

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 17 December 2020 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means

Chair Councillor Mallaghan

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

Officers in Attendance Mr McCreesh, Director of Business and Communities
Ms Canavan**, Director of Organisational Development
Ms Campbell**, Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation
Mr Cassells**, Director of Environment & Property
Mr Kelso**, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure
Ms Mezza**, Head of Marketing and Communications
Mr Moffett, Head of Democratic Services
Mr JJ Tohill, Director of Finance
Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT
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 Mallaghan 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.

C246/20 Apologies

None

C247/20 Declarations of Interest

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

C248/20 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan welcomed Adrian McCreesh as the newly appointed Chief Executive. He stated that Council had done well completing the selection process and making an appointment in the timeframe from the resignation. He commended Mr McCreesh on his appointment and looked forward to continuing to work with him in the future.

In response the Chief Executive stated he was an ordinary person who had worked in Local Government for 25 years and this post was an excellent opportunity to progress. He stated that Local Government had been a fantastic employer and thanked his family and the staff for their support. He concluded that he looked forward to the Christmas break then 'getting stuck in' to the role in January.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan reflected on the reported deaths in relation to COVID 19 and the information being released with regard to further restrictions post-Christmas. He spoke of the important time that Christmas is for families and urged people to enjoy Christmas but endeavour to keep contacts down.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan spoke of Carál Ní Chuilín MLA standing down from the post of Minister for Department for Communities and put on record his appreciation of her work with Mid Ulster Council during her time in office.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan spoke of engagement with Fibrus with regard to broadband connectivity especially for those in rural areas. He emphasised the importance of keeping the dialogue live, spoke of the impressive presentation and stressed that Council would keep a tight eye on the situation given its importance for both Members and constituents especially those home schooling or working from home which was key in keeping the virus down.

Councillor Molloy acknowledged the work of David Flanagan a citizen who took it upon himself to clean road signs in Moy, Benburb and Killyman. Councillor Molloy stated this had improved both road safety and the appearance of the areas but had reflected poorly on DfI Roads on their lack of maintenance. Councillor Molloy requested that the Chair, Councillor Mallaghan send a letter of appreciation to Mr Flanagan on his citizenship.

Resolved That that Chair write to David Flanagan to express appreciation of his initiative to clean road signs in Moy, Benburb and Killyman.

Councillor Hughes highlighted the closure of Tempest in Cookstown and Rushmere speaking of the devastating blow to the local economy and proposed that Council write to the Minister for the Economy requesting a meeting with Members of Council to discuss the recovery strategy for the town centre businesses.

Proposed by Councillor Hughes
Seconded by Councillor Kearney and

Resolved That Council seek a meeting with the Minister for the Economy to discuss recovery strategy for town centre businesses.

Councillor Milne referred to the earlier comments regarding COVID 19 and the roll out of the vaccine through General Practise. He suggested that Council make contact with the Federation of GPs throughout the district to open conversations regarding facilitating the roll out of the vaccine.

Councillor Milne also spoke of the recent problems reported at Antrim Area Hospital and how the second wave of the virus was having a worst impact than the first. He proposed that Council write to the Northern Health Trust to ask for a breakdown of the plans for dealing with the post-Christmas impact.

The Chief Executive advised that both the Director of Public Health and Infrastructure and the Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation were in liaison with the Health Trust and that with Council approval facilities would be available to be used for roll out of the vaccine.

Councillor Wilson expressed concern regarding the sound quality and proposed that Council should invest in headsets for Members in order to eliminate sound issues.

In response to Councillor Wilson's comments regarding sound issues the Chair summarised Councillor Milne's proposals.

Councillor Monteith welcomed the vaccination and stated that it had been agreed some six months ago that Council would assist the Health Trusts in relation to both testing and vaccine roll outs.

Proposed by Councillor Milne
Seconded by Councillor B McGuigan

Resolved That

- (i) Council to continue to work with Health Social Care Trusts and Federation of GPs with regard to the feasibility of using Council infrastructure to rollout vaccination clinics; and
- (ii) Council to write to the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and ask for the breakdown of a coping strategy for services post-Christmas.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan in relation to the proposal for headsets stated that authority should be delegated to the Policy and Resources Committee in January to deal with the issue in order that headsets could be provided prior to the Council meeting.

Councillor Wilson stated that the headsets should be purchased as soon as possible and stated permission should be granted now.

Councillor Kerr suggested that officers' benchmark with colleagues in Derry City and Strabane District Council.

The Chair in response to Councillor Wilson stated that costs would need to be ascertained prior to approval.

Proposed by Chair, Councillor Mallaghan
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That Authority be delegated to Policy & Resources to approve purchase of relevant headsets for Members/officers engaging in virtual meetings.

Councillor Doris acknowledged the difficult times many were experiencing especially those who were vulnerable and how many in the community had come forward to help. In particular Councillor Doris highlighted Caroline O'Neill and Roisin Doherty, Caroline who had worked with various organisations and businesses and raised over £60k to help children throughout Mid Ulster at Christmas, Roisin who had raised money for Cool FM Cash for Kids to ensure every child receives a present at Christmas time. Councillor Doris concluded that there were too many individuals to name and requested that the Chair send a letter to the two ladies mentioned who had excelled in their efforts to help.

Resolved That the Chair, Councillor Mallaghan write to Caroline O'Neill and Roisin Doherty to commend them on their fundraising efforts for Cash for Kids

Councillor Clarke referred back to communication issues highlighted earlier and stated he had had his hand raised but not acknowledged. He stated that he could not be present at meetings and often had to stop using the video to save bandwidth and the situation was far from satisfactory.

Councillor Colvin stated that in the interim Members connecting remotely should use head phones as they would then be speaking directly to a microphone which would improve sound and that better broad band was required.

Matters for Decision

C249/20 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in "Open Business" at the Council Meeting held on Thursday 26 November 2020

Councillor Cuthbertson drew attention to C221/20 Chair's Business and the resolve to write to the Minister of Finance with regard to rates relief and expressed disappointment that no response had been received. He advised that some businesses had not received a penny in grants and spoke of one who had received an acknowledgement on 19th October but had heard nothing since. He stressed that Council needed to write again and continue to shout for local businesses.

Councillor S McAleer advised she had attended the November Council meeting but had been omitted from the attendance list.

Councillor Monteith concurred with Councillor Cuthbertson stating that Council needed to push for a line of communication and was emphatic that it was unsatisfactory that people cannot get speaking to a human being. He stated he too had people contacting him who had received acknowledgments but no money whilst others were told they would not get a grant as they had not been instructed to close. Councillor Monteith spoke of the news report which had highlighted that in Derry City and Strabane district half of the businesses had been turned down with no explanation. He concluded stating that communication was key and businesses deserved answers and the situation was not good enough.

Resolved That Council write to the Minister for Finance to seek clarification as to why businesses have not received the grants following the letters of offer and also the lack of communication available.

Councillor Kerr drew attention to C221/20 and highlighted that Noel Sweeney had received a coach and volunteer award from the IFA not a credit union award as detailed.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor B McGuigan and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 26 November 2020 (C218/20 – C234/20 and C245/20) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C250/20 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Planning Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 1 December 2020

Proposed by Councillor Brown
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

Resolved That the Minutes of Planning Committee held on Tuesday 1 December 2020 (P111/20 – P116/20 and P125 /20) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, subject to the foregoing, were considered and adopted.

C251/20 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Policy and Resources Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 3 December 2020

Proposed by Councillor Elattar
Seconded by Councillor Gildernew and

Resolved That the minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 3 December 2020 (PR201/20 – PR208/20 and PR223/20) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C252/20 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Environment Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 8 December 2020

Councillor Kerr drew attention to *E267/20 Deputation Tree Maintenance Campaign* and commended Helen Sweeney on her informative delivery and the bravery and character she is demonstrating through the campaign and emphasised that Council needs to keep up the support.

Councillor Doris concurred stating that she had worked with Helen’s father in the community.

Councillor Doris drew attention to *E278/20 Bus Shelters Update* and requested an update on Stewartstown bus shelter

In response the Director of Environment and Property stated that he would report to the Member directly regarding progress.

Councillor Burton requested the following amendments to the minutes: Amendment: E367/20 Tree Maintenance Campaign Pg. 71 last paragraph amend to read ...

Councillor Burton confirmed that NILGA had attained clarification that DfI Roads can request the landowner to make safe the trees, if they do not do so, DfI Roads have the authority to hire a private contractor to carry out the works and bill the landowner.

Pg. 72 2nd paragraph ...branches and that work was still ongoing. She concluded stating that as well as impacting NIE electric wires trees could also impact on BT telephone lines

Councillor Monteith drew attention to *E281/20 Environmental Services – Christmas Working Arrangements* and expressed concern that some constituents would be waiting three weeks for a bin collection. He said that the situation was not ideal especially in light of announcements regarding proposed lockdown and whether or not skip sites will be open. Councillor Monteith stated that Council through its communication channels needed to get the message out to constituents tomorrow and not just via social media.

Proposed by Councillor B McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor N McAleer and

Resolved That the Minutes of Environment Committee held on Tuesday 8 December 2020 (E264/20 – E287/20 and E300/20) transacted in Open

Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C253/20 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Development Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 10 December 2020

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Milne and

Resolved That the Minutes of Development Committee held on Thursday 10 December 2020 (D194/20 – D208/20 and D216/20 - D217/20) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C254/20 Requests for Civic Recognition

The Head of Democratic Services sought approval for the previously circulated report on civic recognition requests from Members, in line with the stated Council Policy, as detailed within the report at appendix A.

Councillor Elattar proposed that St Colm’s High School be upgraded to Civic Reception status as the award they received was for the youth club connected to the school together with a local Fold, GAA, Workspace and the Men’s Shed. She highlighted that the award involved a great community effort which co-ordinated by the school group.

In response to Member’s query the Head of Democratic Services advised that due to the pandemic other priorities had come to the fore but the review would be progressed as soon as possible.

Proposed by Councillor Elattar
Seconded by Councillor B McGuigan and

Resolved That subject to the foregoing approval be given to remaining submitted requests for civic recognition as outlined in the report and be dealt with as previously resolved by April Council in that recipients receive a letter together with an award, where appropriate

C255/20 Conferences, Seminars and Training

Approval was sought for the undernoted for attendance of Councillors and Council Officers as outlined in the report, the payment of attendance fees and associated costs as incurred.

Conferences

Provider/Course	Date & Time	Location	Costs	Attendee Requests
Northern Ireland Planning Conference	Thursday 11 February 2021	On line	£145+VAT	

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

Resolved That the attendance of Members, the payment of attendance fees and associated costs as incurred be approved, as required for attendees.

C256/20 Draft Consultation Response on Draft Modern Slavery Strategy 2021/22

The Head of Democratic Services drew attention to the previously circulated report and sought approval for the response to the Draft Modern Slavery Strategy 2021/22 as detailed in the report.

Proposed by Councillor B McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Cuthbertson and

Resolved That council approve the response to the Draft Modern Slavery Strategy 2021/22.

Matters for Information

C257/20 Correspondence

Members noted previously circulated report providing correspondence received for the attention of Council.

Councillor Kearney acknowledged the letter emailed to Members earlier in the day providing a response to concern expressed at the November Council meeting that all local elected representatives had not been afforded the opportunity to attend the photo call in relation to the opening of a stretch of the A6 from Randalstown to Castledawson. Councillor Kearney welcomed the explanation and looked forward to all attending the official opening in 2021.

C258/20 Consultations Notified to Mid Ulster District Council

Members considered the previously circulated report.

Councillor Monteith proposed and Councillor Corry seconded that Council response to consultations listed (i) to (iii) below.

Councillor B McGuigan in relation to the Department of Health Substance Use Strategy suggested that a draft response be brought to the environment committee to allow for discussion prior to response being issued.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That Council submit responses to the undernoted consultations:

- (i) Department of Health: Substance Use Strategy “Making Life Better: Preventing Harm, Empowering Recovery – A Strategic Framework to Tackle the Harm from Substance Use” Liaise with mental Health support groups
Draft paper to be brought to January Environment Committee for discussion
- (ii) DAERA: Launch of the Clean Air Strategy;
- (iii) NI Assembly- Ad Hoc Committee on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland - Consultation on the creation of a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland;

Councillor Doris proposed that either a draft response be brought to relevant committee or a workshop scheduled in relation to the consultation on *The Department of Justice: Consultation on Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders*.

Councillor McFlynn seconded Councillor Doris’ proposal.

Proposed by Councillor Doris
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That Council respond to *The Department of Justice: Consultation on Domestic Abuse Protection Notices and Orders*
Either a workshop or report brought to relevant committee for discussion to prepare response.

C259/20 Notice of Motion

Councillor Elattar moved the motion:

‘This Council condemns the British Secretary of State’s failure to order a full Public Inquiry into the assassination of Pat Finucane.

This Council believes that it is now time for the Finucane family to be told all the facts behind the assassination of their beloved husband and father and calls on the British government to immediately order a full Public Inquiry.

This Council believes that the Finucane family should be told the truth about the extent of collusion in Pat's assassination and the cover up that followed and calls on the British government to immediately order a full Public Inquiry.

This Council demands that any Public Inquiry must be truly meaningful and not restricted under the terms of the Inquiries Act 2005 which Judge Cory criticised as making 'a meaningful inquiry impossible'.

The failure to order a full public inquiry is no longer simply about one man but rather about the wider issue of truth and justice and so this Council calls on the British government to fully implement the Stormont House Agreement's legacy mechanism so as everyone who lost a loved one can get the truth of what happened to them.'

Speaking on the motion Councillor Elattar stated

"Pat Finucane's family has been shamefully denied a public inquiry and the justice and truth they deserve. In 2001 the British government committed to holding a public inquiry into the British state-sponsored killing of Pat Finucane. A former British prime minister previously acknowledged 'shocking levels of collusion in the killing' of Pat Finucane. Yet, the decision by the British Secretary of State, Brandon Lewis, to once again deny the Finucane family a public inquiry, places the British government on a long list of rogue states who are comfortable acting beyond the remit of the law.

The British government and the political establishment in Downing Street have again closed ranks to prevent a public inquiry into the murder of Patrick Finucane. It is clear that the British government has no intention of holding a public inquiry.

This is a cynical and shambolic political manoeuvre to deny accountability and facilitate impunity for state actors, particularly when the evidence speaks to an overarching state conspiracy in the murder of Pat Finucane. The decision is about protecting state agencies and those involved in RUC Special Branch from due process. It is a bad day for justice when those involved in state murder are further placed beyond the reach of the law. This is further evidence that the British government are intent on protecting those in Whitehall who were involved in collusion and state murder in Ireland. The British government has again shown that they have no regard or respect for the families of those killed by state collusion. Their cynical and calculated decision to resist accountability, simply facilitates impunity for those involved in state-sponsored killings.

The decision not to hold a public inquiry has wider implications for legacy matters and the implementation of the Stormont House Agreement. I would like to pay tribute to the courage, bravery and resilience of Geraldine Finucane and her family. Sinn Féin will continue to support them in the campaign for a full public inquiry and asks that this council does the same."

Councillor Doris seconded the motion. The Councillor extended sympathy to the Finucane family and commended them on their resilience and bravery. She stated that the case was not in isolation as many families in Mid Ulster lost members due to collision. She spoke of the cruel tactic of delay of a public enquiry when all people wanted to know was the truth. In conclusion Councillor Doris quoted a family member of Pat Finucane “we know who pulled the trigger but we want to know who pulled the strings.”

Councillor Cuthbertson speaking on the motion said,

“Dealing with the past is deeply sensitive. It is important that a hierarchy of victims is not created. The murder of Pat Finucane, like all other murders, was wrong. 90% of deaths in the Troubles were attributed to paramilitaries. This Party condemns every murder. We must also remember that last year the police revealed there are some three thousand cases on file which are unresolved relating to the Troubles. All victims deserve justice. The link between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA is not disputed. There are many sons and daughters in this Council area who grew up without a father or mother because of the sectarian murder campaign waged by the Provisional IRA. Those victims also deserve the truth and justice.

Sinn Fein councillors in this place claim that they want truth yet when Martin McGuinness was at the Saville Inquiry at a cost of two hundred million pounds, he stayed very tight lipped about the IRA. Indeed, he claimed he couldn't speak about it because of a PIRA code. When Gerry Adams spoke at Kevin McKenna's funeral last year, there was no sign of truth. Indeed, Adams boasted that the actions of McKenna, as an IRA Leader, would “never” be known. I am not a fan of public inquiries. They cost a lot, make lawyers very wealthy and rarely deliver the outcomes that victims really want. But when will Sinn Fein support a public inquiry into the Enniskillen Bomb, the 33 members of 8th Co Tyrone Battalion Ulster Defence Regiment and the many RUC officers and the many hard working family men murdered in cold blood in this Council area. Were their lives worth less than Pat Finucane? Where are the calls for truth and answers for Columba McVeigh's family, Jean McConville's family, and others who have been cruelly labelled as the 'disappeared.' The Finucane case is different, as there was a conviction and sentencing of a man involved in the murder. Everyone must also be aware that the Finucane family turned down a public inquiry because it was under the 2005 Inquiries Act. For Sinn Féin to say tonight that a public inquiry under the 2005 Act would not be meaningful and would be restricted is wrong. How come all other public inquiries, such as RHI, called by a then Sinn Féin Minister, and say the Grenfell case in England be acceptable. What we now need for all victims is a comprehensive legacy process to deal with all the outstanding cases. The Stormont House Agreement's six-year-old legacy proposals failed to gain sufficient support amongst innocent victims. As the recent NIO consultation demonstrated, it is time for a fresh updated approach. 18,000 responses to the consultation calling for a different approach. Would be foolish to ignore victims.

The Government should bring forward proposals which can command support amongst the innocent victims of the Troubles. At the core of those proposals must be truth and justice. Chair we will not be supporting this motion and I call that it is not accepted but over ruled.”

The Chair Councillor Mallaghan, thanked Councillor Cuthbertson for his remarks but did not accept his proposal.

Councillor McFlynn spoke of the brutal murder and reflected on David Cameron's remarks in the House of Commons in 2012 when he said the country was entitled to know the truth and extended an apology to the Finucane family but that his remarks fell short.

Councillor Mullen left the meeting at 7.46 pm

Councillor McFlynn spoke of Patrick Corrigan for Amnesty International NI and the government's shameful refusal to open a public enquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane does a terrible injustice to his family. She further shared that Colm Eastwood speaking in the House of Commons had said that the Secretary of State has failed miserably to do right by the Finucane family.

Councillor McFlynn concluded that the SDLP sympathise with every family who lost a loved one and that a lot of families are waiting for truth which they deserve to know and that the SDLP would continue to support all families.

Councillor Wilson speaking on the motion said,

“The murder of Pat Finucane was wrong, it was unjustified and unjustifiable and must be condemned. There were over 3,700 deaths as a result of ‘The Troubles’ - 60% of all deaths were due to Republicans, 30% by loyalists and 10% by the police and army. Many of those impacted within the Mid-Ulster area and beyond are known to me, they have had no justice, no resources directed towards assisting their efforts, no Government backing, little understanding by Church leaders - there has undoubtedly been a hierarchy of victims with the loudest being appeased at varying levels whilst many of those who have carried themselves with a quiet dignity being increasingly marginalised. It has been said that Pat Finucane was a beloved husband and father, this I wholly accept but it is also extremely important to make the point that so too were many others. In this area I think of the following; Johnny Procter who was brutally murdered in the car park of the Mid Ulster hospital after visiting his newly born son, James Spiers murdered while working in his garage in Desertmartin, David Graham murdered while at his work outside Coalisland and then of course the eight innocents of Teebane. These families also seek justice, truth and accountability, they and so many others have saw little-no progress in their loved one's cases - where is the clamour for their families? Do the human rights of these families actually matter? They most certainly do to me. There have been other legal figures murdered Edgar Graham, Lord Justice Gibson and his wife, Judge Billy Doyle and Judge Staunton to name but a few. Do the NGO's and others who insist the need for a

public inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane actively support the families of these individuals who were practitioners of the law? The motion being talked about tonight refers to “truth and justice” but for all the murders carried out by the Provisional IRA, the victim’s families are unlikely to ever get it. The Provisional IRA has proven it doesn’t tell the truth - just look at the Smithwick Inquiry. Or Gerry Adams’ continued claims he was never in the Provisional IRA and of course the late Martin McGuinness hiding behind his Provisional IRA oath at the Saville Inquiry. There is a great deal of angst within the community presently concerning the two tier approach to examining events of ‘The Past.’ Tonight I have been clear that the murder of Pat Finucane was wrong, I ask this meeting to confirm with me that all criminal violence carried out over the years of ‘The Troubles’ was wrong. I am challenging Sinn Fein and other republicans to acknowledge that the murders of the innocents I have mentioned (and others like them) were unjustified and unjustifiable. The Provisional Republican Movement consists of Provisional Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA. Sinn Fein needs to talk to its’ military wing to establish what is known of the hundreds of unresolved crimes perpetrated by the Provisional IRA were ‘beloved husbands and fathers were assassinated’ and were prevented from ever coming home to their families. Dublin is not lilywhite either; it was not a mere onlooker. The Irish State also needs to disclose its’ role in the formation of the Provisional IRA, the importation of weaponry, training and financing it is widely believed that it was involved in furthering. The Republic of Ireland State needs to also come clean on what it knows about arms dumps, safe houses, extradition failures and cross border attacks.

The Stormont House Agreement or more accurately ‘DisAgreement’ is utterly discredited largely because of how imbalanced it has proven to be. The proposed Historical Investigations Unit would amount to a parallel police force and would rely on records, of which the State has millions, whereas terror groups will claim they have none. Just let me emphasise once again all murders must be condemned but every affected family has the right to truth and justice and there cannot be a hierarchy of victims. When is redress coming, how much further resource can be invested in a single case whilst those cases I have mentioned receive at best; the crumbs under the table? Enough is Enough, there must be equality of access to justice, truth and accountability for all innocents impacted.”

Councillor Graham speaking on the motion stressed that all lives matter and all murders are wrong and posed the question, what will a public enquiry achieve? Councillor Graham said that Pat Finucane was dead and no public enquiry would bring him back. She asked if Council called on the IRA to reveal where the disappeared are buried, as there were many grieving families who bear the scars of a terrible time who will never know the truth for Sinn Féin will take it to their graves. Councillor Graham reflected that the people were targeted shot and bombed by work colleagues, neighbours and strangers and if she didn’t bring this to attention she would let a lot of people down. Councillor Graham said the Council had a nationalist majority and the unionists would be voted down.

Councillor Kerr said he fully supported the motion and that the state had organised the assassination of Pat Finucane who had both loyalist and republican clients. He spoke on the statement made by government about solicitors and the role of Brian Nelson an Ulster loyalist paramilitary who had provided intelligence to the British. Councillor Kerr made reference the office of John Stephens being deliberately targeted and how the state would not share information to his enquiries into British forces and said that the hypocrisy of the British government was nothing new. He concluded that he fully supported the motion and the campaigns of all families who lost members due to the British state.

Councillor Quinn said that the debate had descended into lists and that for many collision is something that happened to someone else but for some it was a fact and relation. He reflected that for some of the Members present it was a very emotive debate.

Councillor Monteith said there are Councillors present at the meeting who had lost family members some years ago and some more recently and all needed to give cognisance to this. He reflected that there would be no one in the Chamber who didn't know someone and that he did not feel that lending support to one campaign would diminish another. Councillor Monteith stated that he would support anyone seeking truth and justice and that every family had the right to ask for it should the death be a result of a car accident or caused by conflict. He said the issue tonight was that of Pat Finucane and that public enquiries were not about bringing people back but uncovering truth. He spoke of the Hillsborough Tragedy and how the public enquiry had uncovered the negligence of the British State and the quest was to get to the core of the system yet the reality of Ireland was that voting would be predictable. Councillor Monteith clarified that he spoke as a republican but it was a reality that the British government at time pulled the strings of IRA activity also, as those working as British agents tasked republicans to carry out atrocities. He said there was not a body of evidence in every case but the public masters were deciding who lived and died on both sides. He spoke of the legislation moving through the House of Commons to give protection to agents on both sides who committed crimes for their agenda mentioning the revelation of MI6 involvement in crime. Councillor Monteith concluded that the State had been heavily involved in crime and murder against their citizens and the Brits needed to be made aware that all lives matter.

Councillor Cuddy commenting on Councillor Monteith's remarks about how members would vote stated that everyone was equal yet he hadn't heard republicans condemning the murders highlighted by Councillor Wilson. He said it may be good to discuss such issues but for unionist members they felt their people were not being listened too. In conclusion he expressed disappointment in the direction of the debate and said a line needed to be drawn.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated it was a difficult motion and acknowledged the feelings of all in the room. He said he had spent time at Omagh Court last week with the family of Pat McElhone and reflected that it was 46 years from his death and that the longer these situations go on people don't get the opportunity to come to terms with their loss.

Councillor McKinney said it was obvious that the motion would cause a stir but emphasised that all lives do matter and spoke of Desertmartin where Mr Spears had been murdered. He said he would not read out a list of names but every person was important to their own family, he also shared that when you carried friends or relatives down the road you felt the pain but stated that younger Councillors such as Councillor Quinn would not have had the experience. He said he did not want to get into tit for tat but both previous and current Members had lost family. Councillor McKinney said that Sinn Féin have elected Members of Parliament to Westminster but their plea has no teeth as they don't attend. He spoke of how some could go back 10, 20 years and longer how they all meet constituents effected by the troubles and were thinking of those not at the table. Councillor McKinney concluded that if Sinn Féin were serious they should tell their Members of Parliament to get to Westminster.

In response Councillor Elattar thanked everyone for their contributions and concurred that every family who had lost a loved one deserved truth and justice. She said there is no hierarchy to loss and referred to the last paragraph of the motion and said everyone should be treated equally including the Finucane family. She highlighted that the difference in the case was that in 2001 the government committed to holding the public enquiry yet 19 years on it still not had happened. Councillor Elattar said that what the British government had done was an act of terrorism and they had responsibility as state sponsored killing is terrorism.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan called for a vote.

For	24
Against	15

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan declared the vote carried.

Councillor Mullen returned to the meeting at 8.15 pm

C260/20 Notice of Motion

Councillor S McPeake moved the undernoted motion,

'This Council notes the centenary anniversary of the Westminster parliament's Government of Ireland Act. We note that the Good Friday Agreement caused this act to be revoked. We welcome this. We note the deep and wide divisions this has sustained and entrenched both within Irish society and in the relationships between the islands of Ireland and Britain, not least of those consequences has been the multi-layered generational conflict our society has endured.

We welcome and support the agreed framework provided by the peace process to address and deal with all of this by peaceful and democratic methods. We recognise that the outworking of this – the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in all its aspects – remains a work in progress. This includes – its core

requirements for equality of treatment, parity of esteem and mutual respect and the provision for a referendum to give full effect to the exercise by the people of Ireland to the right to self determine our future destiny and the centrality to this of both the British and Irish governments. In the first instance in respect of rights throughout the island and in the second the particular responsibility on the British government to set a date for the referendum. This Council further recognises that a stark choice is opening up between the narrow, inward-looking vision of Brexit Britain and the open inclusive vision of a new Ireland.

Therefore we call upon this council to encourage space for debate to present experiences and perspectives, big ideas and a public discourse on our constitutional future which threatens no one and; this council call on both governments to expedite the delivery of their respective responsibilities contained within the Good Friday Agreement.'

Speaking on the motion Councillor S McPeake said,

“Much is being talked presently about how we look back and remember this particular period of centenary anniversaries which led to the creation of the northern state. Looking back and reflecting upon the circumstances that led up to this period in our history is something which none of us should shirk from and something which we should acknowledge as being a part of history where people will have varying different views and interpretations of the rights and wrongs of that era.

This Council has recently outlined how we intend to mark the period of 1921-22. We as members have just this week participated in an on-line workshop on our plans on how we mark this upcoming period in our history. The discussion, I am glad to say was mature, it was frank and it was respectful.

Council is planning to mark the upcoming anniversary period through a series of events, exhibitions, educational talks and support grants for communities to individually reflect on that period of time. This will be through looking at the historical facts, recognising the implications and consequences of what happened during that period of time and understanding the different perceptions and interpretations that exist, showing how events and activities can deepen the understanding of that period and all within the context of an 'inclusive and accepting society' All entirely laudable and which will hopefully lead to further mature discussion's on the implications of what happened in that period of time, what lessons can be learnt from the past and importantly how we should look to the future.

We can all examine the different perspectives that led to the imposition of the Government of Ireland Act in 1921 which was against the wishes of the Irish people, it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that this is not a period where nationalists would be 'celebrating' the imposition of partition within the island of Ireland. 100 years onwards, we who live within this state now have the opportunity not only to reflect on events in the lead up to the imposition of the Government of Ireland Act, but importantly to look forward to planning for the future. To begin the planning for a future where the people of Ireland North and South have a proper democratic say,

something that was ignored 100 years ago but can now be rectified through the enactment of the Good Friday Agreement and the facilitation of an Irish unity referendum.

Historically the need for a one Ireland, one-Island approach across our public services, our economy and our society generally has always been in my view the pragmatic and just approach to take. This small island with a population of around 7 million people is simply too small to have two competing governing administrations and sets of public services. The argument for a one-Ireland, one island, one economy approach has never been as strong as it is presently. In recent times the ramifications of Covid 19 has shown just how important it is to have a uniform and co-ordinated one-Island approach to tackling the pandemic. This also now coupled with the damage that Brexit is causing to our economy within the Island of Ireland is causing many to re-examine the present constitutional make-up of this place.

Again, the forced removal of the north of Ireland out of the European Union against the wishes of the majority here, goes to show once again (if it was ever needed) the lack of interest that Britain has in doing the right thing for the interests of the Irish people.

The Good Friday Agreement of 1998 provides a pathway towards ending of partition. There are provisions within the agreement for a unity referendum to be called to poll the people north and south for their support for Irish unity. In the present context of Brexit the EU has stated that the people of the north can again re-enter the European Union through the pathway of a United Ireland. 100 years onwards since the creation of this state through the government of Ireland Act, it is long overdue that the people of this island have an opportunity to re-address those injustices.

As stated in my motion I am calling on this Council to encourage space for debate in order to present the various experiences and perspectives. Hopefully the educational opportunities and planned discussions and talks around these centenaries events will also provide a stimulus for us to recognise the enormity of the mistake and the missed opportunity to which partition actually was.

The people of the north of Ireland regardless of their background have all suffered as a consequence of partition. Apart from wishing to control us Britain has never had any real interest in Irish affairs. We have been very much peripheral in British interests and on the receiving end of collateral damage as a consequence of the decision to divide our country through partition.

The recent Brexit vote illustrates this. Despite the majority of people here voting to remain within the EU, we are now having to exit the EU against our wishes. People across this island will be significantly worse off as a consequence of Brexit. This week I was amazed to hear an ardent cheer leader for Brexit, Department of Economy Minister Diane Dodds report to the Economy Committee that she is “disappointed” at the loss of £70m of EU funding and that her share of the Block

Grant for 2021/2022 will be cut 15% and the loss of £54m. Minister Dodds said and I quote “The loss of the European Funding represents a huge financial risk” for her Department.” This coming on the back of the Ministers own Permanent Secretary stating that Invest NI will have to stop taking on new businesses going forward - certainly not what the public wants to hear when we start to work our way out of a pandemic.

This unfortunately for us may only be the tip of the iceberg. In the time ahead we can expect further austerity cuts from a Tory government who have the little regard for the economic prosperity of the people of the north. The little Englander mentality will inevitably look after big business interests in the south of England long before us.

But it doesn't always have to be like this. There is a better way. It's is time to start planning ahead and for us to have the opportunity to eventually shake off the shackles of partition through the holding of a unity referendum. This requires preparatory work being done in advance. These preparatory discussions need to be mainstreamed into part of public discourse. Sinn Fein is calling on the Irish government to begin the conversations and planning in earnest around the subject of Irish unity. Sinn Fein has last month produced an 'Economic Benefits of a United Ireland' paper which shows not only the sustainability of a single island economy but that this economy would provide significant growth and prosperity for the people of Ireland.

The EU has stated that it will re-admit it the North of Ireland back into the European Union in the eventuality of a United Ireland. What could be a better stimulus or incentive than being provided the opportunity to vote to re-enter Europe through a united Ireland. What could be a better opportunity as we face the 100th anniversary of partition than to begin an inclusive process of examining what type and future Ireland we want for the next 100 years.

We have nothing to fear from using this opportunity to plan for a unity referendum. As we examine the past decade of wasted opportunity, we should commit ourselves to building a better and more inclusive society for us all.

Members let us begin that process.”

Councillor Brian McGuigan seconded the motion and emphasised its importance stated,

“My party colleague, Councillor McPeake has pointed to recent discussions within Council regarding seminal moments in Ireland's history that have still to be remembered as part of the Decade of Centenaries. This includes the Centenary of Partition which will be no celebration for nationalists, republicans, socialists and others who consider themselves to be progressives.

Councillor McPeake has described the discussions to date regarding upcoming centenaries as being mature, frank and respectful. I hope that we can continue to go forward into what is being framed as a 'Decade of Opportunity' with the same

spirit as we have conducted our discussions in relation to centenaries over recent weeks. Councillor McPeake's description of our discussions and decisions to date reflect the leadership this council has given since we began rolling out our Decade of Centenaries programmes and the many related funding opportunities overseen by relevant council officers and staff.

Tonight, I want to pay tribute to everyone within Mid Ulster District Council who has given great leadership and have worked in complete adherence to the framework for ethical remembering as presented by the Community Relations Council. I particularly want to thank our council officers and staff working in the fields of good relations and community development. Principles enshrined in the CRC framework will guide us as we proceed into 2021 with the Centenary of Partition. From commemorative events leading up to the centenaries of the 1916 Rising, the 1918 elections which saw votes for women and the election of Constance Markievicz as the first women elected to Westminster, as well as the establishment of the First Dáil and what academics refer to as Ireland's War of Independence, the right tone for commemoration and remembrance has been set, ensuring that our own programme of commemorative events and those organised by local community and voluntary groups - but funded by council - have been inclusive.

The events have been thought-provoking, but respectful of everyone living in our district. They have very importantly been challenging in terms of putting all narratives under the spotlight and they have presented great opportunities for learning in relation to the material conditions in which we find ourselves in Ireland today, north and south. Local groups such as the *County Derry Centenaries Group* have led the way during the course of the Decades of Centenaries when it comes to remembering within an ethical framework as well as adhering to principles developed by the Community Relations Council and implemented by our council staff - Council staff have had to deal, in a fair and impartial manner, with funding applications and event proposals from a whole range of groups and organisations, reflective of all our political traditions. The inclusive commemorative programmes organised by County Derry Centenaries Group have never been afraid to open up important "uncomfortable conversations" in relation to the Ireland of today which we inhabit or our ongoing relationship with our neighbouring island, Britain.

Our future post-Brexit, protocols with the European Union and in turn greater prospects for Irish Unity, national reconciliation and the promotion of a rights-based society - as well as the need for social and economic justice - have all featured as points for discussion at commemorative events. Concerns from unionists in relation to the right to identify as British, access to universal health care in the event of Irish Unity and other pertinent issues have all been discussed respectfully.

Platforms at these very well attended and engaging events have been shared by speakers from unionism as well as northern nationalism and Irish republicanism and key voices from the trade union movement and wider civic society. These

commemorative events have always benefited from having key figures from academia on platforms or as key note speakers. Academics noted for their fair, balanced, impartial and rigorous exploration of historical facts and the political legacy and many societal challenges that we now deal with as part of our daily lives -Debunking myths and setting the historical record straight! A good benchmark has been set in terms of how we proceed with the upcoming Decade of Centenaries events that have still to be organised, overseen and / or funded by Council.

I conclude my comments by stating that the Community Relations Council framework for ethical and shared remembering, which has guided council officers and staff to date, remains our best pathway for guarding against aggressive triumphalism when it comes to centenary events.”

Councillor Black speaking on the motion stated,

“This motion has little purpose and certainly has no coherent approach. It is simply a platform speech to grab a headline. We are in the midst of a pandemic, yet progressing the issue of a border poll is top of some people’s priority list. I would suggest, that at this time, it is certainly not at the top of the wider public’s priority list.

Mention is made of the Belfast/ Good Friday Agreement. If people were serious about moving Northern Ireland forward, they would do better by working within the structures of this agreement and the later St Andrews Agreement to improve our political structures, our public services and the opportunities for our younger generation.

This has been brought into even greater focus by the current pandemic we are living through, and which threatens the prospects of a generation if we don't ensure that we find the economic and health solutions required to combat it. This is where our efforts should be directed and these are the areas that should be top of our priority list as community leaders.

It is unfortunate that some within the Nationalist and Republican community seem to solely focus on uniting land masses, with no regard for healing the divisions which still exist within our society and bringing our communities together. Rather than work within the structure of political agreements for the benefit of all our people, they are only being used a staging post. The drive remains full steam ahead to a divisive border poll, no matter the collateral damage to community relations along the way.

This motion mentions the prospect of an ‘open and inclusive’ New Ireland. As a Unionist, speaking on behalf of many in my community, no ‘All Ireland’ or United Ireland is a welcome prospect. The fundamental principle of being a Unionist is being part of the United Kingdom, so to remove this takes away our underlying core identity. That is something that can never be accommodated in a United Ireland.

Being part of the United Kingdom also brings many benefits to all who live here, no matter their community background or belief. For example, whether it is being part of one of the world's strongest economies, or having the great benefit of the NHS, both of which have proven invaluable during the pandemic. No viable replacement of such great benefits has been suggested by those supporting a United Ireland, only unsubstantiated pipe dreams.

There was a Centenary forum convened by the NIO, which is intended to be inclusive and provide people with the space to have an open discussion, with an emphasis on mutual respect, equality and parity of esteem, which ironically this motion demands. We were very disappointed that Nationalists chose not to participate in this.

Therefore, it seems to us in this motion that Nationalists want the space to debate equality and history, but only as part of their wider United Ireland project, and only their perspective and narrative is welcome. It will be no surprise that we will therefore not be supporting this motion.”

Councillor Wilson speaking on the motion said,

“The Belfast Agreement legitimised Northern Ireland and settled our Constitutional future. We are part of the United Kingdom for as long as a majority of the people of Northern Ireland so wish.

Those who wish to leave the United Kingdom have never managed to secure even 40 per cent of the vote in any election and have no prospect of winning any Referendum.

No matter the spin or hype, the conditions simply do not exist that would allow any Secretary of State to call any such Border poll.

Those demanding a Border poll know full well that this course of action will destabilise politics and life in Northern Ireland with a fractious debate, rerunning old divisions, creating new enmities causing even more deeper division and seeking to capitalise on that politically. Instead, we want to focus on the practicalities of making Northern Ireland work for all of us who call this place home. Surely that is more in keeping with the letter and spirit of the Agreement?

Those of us who love Northern Ireland and cherish its place within the United Kingdom will quite rightly want to celebrate its 100th birthday and the Government's £3m of funding will help us do just that. Inevitably, there will be those who take a different view, and in a free society they are quite entitled to do so, but that will not detract from those of us who are proud to call this place home. As a people we have achieved much in the last 100 years. People from Northern Ireland have excelled in a wide range of fields, in business, politics, the arts and sport.

Much has changed in the past Century, and the people of Northern Ireland have endured good times and bad, triumph and tragedy. As we celebrate this Centenary, it is time to celebrate and also to take stock as we look forward to the future. Northern Ireland was created in 1921 as Europe was emerging from the cataclysmic effects of the First World War. Boundaries were being redrawn throughout Europe and new Nation States were emerging. Given the political upheaval on the island of Ireland, partition was a logical - even inevitable - solution to the stark divisions that existed between those who wanted to strike out on their own, and those who wanted to remain within the United Kingdom.

Partition was not our idea – it was republicans who wanted a new political arrangement – the original Brexit as it were, whereby they left the largest trading block on Earth at the time. Our forefathers did not seek Partition, but back in the post-war era it was the least worst option when it came to charting a way forward.

The so-called ‘conflict our society has endured’ is not due to Partition. Partition was a symptom not the cause. Republicans talk of 800 years of oppression since the Norman French nobles first came to Ireland, a long time before 1921. A stark choice is opening up between the narrow, inward-looking vision of Brexit Britain and the open inclusive vision of a new Ireland.

The UK is still the fifth largest economy on the planet. It has traded with the world for Centuries and nothing will change. If some people want to retreat from a global leader that is up to them, but we will not be joining them. And spare us the nonsense of a ‘new inclusive Ireland.’ We have seen how little respect there is for Britishness and Unionism in the Republic, where even an attempt to remember the RIC ended in outrage and failure. The Unionist population in the Republic was targeted post partition with events like Dunamansway buried.

Sinn Fein is still wedded to De Valera’s myth of a catholic Gaelic speaking Ireland which immediately excludes those who do not share the religion of that language and is the very opposite of ‘open and inclusive.’ Open and inclusive?? – There is a real irony in Sinn Fein – whose very name translates as ‘ourselves alone’, describing anyone else as ‘inward looking’ and themselves as ‘open and inclusive.’ Sinn Fein and the narrow, mono cultural Ireland they have always stood for is the very definition of inward looking and always has been, with the old racist mantra of ‘Brits Out’ the light to guide their way. The United Kingdom on the other hand is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic and multi-faith society. London is a world capital never mind European one. It is as open and inclusive as it gets and we in Northern Ireland certainly will not be volunteering to leave the United Kingdom any time soon. We will not be walking away from the fifth largest economy on the planet and the Nation which we and our forefathers have been part of for centuries.”

Councillor Cuddy reflected that the Good Friday Agreement was to improve the lives of everyone yet here Council was re-opening discussion on historic divided cultures in the midst of a pandemic, impacts of Brexit, poverty across all communities which will be felt in society for years to come. He stated that everyone needed to work on

improving the National Health Service and to understand the cause of poverty and seek ways to lift people out of it not discussing a border poll two days after the Christmas economy had been locked down again. Councillor Cuddy asked was some Members in a different planet from everyone else at present. He said that when COVID 19 was sorted the best friends Northern Ireland would have would be England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland but emphasised that to date Northern Ireland had received massive amounts of money from the South of England. Councillor Cuddy concluded he could understand why Sinn Féin would want a border poll but stressed that there were currently larger issues to be sorted.

Councillor McKinney reminded Members that when the Irish economy collapsed Britain lent them money and that when the 1 January 2021 dawns the Irish agriculture industry would suffer severely and whether it was liked or not Britain would be the 'bread and butter' of Irish agriculture. He further highlighted Altnagalvin Hospital and South West Hospital accommodating people living in border areas thus the British people were not as bad as portrayed and unless you had a personal hatred for them there is a lot of bigger issues. He concluded that the motion was good public relations exercise for Sinn Féin but said if Councillor S McPeake and Councillor B McGuigan stood at the queue of ambulances waiting hours to get patients into a hospital and asked about the border poll there would be realisation there are bigger issues.

Councillor Cuthbertson concurred with Councillor Black and said that perhaps some had been sleeping the past ten months and highlighted that all support for businesses and the community had come from Britain. He said to align with the Republic of Ireland when out of Brexit would lead to a failed economy as Ireland could not stand on its own. Councillor Cuthbertson also said that each motion pushed through demonstrates the level of equality and respect shown to and highlighted that at the workshop to discuss centenary events some Members "would not agree to planting trees to celebrate the North of Ireland" which showed they could not even call the country by its name nor would some agree to a Centenary Celebration Concert. Councillor Cuthbertson concluded that he had never heard such hypocritical words in all of his life.

Councillor Corry said that the National Health Service was in the state it was due to British austerity and that an all Ireland approach could help alleviate this. She further reflected on the level of poverty in the United Kingdom being highlighted by UNICEF and Save the Children and with regard to Brexit and the European Union how Minister Poots had stated conversations were needed. Councillor Corry concluded stressing the need for ongoing conversations.

Councillor N McAleer stated as a young republican he had no problem with anyone marking the centenary of the creation of the Northern state but that it should not be whitewashed as a good thing as it had been anything but. He said that there is a growing support for a United Ireland and reflecting on earlier comments asked if the United Kingdom prosperity fund would replace the loss of EU funding.

Councillor Glasgow stated that Mid Ulster had been rated the happiest place to live in Northern Ireland, he shared other statistics such as the United Nations rankings for happiest countries when in 2020 the United Kingdom ranked 13th and Ireland 16th. He further reflected that the Taoiseach in October 2020 had said that a border poll was not on his agenda so who exactly did want it. Councillor Glasgow said that Council was sitting debating a motion when discussion would be better directed towards dealing with the current pandemic, the economy and the impact of Brexit.

He continued that the beef and milk industry in Northern Ireland is a leader in the UK market and has stood the test of time and will continue to do so even during Brexit. He also spoke of knowing many farmers who have recently went through the red tractor and farm quality assurance standards because they want to stay in line with the rest of the United Kingdom as after all Great Britain is their biggest customer.

Councillor Quinn stated he had sat in bewilderment during discussion. He said he would support the motion and acknowledged that Irish unity would not happen in the next decade and speaking as a proud republican he felt debate was needed prior to setting plans in motion as he did not want it to end up like Brexit jumping on a red bus and not knowing where it was going. He said the British government called for a referendum on the European Union and now down the road there was still no plan but thousands of jobs were lost and millions of pounds of funding. He further reflected on the Scottish referendum and said for Ireland what was required was a new entity something the world hadn't seen before. Councillor Quinn said he knew that the debate would fall into tit for tat and anyone listening at home he was sure was wondering what under god Members were talking about. He said as a party the SDLP supported many of the ideas in the motion but did not aspire to setting dates and really would want to get the result over the line with 60-70% wanting it. Councillor Quinn stated that there was comments that the United Kingdom was a world leader when in fact due to Brexit it had become a pariah and that to attain a United Ireland a plan was needed followed by a date.

In response to Councillor Quinn's comments the Chair Councillor Mallaghan stated that the debate around the partition of Ireland and Irish unity should not be dismissed.

Councillor Molloy reflecting on previous comments by Members said he saw no mention of a date for Irish unity and that many of the cheer leaders for Brexit had sat through the debate this past week in relation to the red meat industry that thrives in Mid Ulster together with the white meat industry, mushroom and vegetable industry which due to Brexit are now on their way out would welcome the debate for a new Ireland.

Councillor Colvin said there was a lot of doom and gloom about Brexit but he thought it would be a success if intelligent people would come up with a deal. He did acknowledge that a deal would impact on the Republic of Ireland as much of their trade depended on Great Britain. He said people should look at where our wealth lies and it is with England as the South had let Northern Ireland down and he would look forward to a referendum and indeed if Scotland had one it would get a nay.

Councillor Monteith said that the British rule in Ireland was no paradise that he was an elected Irish Republican and would take every opportunity to talk about it. He said he would be abstaining from the motion as although within his political remit there were aspects of the agreement which was fine other aspects of it hindered Irish unity and in plain English it was typical Connolly house double speak. Councillor Monteith said he would support Irish freedom and would love all to vote for it and that the Good Friday agreement promised many things but it did not create unity and spoke of the LGBT community endeavouring to get equal rights in the six counties. He also said that with the Good Friday Agreement 22 years later partition is as strong as ever due to it. Councillor Monteith spoke of legislation being put through by the British government yet the British Secretary of State would decide whether or not to bring it to Northern Ireland. He continued stating that he was elected as an Independent and sought 32 county Irish freedom and that an internal six county poll was not acceptable as the reality was it was full of British caveats. He spoke of decisions in 1918 and 1920 and how the partition had led to gerrymandering. Councillor Monteith concluded that it was vital that Republicans continue to question and he could understand that the Good Friday agreement benefited some it reinforced partition rather than securing Irish unity and that in his lifetime he looked forward to Irish Unity attained in a democratic manner. He said the motion did not call for a referendum and was a love letter to the Good Friday Agreement and thus he would not support it but abstain.

Councillor Kerr concurred with Councillor Monteith and said he too would abstain from the motion as whilst some aspects of the Good Friday Agreement was good a lot was not and that it was undemocratic that one person, the British Secretary of State, can decide the future of Ireland as only he could grant permission for a border poll. He spoke of how the British misled the Scottish people in the recent Brexit poll and that to think Britain had no interest in Ireland was wrong and quoted that former British Home Secretary Jack Straw had said if Ireland was reunited it would lose its status as superpower and its permanent seat on the United Nations security council and the G8. Councillor Kerr said he too would abstain from the motion.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan said that the debate had been useful and whilst some would criticise the motion no one had taken their foot off the pedal for Brexit because of the pandemic why should the pedal be eased on Irish unity. In response to some comments he stated that in relation to the Irish state collapsing the United Kingdom national debt sits at £2trillion, the average earnings in the South was €53k per annum and £45k in United Kingdom. He stated that over the past two hundred years Britain had a major empire but over the years many countries had left but none had asked to re-join.

Councillor S McPeake said the debate had been useful and acknowledged that it would be 'close to the bone' but it was good to make the opportunity for discussion just like the out workings of Brexit was being discussed.

The Chair Councillor Mallaghan called for a vote.

For 21
Against 15
Abstained 4

C261/20 Notice of Motion

Councillor Kearney read the motion

“This Council notes with concern figures showing that over a quarter (27.5%) of those who died from covid-19 were people living with dementia and this is the most common underlying health condition associated with deaths from the virus. This Council welcomes the Minister for Health’s stated commitment to reforming Adult Social Care and urges his Department to heed Alzheimer’s Society’s “The Fog of Support: An inquiry into the provision of respite care and carers assessments for people affected by dementia” to ensure those living with dementia are better protected now and into the future, specifically allowing loved ones of care home residents to be given key worker status. This Council will commit to build on the work of Alzheimer’s Society of creating Dementia Friendly Communities by hosting a virtual ‘Dementia Friendly Workshop’ which will increase the awareness and confidence of our staff to better relate to, support and communicate with people with dementia to help tackle stigma, establish best practice and reduce barriers for our ageing population within our Council area.

Councillor Kearney spoke on the motion saying,

“People affected by dementia have been worst hit by the coronavirus pandemic – facing devastation at home, in their community and in care homes. Alzheimer’s Society published a report on Tuesday 29th September entitled “Worst Hit: dementia during coronavirus. The effects of the outbreak cannot be undone, but urgent action can be taken to better protect people ahead of the winter, and in the future. To make this happen, we need government to address the reality of lockdown for people affected by dementia. From the high death rate in care homes, to the significant cognitive decline for those who live in the community, to the rising mental health challenges for unpaid carers, the pandemic has had a severe impact, while exposing our fragmented social care system for all to see. Alzheimer’s Society’s new report shines a light on the impact of coronavirus on people who have dementia and those who care for them.

- Over a quarter (27.5%) of people who died with COVID-19 from March to June had dementia.
- The largest increase in excess non-COVID-19 deaths was in people with dementia
- For people who survived the crisis, the effects of social isolation were severe.

- Regular health and social care services were put on hold, creating a backlog of people who have missed out on essential support.

While this report is focussed on England and Wales, as the main requirements for respite care and carers' assessments come via the Care Act, which applies to those two countries, there's still significant learning in there for those with similar responsibilities in Northern Ireland. Alzheimer's Society have joined with many other dementia charities such as TIDE, John's Campaign and Alzheimer's Research UK to campaign as #OneDementiaVoice as people living with dementia in care homes need regular visitor contact as it's vital for their mental health and upkeep of communication skills. Family members often also can provide personal care and ongoing contact brings benefits to the carer as well as the person in the care home. Worryingly and separate from Covid-19 there has been a large increase in 2020 in the number of deaths of people who have dementia indicating that reduced social interactions is exacerbating the difficulties face by those living with dementia.

Alzheimer's Society can provide a Dementia Friendly Workshop to our Council's elected representatives and staff. Dementia-friendly communities are vital in helping people live well with dementia and remain a part of their community. This can be done virtually and lasts for around 1 hour. Too many people affected by dementia feel society fails to understand the condition they live with, its impact or how to interact with them. That's why people with dementia sometimes feel they need to withdraw from their community as the condition progresses. This isn't okay. People affected by dementia still have an incredible amount to offer to their community. If appropriately supported, they can continue to play an active and valuable role even years after diagnosis. The Dementia Friendly Communities programme challenges stigma and misconceptions about dementia, increases awareness and understanding in the community and improves access to community facilities for people with dementia.

According to the London School of Economics there are currently over 22,000 people living with dementia in Northern Ireland, this figure is projected to nearly double to 42,800 by 2040 and the cost to the economy of dementia in 2040 will be over £1 billion. The projections detailed in the opening paragraph have been robustly evidence based and were published in 2019 by the London School of Economics. Prior to Covid-19 through the Westminster All-Party Parliamentary Group on dementia "Hidden No More – Dementia and Disability" 2019 report we know that people living with dementia feel they are treated differently to people with other health conditions or disabilities. This is due to the progressive but 'hidden' nature of dementia, the individuality of dementia and its symptoms, and the stigma surrounding the condition.

There is a need for the Department to ensure all Trusts across Northern Ireland act in the same way as this will reduce people with dementia having to access acute care and also a collective approach will assist families and carers by providing consistent pathways - eliminating a postcode lottery approach. It has been highlighted how different Health Trusts handle dementia in a different way. In Mid

Ulster we share two Health and Social Care Trusts and the following Directorates lead on dementia diagnosis and care', Northern Trust - Mental Health, Learning Disability and Community Wellbeing Directorate; and the Southern Trust - Mental Health & Disability Directorate

Reform of Adult Social Care is important as we need to end the unfair daily injustice people with dementia and their families face in accessing and paying for the good quality care to which they are entitled which should be free at the point of need. We need a frank public discussion about the value of social care to society – not only to those who use it. Building understanding of dementia, as a serious and progressive health condition, and its impact on the person and on family carers, can tackle damaging and discriminatory practice. The Government must take action to ensure people with dementia and carers are given high quality care and support at every stage.”

Councillor Hughes seconded the motion and said that the current pandemic had proved a very difficult time especially for dementia sufferers, their care workers and families, she said that training would be imperative.

Councillor Wilson stated that there are over 200 subtypes of dementia, but across the types the impact can be debilitating. It can rob people of their memories, their personalities, their thoughts and cruelly their emotional connections with people that they knew for their entire lives. He spoke of families affected as they can only watch while their loved ones remain often physically fit and well but mentally slip away and as the population ages, there is no doubt that dementia problem will accelerate and now is the time to plan and prepare. Councillor Wilson spoke of countries across the world working to find out more about the condition, to find new treatments which delay onset, and ultimately maybe even one day to cure dementia but until there is more effective treatment, it is essential we take action now to prepare for what we all know will be an increasing reality for the next number of years. He said as such the UUP would strongly support continued efforts to dementia proof our health service and that should start with health service staff, so that they can spot the signals and perhaps pre-empt the very practical but important challenges of communication and surroundings. Councillor Wilson reflected on the growing body of evidence to suggest that it is possible to reduce an individual's risk of dementia with research, both in the United Kingdom and internationally suggesting that smoking, excessive drinking, and lack of physical activity for instance can all contribute to a higher risk of an individual getting dementia later in life. Councillor Wilson concluded that with this in mind, healthcare practitioners and public health bodies can aid the population to reduce or mitigate their risk of developing dementia.

Councillor Cuddy welcomed the motion and the Minister for Health Robin Swann MLA's commitment to the issue and said that everyone would know someone either friend or relative who had or would suffer.

Councillor Brown said it was a good motion and as councillors they would all be aware of people who have suffered with dementia, and it was essential that their families and carers who carried out a vital job in hard circumstances needed support.

He said whilst carers are hugely dedicated they were people with talents, ambitions and must be allowed to live their own lives.

Councillor Cuthbertson said this is a real crisis and at the present moment in hospitals he was aware of patients and their carer's are not allowed in to see them. He said he had been lobbying the Chief Executive of the Trust as there needed to be a plan in place to admit such carers as this settles the patients, and relieves pressure on nursing staff. Councillor Cuthbertson concluded that something needs to happen immediately.

Councillor Kerr said he fully supported the motion and spoke of the recent news reports from former rugby players linking blows to the head with dementia with football and American football also being highlighted due to blows to the head over long term.

Councillor Monteith said like Councillor Cuthbertson he too was dealing with people unable to visit relatives yet television crews could film and report on COVID wards. He said there was something badly wrong with regulations that permitted this. Councillor Monteith said what was happening to people unable to see their relatives was barbaric and inhumane devastating families. He spoke of dementia being one of the saddest conditions a family has to deal with and how heart-breaking it was when a loving relationship between two partners came down to clinical care. Councillor Monteith said many have experienced this and social care had been neglected and underfunded and whilst Councillors could pay tribute they must not ignore the neglect of underfunding especially in carers receiving the minimum wage, their lack of terms and conditions he said if workers are key workers they need to be such and society who have limited knowledge needs to know exactly what they are doing.

Councillor Burton said that just today on NILGA training there had been a member of Mid and East Antrim who discussed what they had done in their role as dementia champion, she said the lady was passionate about a joint up approach. Councillor Burton said that often people cared for loved ones at home and how so many suffered from exhaustion as their loved one was unsettled at night and often did not know who their family members were. Councillor Burton concluded saying that before physically losing a person the carer had lost their loved one mentally and commended Councillor Kearney on bringing the motion forward.

Councillor S McGuigan concurred with Councillor Burton and shared that he had a number of relatives with dementia and cared for his mother and without the support of his wife would have found it impossible. He was emphatic that Council should support carers as dementia detaches the sufferer from their own relatives. He thanked Councillor Kearney in bringing the motion forward.

Councillor McKinney stated he was happy to support the motion and highlighted that all must be mindful of those working in the National Health Service together with the need to support people dealing with family members with dementia.

The Chair, Councillor Mallagahn called for a vote

The motion was carried unanimously.

Councillor Kearney thanked Members for their thoughtful comments and said that 22,000 sufferers from Northern Ireland in concerning.

C262/20 Notice of Motion

Councillor Mallaghan moved the motion as undernoted:

That this Council notes at Mid Ulster Council Meeting 30th June 2016 we unanimously endorsed a motion moved by Ronan McGinley which asked the Minister for Communities to give consideration to putting in place arrangements that would assist councillors who required extended periods of leave due to maternity, paternity or sickness.

The current arrangements put unnecessary pressure particularly on women and those who are vulnerable due to illness.

This Council resolves to write to the current Communities Minister, Nilga and the NAC to restart the conversation on this issue so that our citizens continue to receive full representation and ensure that the health and wellbeing of members is given due regard.

Councillor Mallaghan said that when the motion was discussed before the NI Assembly collapsed soon after and much time has passed and Council should re-engage the conversation as it was vital if a Member was ill or on maternity that their constituents still had representation.

The motion was seconded by Councillor N McAleer.

Councillor S McAleer fully supported the motion stating that the lack of provision for maternity cover is an unacceptable inequality in the 21st century, she said elected representatives should have paid sick also and said that the lack of maternity was a clear deterrent for women in an age when there is supposed to be gender equality.

Councillor Cuddy stated that it is an area that needed to be reviewed and spoke of Ministers returning to Stormont immediately after having a baby and that the UUP would support the motion.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan said that judging by the comments a vote would be unanimous.

The Chair declared the motion carried.

Councillor Quinn highlighted that Mr Patrick McGlinchey a well-known personality in Coalisland, who had served on the old Dungannon Council for 10 years had passed away and requested that the Chair forward a letter of condolence to the family.

Resolved That Chair forward a letter of sympathy to family of former councillor on legacy council in Dungannon Mr Patrick McGlinchey

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.

The live broad cast concluded at 9.43 pm

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Brown

Resolved That items C263/20 – C272/20 be taken as confidential business.

Matters for Decision

- (i) Audit Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 24 November 2020;
- (ii) Council confidential minutes of meeting held on 26 November 2020;
- (iii) Planning Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 1 December 2020
- (iv) Policy and Resources Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 3 December 2020
- (v) Environment Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 8 December 2020
- (vi) Development Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 10 December 2020
- (vii) Receive a verbal update from the Director of Finance on Legal Issues
- (viii) Document for Sealing: Contract Award between Mid Ulster District Council and FIBRUS NETWORKS (FFNI) LTD
- (ix) Document for Sealing: Deed of Indemnity In Relation To Design, Support and Hosting of E-Tourism Related Website Platform
- (x) Document for Sealing: “Deed of Surrender; Lease of December 2013 between Mid Ulster District Council (as successor to Magherafelt District Council) and the Representative Church Body of the Church of Ireland with respect to Maghera Walled Garden”

C273/20 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 10.15 pm

Chair _____

Date _____