

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 7 October 2021 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor McKinney, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Buchanan, Cuddy, Doris*, Elattar*, Forde, Gildernew*, Kearney, S McAleer*, S McGuigan, McLean, S McPeake, Molloy*, Quinn*

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Mrs Campbell**, Strategic Director of Environment
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance
Mrs Dyson**, Head of HR
Mr Hill**, Head of Parks
Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure
Ms Linney**, Assistant Director of Development
Ms Mezza**, Head of Marketing and Communications
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance
Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance
Miss Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Councillor McFlynn*** (7.09 pm)

* 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 McKinney welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor McKinney 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.

PR176/21 Apologies

Councillor Totten.

PR177/21 Declarations of Interest

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

Councillor Buchanan declared an interest in agenda item 4 – Community Development – Connecting Pomeroy as he sits on the Connecting Pomeroy Committee.

PR178/21 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor McKinney advised there was an item of Chair's Business which would be taken in confidential business.

Matters for Decision

PR179/21 Community Development – Connecting Pomeroy

The Assistant Director of Development presented previously circulated report which sought approval to accept additional funding from the Rural Development Programme to extend the previously approved project at the court yard parking and amenity area at Pomeroy Forest.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council –
- (I) To accept funding from the Rural Development Programme (£60,750), with match contribution (£20,250), and proceed with the court yard parking and amenity area at Pomeroy Forest.
 - (II) To approve awarding delegated powers to the Policy and Resources Committee to approve the award of IST contractor at November 2021 Committee.

PR180/21 DAERA: Environmental Challenge Fund 2021/22

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report which advised of successful application to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs: Environment Challenge Competition 2020/21 for the redevelopment of Ballyronan Wood and sought approval to secure match funding for the redevelopment of the Wood project.

Councillor Kearney stated that this is a very worthwhile project and that the possible future link with Traad Point will also be something to look forward to. The Councillor stated that he had visited Ballyronan a number of times during the summer and that he felt the facilities there are probably the most up to date in any Council area. Councillor Kearney proposed the recommendation.

Councillor Forde seconded Councillor Kearney's proposal and stated that she had also visited Ballyronan a number of times recently and that it is a great facility.

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to allocate match funding of £47,454 to the Ballyronan Wood redevelopment from Council's Capital Programme budget allocations as part of the Council's Outdoor Recreation Five Year Strategic Plan.

PR181/21 Iniscarn Forest, DAERA - TRPSI Application

The Head of Parks presented previously circulated report which provided update on the application to DAERA for Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) funding to assist with the development of Iniscarn Forest and sought approval for match funding allocation from Council's Outdoor Recreation capital budget.

Councillor S McPeake proposed the recommendation and stated that Iniscarn Forest had always been popular but that during the pandemic the popularity of the facility was causing issues with car parking and had outgrown any previous investment.

Councillor Cuddy stated it was good to see several projects coming forward tonight to which there is significant capital funding going into and that this is being triggered by over 50% of external funding. The Councillor thanked the teams for their work in this regard and stated that rate payers' monies were being maximised. Councillor Cuddy seconded Councillor S McPeake's proposal.

The Chair, Councillor McKinney stated this is a good project and that local residents will be glad to see a car park at this location coming to fruition.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to allocate match funding of £68,750 for the development of Iniscarn Forest subject to an agreed Letter of Offer from DEARA as part of the TRPSI funding allocation.

Councillor McFlynn joined the meeting at 7.09 pm.

PR182/21 Requests to Illuminate Council Property

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance presented previously circulated report which considered requests received to illuminate/light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness of and mark;

- World Diabetes Day: Sunday 14th November 2021
- World Pancreatic Cancer Awareness Day: Thursday 18th November 2021
- NSPCC Walk for Children Day: Tuesday 21st December 2021

The officer advised that since the report had been published a further request had been received from North West Migrants Forum to illuminate Council's designated properties to mark Black History Month on 30 and 31 October 2021.

Councillor Cuddy proposed that Council's designated properties be illuminated as per the report and additional request as detailed tonight. The Councillor referred to the lighting of Ranfurly House in Dungannon which is illuminated by only two lights and stated that he felt additional lighting at this location would be beneficial.

Councillor Ashton seconded Councillor Cuddy's proposal with the addition of including the NIO proposal to illuminate properties on 22 October 2021 as part of the Northern Ireland Centenary Programme detailed within the report.

The Chair, Councillor McKinney stated that officers would come back with costing for additional lighting at Ranfurly House.

Councillor Molloy proposed the three requests detailed on the report and the additional request outlined by the officer tonight in relation to Black History Month. Councillor Molloy stated that he felt Council had previously taken a decision in relation to lighting up Council properties to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland.

Councillor Quinn stated he supported the three requests listed in the report along with the additional request to mark Black History Month.

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance advised that the report included correspondence from NIO which gives notification of plans to light up buildings across the UK on 22nd October as part of the Northern Ireland Centenary Programme.

Councillor Cuddy proposed that Council's designated properties be illuminated to mark the three requests listed in the report along with the additional request to mark Black History Month and that properties also be illuminated on 22 October as part of the Northern Ireland Centenary Programme.

Councillor Ashton seconded Councillor Cuddy's proposal and stated that the NIO proposal is a UK wide initiative and it would be good for Mid Ulster to be represented.

Councillor Doris stated that as an Irish Republican she would be voting against Council properties being illuminated to celebrate something which deserves no celebration which was the partition of Ireland. Councillor Doris stated she would second Councillor Molloy's proposal as previous discussions and decisions had taken place regarding illuminating Council properties for the Northern Ireland Centenary.

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance stated that a decision was previously taken not to light up Council properties to mark the Northern Ireland Centenary at the start of May. The officer advised that the correspondence before Members tonight from the NIO is informative and it is up to Members how they wish to proceed.

Councillor Cuddy stated that everyone signed up to the Good Friday Agreement and that minorities should be respected and that the people of the Unionist community would like the opportunity to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance clarified that costings referred to earlier does not refer to the cost of lighting up of buildings but rather the cost of additional lighting at Ranfurly House.

Councillor McLean stated it was his understanding that the Centenary Committee of the NIO was set up by the Executive which is a joint working group across all parties and that he thought that as this information had come through the auspices of the Executive Office it would have been favourably considered. Councillor McLean asked Councillor Molloy and Doris to reflect on their proposal to exclude lighting up Council properties to

mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland. Councillor McLean stated he appreciated the political viewpoint of other Members but that history could not be changed.

Councillor Molloy stated that this matter was discussed previously in April/May with a decision taken at that time. Councillor Molloy stated that the lighting up of Council properties is for charitable organisations and that he was content to stand over and keep to that.

Councillor Cuddy stated that there were instances in the past in which Council properties were lit up for non charitable organisations and asked Members to respect what was signed up to in the Good Friday Agreement. The Councillor stated that moving forward is about respecting other traditions and to work in partnership and that the request to light up Council properties to mark the Centenary of Northern Ireland was not going to change the world. Councillor Cuddy stated that all residents in the District paid rates and own part of the Council properties and it was a pity a way forward could not be found.

Councillor Doris stated that no one is trying to stop Unionists from celebrating the Centenary of Northern Ireland and that she has a good working relationship with Unionist Councillors however she would understand how Unionists would not be comfortable with lighting up Council properties to mark events such as the 1916 Easter Rising and would therefore not try to impose that opinion. Councillor Doris stated she continued to second Councillor Molloy's proposal and requested a recorded vote.

Councillor Quinn proposed that a vote be taken on the first four requests and a separate vote be taken in relation to lighting up properties to mark Centenary of Northern Ireland.

Councillor Molloy stated that his proposal was to light up Council properties on the three occasions outlined in the report and including the additional requested outlined in relation to Black History Month and that this had been seconded by Councillor Doris. The Councillor stated that Councillor Cuddy's proposal was to illuminate Council properties for all five occasions and should be voted on first.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance advised that the original proposal was Councillor Cuddy's and this was to illuminate Council properties for all five occasions (three listed in report together with the additional request for Black History Month and to mark Centenary of Northern Ireland). Councillor Molloy and Councillor Doris then proposed and seconded an amendment which was to illuminate Council properties on four occasions (three listed in report and additional request for Black History Month). The officer advised that the amendment would be taken first -

Members voted on Councillor Molloy's proposal –

For – Doris, Gildernew, S McGuigan, S McPeake, Elattar, Kearney, Molloy, S McAleer, Quinn (9)

Against – Ashton, Buchanan, McKinney, Cuddy, Forde, McLean (6)

It was advised that the amendment had now become the substantive proposal and that Members were voting on whether they were for or against illuminating Council

properties on the four occasions (three listed in report and additional request for Black History Month).

For – Doris, Gildernew, S McGuigan, S McPeake, Elattar, Kearney, Molloy, S McAleer, Quinn (9)

Abstained – Ashton, Buchanan, Cuddy, Forde, McLean, McKinney (6)

It was advised that the substantive motion had been carried.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to light up designated Council properties as follows -

- (I) World Diabetes Day on Sunday 14th November – colour blue;
- (II) World Pancreatic Cancer Day on Thursday 18th November – colour purple;
- (III) NSPCC Walk for Children on 21st December – colour green
- (IV) Black History Month on 30th and 31st October – colours green and red

PR183/21 Corporate Good Relations Working Group Meeting Report

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance presented previously circulated report which provided details of the outworking's of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group that was held on 20th September 2021.

The Chair, Councillor McKinney stated he felt this was a paper exercise given what had just happened at tonight's meeting. Councillor McKinney highlighted that there was no one from the Unionist perspective in attendance at the working group and that he felt good relations within Council were nil.

Councillor Cuddy stated that there was no Unionist attendance at the working group because there was nothing there for Unionists.

Councillor Ashton stated that tonight was a demonstration of why there was no Unionist uptake at the working group and called into question the purpose of having the working group.

Councillor S McPeake stated it was disappointing that no Unionists attended the working group and that this said more about Unionism than anything else. The Councillor stated that the meeting was open to all Councillors and was an opportunity to bring grievances to the table and it was highly disrespectful to the outside facilitators who were there to facilitate the meeting that no Unionists attended.

Councillor Doris stated she felt the meeting was helpful and that it was disappointing that no Unionists were in attendance. The Councillor stated she hoped Unionists would consider attending future meetings as there was nothing to fear from talking to each other.

Councillor Cuddy stated it was good to hear Councillor Doris' comments but that from a Unionist point of view he felt there was nothing there. Councillor Cuddy stated that a sign of any party in control is how they treat the minorities around them and how well they work with them. Councillor Cuddy referred to the previous item of discussion and

how this would have been a simple, small gesture for the Unionist community. The Councillor stated that Unionist Councillors can go to meetings but that time and time again anything to do with the Unionist background is brushed under the carpet and that it gets to the stage that Unionist Councillors do not attend meetings because they aren't getting anything for the community they represent. Councillor Cuddy appealed to the majority on Council that it is how they treat the minority and that the minority feels it is not getting its fair share. The Councillor stated that Unionist Councillors needed to see more than words and that this can sometimes be hard but that is why there is frustration tonight and that this will continue until things change.

Councillor McLean stated that Councillor Cuddy had articulated the issue well and that as Chair of Council for this year he had played his part as a Unionist Councillor and had visited places and people which as a mature Unionist he believed it is his responsibility to do so. Councillor McLean stated he took exception to Councillor S McPeake's comments as they both would know each other better than some of the other Councillors having both sat on Magherafelt Council previously. Councillor McLean stated that he had attended meetings on many occasions in the past and that he felt they were just lip service to the Unionist Councillors. The Councillor stated he was for inclusiveness and discussing issues but that there was only a certain length of time this can be done and if such meetings are not profitable for Unionists then they would not be there. Councillor McLean stated that if the working group continues to meet and there is a genuine olive branch set before Unionist Councillors then he did not think there would be a problem in attending and being part of future discussions but that there needed to be something tangible and that at the moment it was not there. The Councillor stated he understood this may be difficult but that it was the reality.

Councillor Kearney stated he had attended the working group and could not remember the previous meeting of good relations. The Councillor stated that one of the things he took from the meeting was the huge role and responsibility on everyone to do their best. Councillor Kearney stated that there is an outside facilitator who is prepared to attend future meetings and again highlighted the responsibility of everyone to do their best and that he would continue to attend any future meetings.

The Chair, Councillor McKinney stated that for a meeting such as good relations to take place needs the opinions of both sides of the community and asked is the working group a tick box exercise for Council.

The Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance stated that the role of the working group is embedded within the equality scheme and that its purpose is to create an environment to discuss and work out sensitive issues and that the working group held in September was convened to discuss the review of Dual Language Signage. The officer advised that the working group is part of the governance of Council and that its representation is a matter for parties if they wish to attend as the Standing Orders do not extend to working groups and their makeup. The officer added that there will be a further meeting of the working group in November.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Councillor Kearney and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the report of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group meeting held on 20th September 2021 as set out at appendix one of report.

PR184/21 Member Services

No issues.

Matters for Information

PR185/21 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 9 September 2021

Members noted Policy and Resources Committee Minutes of Meeting held on 9 September 2021.

PR186/21 Non-Domestic Rating Revaluation 2023

The Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance presented previously circulated report which provided update in relation to the Department of Finance's (DoF) non-domestic Rating Revaluation 2023.

Members noted the content of the report.

PR187/21 Full Fibre Project Update

Members noted previously circulated report which provided update regarding implementation of Full Fibre Project.

The Chair, Councillor McKinney stated it was good to see the continuing roll out of this programme which will help to bring broadband to rural areas.

Live broadcast ended at 7.46 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy 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 Member consider items PR188/21 to PR198/21.

Matters for Decision

PR188/21 Davagh Forest Mountain Bike Trails – TRPSI Application
PR189/21 Cot Lane Footbridge

- PR190/21 DfC Revitalisation Scheme 2021/2022 – Coalisland Town Centre
- PR191/21 Chair's Business
- PR192/21 Review of Financial Statements 2020/21
- PR193/21 Staffing Matters for Decision

Matters for Information

- PR194/21 Confidential Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 9 September 2021
- PR195/21 Contracts and DAC
- PR196/21 Staff Matters for Information
- PR197/21 ICT Update October 2021
- PR198/21 Update on Senior Staff Structure

PR199/21 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.55 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.