

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 9 March 2023 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor S McAleer, Chair

Councillors Ashton*, Buchanan, Cuddy*, Doris*, Forde, Kearney*, S McGuigan*, McKinney, S McPeake, Molloy*, Quinn*, Totten*

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive**

Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities & Place (SD: C&P)**

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)

Mr Scullion, Assistant Director of Property Services (AD:PS)

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

Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT (HoICT)

Miss Thompson, Committee and Member Services Officer

* 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.

PR040/23 Notice of Recording

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

PR041/23 Apologies

Councillors Elattar, Gildernew and McLean.

PR042/23 Declarations of Interest

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

PR043/23 Chairs Business

Councillor Doris asked that officers engage with DfI Roads in relation to the planting of wildflower seeds along suitable grass verges. The Councillor referred to the Climate Change Bill to which DfI Roads committed to planting wildflower seeds and asked for an update as to how these plans are progressing. Councillor Doris also spoke in relation to the Derrylaughan and Derrytresk areas and asked that officers explore the option of planting wildflowers to assist with the biodiversity and wildlife in these areas.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F) advised that the Strategic Director of Environment is the lead officer in relation to climate change, grass cutting and also biodiversity and wildlife and that Councillor Doris' comments would be brought to her attention.

Matters for Decision

PR044/23 Review of Equal Opportunities Policy

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) presented previously circulated report which sought approval for the noted revisions to Mid Ulster District Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.

Councillor Cuddy stated that Members used to receive an annual report which outlined the make up of staff etc and that it would be interesting to see this again given the changes to the local population in recent years.

The SD: ODSP advised that an employment return was submitted last week and that a report would be brought forward for Members attention on this matter in June.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor S McPeake and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the revised Equal Opportunities Policy as set out at appendix to report.

PR045/23 Response to Consultation on DoH Autism Strategy 2023-2028

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval for Councils draft response to the Department of Health's Autism Strategy 2023-2028 consultation.

Councillor Quinn proposed the response as outlined. Councillor Quinn referred to presentation made previously in relation autistic children bringing their own food to restaurants and asked if there is opportunity to tie this in with the Autism Strategy or if it will be carried forward separately.

The HoSS&E stated he would come back to the Councillor on the matter.

Councillor Molloy stated he attended the consultation meeting and that it had been enlightening to see some of the challenges faced by autistic children and their families. The Councillor stated he felt the response captures what was said at the meeting. Councillor Molloy stated he raised the bring your own food initiative with some groups to make them aware that the concept is being rolled out. Councillor Molloy seconded Councillor Quinn's proposal.

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer stated she welcomed the Council response.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the draft response to DoH Autism Strategy 2023-2028 as set out at appendix to report.

PR046/23 Request 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:

- Marie Curie Memory Stones of Love
- Compassionate Communities NI
- International Nurses Day
- Alzheimers Society
- Tourette's Support NI
- Mid Ulster Loneliness
- Deafblind UK
- Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI

The HoSS&E advised of an additional request which had been received since the report was published to mark World Parkinson's Day on 11 April.

Proposed by Councillor McKinney
Seconded by Councillor S McPeake and

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

- Marie Curie Memory Stones of Love - 3rd Annual Day of Reflection – 23 March 2023 - Yellow

- Compassionate Communities NI – Advance Care Planning – 3 April 2023 - Blue
- Compassionate Communities NI – Dying Matters – 8 May 2023 - Yellow
- International Nurses Day – 12 May 2023 – Blue
- Alzheimers Society – Dementia Action Week – 15 May 2023 - Blue
- Tourette’s Support NI – Tourette’s Awareness Month – 22 May 2023 – Teal
- Mid Ulster Loneliness Network – Raise Loneliness Awareness – 13 June 2023 – Blue
- Deafblind UK – Deafblind Awareness Week – 27 June 2023 – Purple & Green
- Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI – Blood Cancer Awareness Month – Red
- Spires Magherafelt Branch for Parkinson’s UK - World Parkinson’s Day – 11 April 2023 – Blue

PR047/23 Member Services

None.

Matters for Information

PR048/23 Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 9 February 2023

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 9 February 2023.

PR049/23 Autism Training – Virtual Experience Bus

Members noted previously circulated report which provided update on plans for the Council to host the Autism Virtual Experience Bus on Wednesday 26th April 2023 at Cookstown Leisure Centre. This visit forms part of the bus’s week long tour of Council facilities in the NH&SCT area.

PR050/23 Local Government Staff Commission & National Association of Councillors NI - Annual Subscription 2023-24

Members noted previously circulated report which advised of correspondence received from the Local Government Staff Commission and the National Association for Councillors (NAC) on annual contributions payable for 2023-24.

Councillor S McGuigan questioned Council’s funding of the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) year on year and asked if Council is legally obliged to continue with its annual contribution to the Commission.

Councillor Kearney advised that NILGA recently met with the Permanent Secretary and the question had been raised as to why the LGSC had not been wound up. Councillor Kearney stated that the response from the Permanent Secretary was that

DfC was not confident it had the powers to progress the winding up of LGSC in the absence of a Minister. The Councillor stated that the winding up of LGSC seemed to be caught up in the Stormont situation in that it needs a Minister in place to progress the matter.

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP) confirmed Councillor Kearney's comments and advised that the LGSC is to be wound up but that Council still has an obligation under the 1972 Act to pay a contribution until such times as it is wound up.

The Chief Executive stated that Members queries were valid and legitimate and that his understanding is that as soon as a Minister is in place then LGSC will be wound up. The Chief Executive stated that the LGSC plays a useful role in relation to recruitment exercises for senior staff and that they have also been working with NILGA and others in relation to cross council representation with trade unions. The Chief Executive stated that as LGSC is still in place Council is still obliged to make its contribution until such times as LGSC is formally wound up.

Councillor S McGuigan stated he accepted what had been said and the advice given but felt that this was a situation that could go on indefinitely if Stormont did not return and no one challenged the payment of the contribution.

PR051/23 Implementation of Online Registration Services Booking System

Members noted previously circulated report which provided update on the introduction of a new online booking system for the Registration service in Council.

Councillor Cuddy stated that the implementation of the online booking system for registration services is good to see and is another step in relation to transformation.

Live broadcast ended at 7.18 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Forde 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 PR052/23 to PR065/23

Matters for Decision

PR052/23 Mobile Network Choice for Contract 2023-2025
PR053/23 Procurement Policy – Review
PR054/23 Insurances – 2023/24
PR055/23 Lands at Feeney's Lane, Dungannon
PR056/23 Staffing Matters for Decision

- PR057/23 Local Election Count Arrangements: Appointment of Count Centre Staff and Rates of Pay
- PR058/23 Thomas Street Gardens Acquisition
- PR059/23 Gortgonis Health and Wellbeing Hub – Phase 1 Enabling Works
- PR060/23 Capital Planning Governance and Capital Programme 2023-2027

Matters for Information

- PR061/23 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 9 February 2023
- PR062/23 Customer Service Alignment and Developments – For Information
- PR063/23 Staff Matters for Information
- PR064/23 Contracts and DAC Registers – Update
- PR065/23 Financial report for 10 months ended 31 January 2023

PR066/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.52 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.