan, Cuddy, Doris*, Elattar*, Gildernew*, S McGuigan, McKinney*, McLean, S McPeake*, Molloy (7.10 pm), Quinn*, Totten*

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive*
Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities & Place (SD: C&P)*
Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env)
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP)
Mrs Dyson, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)*
Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E)
Ms McNally, Assistant Director of Corporate Service and Finance (AD: CS&F)*
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP)
Miss Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Deputation – Communications Workers Union
Mr Hannaway*** and Mr McKane

* Denotes members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor S McAleer 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.

PR226/22 Notice of Recording

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

PR227/22 Apologies

Councillors Forde and Kearney and Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance.

PR228/22 Declarations of Interest

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

Councillor Buchanan declared an interest in agenda item 17 – Connecting Pomeroy – Contract Award as a member of the Connecting Pomeroy Committee.

PR229/22 Chairs Business

None.

PR230/22 Deputation – Communications Workers Union

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer welcomed Messrs Hannaway and McKane from Communications Workers Union and invited them to address the Committee.

Mr McKane thanked Council for their invitation and the interest shown in the Royal Mail strike action. Mr McKane advised that he was the Communications Workers Union representative for the Dungannon office and works to ensure staff are treated properly and that procedures are followed by management. Mr McKane stated that staff have been involved in industrial action since August this year due to the fact that a pay deal was requested in March to deal with the cost of living. At that stage Royal Mail advised they had no money however they later announced a £758 million profit of which £500 million was then distributed to shareholders. Staff were advised there was no money for new uniforms or vehicles, modernisation or investment. Mr McKane stated that management are also trying to change staff terms and conditions and public service benefits such as sick leave. Mr McKane stated that management wanted to destroy the union and anything that made the job worth having. Mr McKane stated that management want to introduce annualised hours which would mean working less hours in the summer and more in the winter. Management also want staff to work Sundays and are trying to recruit owner drivers. Mr McKane highlighted that this is all on the back of Royal Mail staff being key workers during the pandemic. Mr McKane stated that staff worked right through this period which was the busiest time for the postal service and generated massive profits for Royal Mail and that management now want to hammer staff instead of rewarding them. Mr McKane stated that staff have been engaged in ten strike days to date but that he felt the dispute was getting more bitter as time progresses and that management are trying to intimidate staff in order to break the strike and morale.

Mr Hannaway stated that the introduction of annualised hours would mean that staff would have set pay with no overtime and that hours during the summer could be banked with staff left owing hours during the winter. Mr Hannaway stated that currently sick pay is six months full pay and six months half pay and that management are trying to do away with this and introduce statutory sick pay for the first week of illness and then normal pay from the second week however staff have not been advised how long that would then continue for. Mr Hannaway stated that Sunday working is currently voluntary with a payment allowance but that management want to remove that payment allowance so there would just be a set pay for working Sunday as well. Mr Hannaway stated that there is currently an option of ill health retirement but that again management are trying to do away with this by removing a weeks ill health retirement

payment for every week a person is off. Mr Hannaway stated that staff have a connection with the community and may be aware of people sick who are waiting on hospital letters but that due to overtime being banned staff are being told by management to leave letters and prioritise packets.

Councillor Molloy entered the meeting at 7.10 pm.

Councillor Cuddy thanked the representatives for coming in and hoped that management, staff and unions can get a resolution soon.

Councillor Elattar thanked Messrs Hannaway and McKane for their presentation and that she felt most people are supportive of the action being taken. Councillor Elattar stated that the Royal Mail staff are not alone and that as an employee of the health service there is a lot of solidarity with them.

Councillor S McGuigan thanked the representatives for the presentation and stated it was good to get clarity on the issues. Councillor S McGuigan asked if there was any practical support Council could offer.

Mr McKane stated that all Members are welcome to visit the picket line and to have a conversation with postal staff. Mr McKane advised that the next strike day is Friday 9 December. Mr McKane stated it would be appreciated if some heat or protection from the elements could be arranged ie. gas heater or canopy.

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer thanked Messrs Hannaway and McKane for attending the meeting and providing an update.

Councillor Doris expressed solidarity with the Royal Mail staff and stated there were very few organisations who had done so well out of the pandemic and it is now a disgrace that management are letting down those who were on the front line. Councillor Doris referred to the personal relationships postal staff have with the community and the importance of hospital letters.

Messrs Hannaway and McKane left the meeting at 7.15 pm.

Matters for Decision

PR231/22 Social Inclusion – Hardship Fund

Policy and Resources Committee have delegated authority to deal with this matter.

Strategic Director of Communities & Place (SD: C&P) presented previously circulated report which sought approval for use of Covid reserves funding, following the announcement by the former Communities Minister which provides greater flexibility for this funding. The use of the funding will be to enhance existing funding for the delivery of a hardship fund.

Councillor Molloy welcomed the money going to the hardship fund and felt that it would be good for Council governance if a report was brought back outlining how the money has been spent, the amounts distributed to each of the groups and how the groups

distribute the money in the community. Councillor Molloy stated that similar reports are provided for other services Council contribute towards.

Councillor S McGuigan stated he would be supportive of Councillor Molloy's comments and that it is important to get the money out to people but that it is also important that it is clear where the money has gone to. In relation to the earlier presentation, Councillor McGuigan asked if it is appropriate for Council to do something in relation to supporting the postal staff in their strike action.

The Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env) advised that she would have to look into that matter and how appropriate it would be and report back.

Councillor Doris stated she would also concur with the previous comments and that she did not have a full understanding of the breakdown of monies being spent. The Councillor agreed that a report should be brought back on a breakdown of the money distributed and the number of people it has supported. Councillor Doris stated she did not want to delay any monies being distributed but that it is important to look at the legacy.

Councillor McKinney agreed that a report should be brought back which provides detail on the monies distributed to each group and how many people are supported and to give an idea of the scale of hardship. Councillor McKinney proposed that when a report is brought back that it is taken in confidential business.

Councillor Quinn declared an interest in this item as a member of St Vincent de Paul.

Councillor Quinn agreed with the previous comments and would like to see a breakdown of the funding and that this should be brought back in confidential business. The Councillor stated that without the Council funding being proposed now and funding provided over the previous two years there would be a lot of people in difficulties.

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer asked if a report would be brought back to the P&R Committee.

The SD: C&P advised that it may be more appropriate for the report to be brought back to the Development Committee as it is the parent committee of the overall fund but that there is no issue in getting a cumulative report in terms of all of the elements of the hardship fund and the previous monies which has gone out to strategic partners.

Councillor McLean stated there seemed to be a lack of understanding as to where all the monies are going. The Councillor referred to representation made to himself and that he spoke to officers on this and that he felt Council made the best judgement based on the information they had. Councillor McLean stated he concurred with the previous comments and that it would be good to get feedback which can be built upon for the future but that there should be no delay in getting the monies distributed now.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That an allocation of up to £124,000 from Council Covid reserves be allocated as a one off contribution towards the agreed Council Hardship Fund and that report be brought back detailing breakdown of monies distributed to groups and the number of people this helped to support. This report should be brought back under confidential business to the Development Committee.

PR232/22 Response to Consultation Provision of Dementia Inpatient Services in SHSCT

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval for Council's draft response to the consultation on the provision of Dementia Inpatient Services in SHSCT.

Councillor Ashton thanked the officers for the response and that the consultation highlights the pressures on the health service and that Dementia is now another area falling short of the resources required. The Councillor stated that there is a problem in the West in relation to staffing and that this comes across in the consultation and is something the health service needs to get a grip of.

Councillor S McGuigan stated he had attended the workshop which discussed the consultation and felt that the response captures that discussion.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the draft response as circulated at appendix A of report for submission to SHSCT by 23 December 2022.

PR233/22 Requests to Illuminate Council Properties

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Holocaust Memorial Day Trust: Purple
- Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia International: Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Day: Blue
- Encephalitis Society: World Encephalitis Day: Red

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties as follows: -

- Friday 27 January 2023: Holocaust Memorial Day Light of Darkness Campaign – Purple.
- Wednesday 22 February 2023: Encephalitis Society: Worle Encephalitis (Inflammation of the Brain) Day – Red.

- Wednesday 19 April 2023: Congenital Diaphragmatic Hernia International: Diaphragmatic Hernia Awareness Day – Blue.

PR234/22 Civic Recognition Working Group

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which provided the outworkings of the most recent Civic Recognition Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 22 November 2022.

Councillor S McPeake referred to the addition of industry category and asked if business will come under this and if not he would suggest a business and industry category as there had recently been a number of businesses awarded through civic recognition and he did not want these to be excluded going forward.

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP) stated that it was his understanding based on discussion at the working group that industry and business were one in the same and therefore business would be included in the industry category but that consideration needs to be given to the other awards ceremonies already held within the Mid Ulster area. The AD: ODSP stated that the report tonight details the outworkings of the working group meeting held on 22 November and that further detail on the way forward will need to be discussed.

Councillor S McPeake stated he was content with the response and that business was included.

Councillor Quinn stated he had been at the working group and that when industry was raised it was to engulf business as well.

Councillor Ashton asked that the working group be reconvened as early as possible in the New Year in order to move forward.

Proposed by Councillor Quinn
Seconded by Councillor Ashton and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the report of the Civic Recognition Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 22 November 2022.

PR235/22 Member Services

None.

Matters for Information

PR236/22 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 November 2022

Members noted Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 November 2022.

PR237/22 Performance Improvement Six Month Progress Update (Q1 to Q2 - 2022/23)

Members noted previously circulated report which outlined a review of Council's performance against its seven statutory and three corporate performance improvement indicators and standards, along with an overview of the Corporate Health Indicators for the first six months of 2022/23. The report also provided a performance progress summary against the Council's four corporate improvement objectives and their associated project. The indicators and standards, the 4 improvement projects and corporate health indicators are contained within our Two Year Performance Improvement Plan for 2021/22 to 2022/23.

Councillor McLean stated that a lot of work goes into providing this update which should not be glossed over and that it was good to see Council was heading in the right direction.

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer concurred with the remarks and that the work that goes into providing the report is appreciated.

Live broadcast ended at 7.28 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan 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 PR238/22 to PR248/22.

Matters for Decision

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| PR238/22 | Gortgonis Health and Wellbeing Hub |
| PR239/22 | 2023/24 Rate Estimates |
| PR240/22 | Staffing Matters for Decision |
| PR241/22 | Land and Property Matters |
| PR242/22 | Connecting Pomeroy – Contract Award |
| PR243/22 | Derrynoyd / Drumcairn – Contract Award |

Matters for Information

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| PR244/22 | Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 November 2022 |
| PR245/22 | Financial report for 7 months ending 31 October 2022 |
| PR246/22 | Contracts and DAC Registers - Update |
| PR247/22 | Financial Statements 2022/23 Update |
| PR248/22 | Staffing Matters for Information |

PR249/22 Duration of Meeting

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer wished everyone a Happy Christmas.

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.10 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

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 roll call of all other Members in attendance.