

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 28 January 2021 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*, Oneill*, Quinn, Robinson*, Totten* and Wilson*

Officers in Attendance Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
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 Kennedy**, ICT Officer
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.

C001/21 Apologies

Councillor Mullen

C002/21 Declarations of Interest

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

C003/21 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan acknowledged the death toll due to COVID and extended sympathy to all who lost loved ones and reiterated the call for the public to

follow Public Health Agency Guidelines. He expressed appreciation to those Members who had chosen to work from home by connecting to the meeting virtually.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan further advised that he had visited Meadowbank Centre which was currently being used by combined GP practices for vaccine clinics. He advised that clinics were also operating from MUSA and Dungannon Leisure Centre and speaking to the doctors there was a shortage in supply of vaccine as they had hoped to vaccinate up to 1200 people per day but currently it was in the lower hundreds. He assured the meeting that health professionals were eager to do as much as they could to get the vaccine rolled out.

Councillor J Oneill commended amenity centre operatives at Coalisland who had went beyond the call of duty assisting the public when the bins had not been operational in recent weeks.

Councillor Doris spoke of recent announcements regarding payments to student nurses and health care workers. She spoke of first-hand experience of care workers who had cared for her granny who had been in hospital for 29 days during which time her family could not go to see her. Councillor Doris told of how they held the phone up to her to allow her to communicate with her family. She also took the opportunity to extend sympathy to those families whose loved ones hadn't made it and that care worker payment was but a small token. Councillor Doris stated that the Sinn Féin party would continue to work to ensure these payments to health care workers and student nurses were exempt from tax.

Councillor Wilson paid tribute to all NHS workers and care workers who work in the community and stated it was but a small token of appreciation but it was to be welcomed.

Councillor Wilson raised the issue of traffic wardens who were still working even though non-essential retail was closed. He said people in Cookstown would park in the town and do the 'town walk' and were coming back to find they had received parking tickets. He stated that during this time of pandemic he would propose that Council write to the Minister and request that within town centres parking time be extended to two hours and only tickets issued for unsafe parking.

In response the Chief Executive stated that the issue would have financial implications and may impact budgets and asked if the matter could be referred initially to committee for discussion.

Resolved That a report to Environment Committee with regard to impact of extending parking in town centre from one hour to two hours and consideration of tickets only issued for unsafe parking during pandemic.

Councillor Cuthbertson highlighted that during the recent cold spell paths in Dungannon Park had been frozen badly causing falls. He paid tribute to Council staff who addressed the issues and he acknowledged that during the lockdown the park was a life line for many and a walk the only opportunity to leave home. Councillor

Cuthbertson stated that Council needed to have a policy with regard to gritting all parks when necessary across Mid Ulster in particular those with a high footfall. He further advised that during the first lockdown Dungannon Park had implemented a one way system around the lake and that he had been lobbied earlier in the day for this to be reinstated and signage displayed highlighting this.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan said that he would anticipate a financial burden regarding the gritting and stated the matter should be referred to environment committee for consideration.

Councillor Cuthbertson asked if in the interim if there is bad weather that gritting is carried out.

The Chief Executive stated it was a valid issue and both the Director of Environment and Property and Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation were undertaking a piece of work in relation to Council owned walkways across the district noting that there were different surfaces and a maintenance schedule would be brought to committee in due course. He acknowledged that parks at present were very much a 'go to' place.

Councillor McNamee concurred with Councillor Cuthbertson and also acknowledged the various surfaces highlighting the walk at Lough Fea and stated as Council creates parks and walking spaces this needed to go hand in hand with a strategy to have them gritted when required.

Councillor Monteith stressed that any policy brought forward needed to include all Council parks and pathways as only gritting selected parks was not the type of service people expected from Council.

Councillor Quinn drew attention to Drum Manor Forest in Cookstown and acknowledged that although it was not Council owned he had visited it recently and the carpark had not been gritted in the ice and was in a disgraceful state. He proposed that Council write to the Forestry Service to request they grit the carpark in inclement weather.

Councillor Quinn also raised the matter of gritting at Kingsisland Primary School on the Annaghmore Road and highlighted the school was paying for this service and that it was pathetic that Department for Infrastructure (DfI) was not doing so. He proposed a meeting for Torrent DEA and DfI to discuss the matter as two buses had veered off the road in icy weather last year.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan referring to Councillor Quinn's comments regarding Drum Manor advised that the NI Forest Service had closed Drum Manor car park following complaints.

Councillor Kerr seconded the proposal for a meeting with DfI highlighting that he had been contacted about gritting of the pathway at Coalisland Canal and also roads and un-adopted housing estates which are not gritted and do not have grit boxes. He

spoke of one incident with Dfl when he had been advised that it was not their job to liaise with the public regarding grit piles. Councillor Kerr stated that Dfl could be more proactive in their approach.

Councillor Doris referred to earlier comments regarding the payment to nurses stating that it was but a drop in the ocean given that there was a misconception with regard to the pay-rise as due to back pay they had to pay back money as they had moved up a pay bracket.

Councillor McNamee referred to Councillor Quinn's comments with regard to Drum Manor and reflected there was many ways to enter the forest even if the car park was closed. He also referred to the £4 charges and proposed that a DEA meeting be organised with the Forestry Service to discuss the matters of both gritting and charges.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan seconded the proposal.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved That Council seek a meeting with Forestry Service to discuss issues regarding Drum Manor Forest Park, Cookstown

Councillor Burton highlighted the walk at Brantry Lough area and advised that the back path was completely flooded. She acknowledged that the area was well used, often by people on mobility scooters and asked if the flooding issue could be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated that an item should be included on the agenda for Environment Committee with regard to Council owned paths. He requested that any Members with issues regarding paths raise them at Environment Committee highlighting that all Councillors have the opportunity to attend they do not need to be assigned to the committee.

Resolved That an item be place on Environment Committee Agenda regarding issues with Council owned paths/walkways throughout the district.

Councillor Elattar raised the issue of cars parked at local forests and walks along small country roads. She referred to parking at Iniscarn Forest in particular and stated that perhaps via Policing and Community Safety Partnership a publicity Campaign be organised regarding safe parking.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan suggested that this perhaps could be organised via social media.

Resolved That Council undertake Publicity Campaign with regard to parking safely at access paths to local walking routes such as Iniscarn Forest.

Councillor Gildernew referred to earlier discussion with regard to paths at Brantry Lough and advised that work had commenced on this.

Councillor McLean requested that Council pass condolences to the McCartney family on the death of Sam McCartney who was a former Councillor in the legacy Council between the 1985 – 1993, 2005 – 2014. Councillor McLean advised he had been a good Christian man, with a good ethos, had been highly respected and a man of determination. Councillor McLean requested that a letter of condolence be forwarded to the family.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan agreed.

Resolved Council to send letter of Condolence to the McCartney family on the passing of former councillor Sam McCartney (served in former Cookstown District Council 1985-1993 & 2005-2014)

Councillor McLean requested that as had been done in previous years the Chair send a letter of congratulations to those named in the New Year's Honours list.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan agreed.

Resolved Chair to send letter of congratulations to residents named in 2021 New Year's Queen's Honours List

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Ashton declared an interest in the New Year's Honours.

Councillor N McAleer referred to the notice of motion passed at the November meeting of Council in relation to support for students and proposed that Council write to Minister Dodds to request that the Department makes a bid for additional funding to support students at this time.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan seconded the proposal.

Proposed by Councillor N McAleer
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved That Council to write to Minister for the Economy to request that a bid be made for additional funding to support students

In response to Councillor Monteith the Chair, Councillor Mallaghan confirmed that the NI Students Union were scheduled to make a presentation in March 2021.

Councillor Monteith drew attention to the report issued with regard to the horrors that took place in mother and baby homes both in the six counties and across Ireland. He spoke of the torture and punishment endured borne out of a perverse sense of

superiority. Councillor Monteith proposed to invite a local campaigner Fiona Boyle who was also a survivor of the homes. He advised that Ms Boyle worked in the community sector and was involved in the campaign seeking justice for her twin brother who had passed away in the home. Councillor Monteith stated it was important that Council hear of the experiences in order to learn how they can support these people involved in these horrors. He stated that the report did not just focus on the Magdalene laundries but also work houses and acknowledged he was aware of workhouses having been operational in Clogher, Dungannon, Cookstown and possibly South Derry. Councillor Monteith included in his proposal that Council request again that the South Tyrone Hospital Trust be asked to erect a memorial to acknowledge the unmarked graves of those who had perished at the workhouse site between 1850- 1940.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan highlighted the responses of the churches and the state which had been highlighted in the media in recent weeks which saw them whitewashing over the issues and passing the buck to society. He stated that they should take courage, accept and acknowledge the wrongdoing.

Councillor Kerr seconded Councillor Monteith's proposals.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That Council

- (i) write to Southern Health and Social Care Trust seeking a memorial for the unmarked graves of those who perished in the Workhouse on The site of the South Tyrone Hospital; and
- (ii) that Fionnuala Boyle asked to present to council in the context of Mother and Baby Home Inquiry.

Councillor D McPeake highlighted the deaths of two men in his community Harry Gribbin who had won an Ulster Minor medal in 1950 and later led Derry to its under 21 title in 1997. The second was Paul Devlin (Big Red) who had passed away at the age of 50 but had done great work in the community.

Matters for Decision

C004/21 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in Open Business at the Council Meeting held on Thursday 17 December 2020

Councillor Cuthbertson drew attention to *C249/20 Council minutes* and stated that to date no response had been received from the Department of Finance and asked that the two letters be circulated to members.

Councillor Kerr spoke of the lack of support being given to Lough Neagh Fishermen and highlighted their importance to the local economy.

Councillor Kerr also spoke of being lobbied by someone who required medical attention but as there was currently no National Health clinics had endeavoured to go private but still could not get an appointment. Councillor Kerr proposed that Council lobby the Health and Social Care Trusts (HSCTs) to request that all appointment clinics are up and running again.

Councillor Molloy following on from the comments requested that Council seek assurance from the Southern HSCT that both theatres at the South Tyrone Hospital site are being utilised at this time.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That Council to write to

- (i) Northern HSCT to lobby that appointments for all clinics be running again;
- (ii) Southern HSCT to lobby that appointments for all clinics be running again and seek assurance that operating theatres at South Tyrone Hospital are being fully utilised.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Doris and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 17 December 2020 (C2246/20 – C262/20 and C273/20) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C005/21 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Planning Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Monday 11 January 2021

Councillor Colvin said he had no issue with the minutes but advised that recently items discussed at planning in confidential business had appeared on social media and this should not be the case.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan acknowledged this.

Councillor McKinney requested that the matter be looked into as this had started to happen on a regular basis that confidential business from planning was appearing in the public domain and this needed to be investigated.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated that the matter be referred to Policy and Resources under Member Services and ways of eradicating such instances be explored.

Councillor Colvin concurred.

Resolved That a report to be brought to Policy & Resources under Members services regarding the processing and treatment of confidential business/papers.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Councillor Bell and

Resolved That the Minutes of Planning Committee held on Tuesday 11 January 2021 (P001/21 – P116P005/21 and P015/21) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, subject to the foregoing, were considered and adopted.

C006/21 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Environment Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 12 January 2021

Councillor Cuddy drew attention to *E018/21 Dual Language Signage* surveys and stated that English language was used universally. He stated if Council wants to promote a modern and diverse society that English as a common language, is understood by more people in the world and used by the European Parliament. He spoke of the 1995 legislation with regard to dual language street signage to protect all languages. Councillor Cuddy proposed that Council review the Dual Language Street Signage Policy and give English its place as it was the default language in a modern society.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated he was ‘drawing a line’ under the discussion as it was now a monthly session in both Environment Committee and Council and stated that once a decision was voted on democratically it remained for a six month period.

Councillor McNamee concurred with the Chair stating that the policy would be reviewed when due.

Councillor Cuthbertson seconded Councillor Cuddy’s proposal

Councillor Doris stated that the reason people speak English is because the English invaded all around the world and took over colonies and enforced the use of their own language.

Councillor Graham advised that she had indicated to speak to second Councillor Cuddy’s proposal. She stated that the aforementioned matter is brought up continually because they believed that English is the universal language and the

policy says a secondary language thus any other language on signage should be secondary to English.

Councillor Monteith stated that the point is loud and clear that the Irish language and its culture is not acceptable to some. He stated that more people in the world speak Mandarin than English. Councillor Monteith stated that Council had a policy and should stick to it and Members should refrain from grand standing.

Councillor Colvin referred to Councillor Monteith's remarks and stated that the Ulster Unionist Members were not against the Irish language nor the Irish culture and highlighted that it had been the Presbyterians who had preserved the Irish language for many years. He stated that they had concerns that English was being treated as a secondary language on signage.

Councillor Kerr stated that to speak of respect all should like many across Ulster respect the Irish language.

Proposed by Councillor B McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That the Minutes of Environment Committee held on Tuesday 12 January 2021 (E001/21 – E0020/21 and E031/15) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C007/21 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Policy and Resources Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday 13 January 2021

Councillor McKinney posed the question was the Chair, Councillor Mallaghan ignoring the previous proposal because it had come from a minority party.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated he was working within the standing orders.

Councillor Monteith drew attention to *PR006/21 Policy on Room Hire* and asked why if a document goes to committee and amendments are discussed it is not included in the final document for all Members to view. He sought clarity as to whether the comments recorded were incorporated in the final document that controversial applications be referred to the Party Leaders. He stated that Independents and Aontú were excluded from the party leaders' discussions, which was not within the governance structure of Council and did not have a decision-making role. Councillor Monteith proposed that the policy be referred back to committee.

In response, Councillor Ashton advised that the aforementioned comment had been made to ensure there was trust as the Chair of Committee was from a different political party each year thus more Members would be consulted.

Resolved That the final Room Hire Policy to be bought to Policy & Resources Committee for information

Proposed by Councillor Quinn
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That the minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Wednesday 13 January 2021 (PR001/21 – PR010/21 and PR024/21) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C008/21 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” Development Committee Minutes of Meeting held on Thursday 14 January 2021

Councillor Kerr requested that a letter of appreciation be sent to Mr Leo Quinn

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and

Resolved Chair to send letter commending Leo Quinn who done a sponsored ‘Walk not Talk’ and raised thousands of pounds for local charitable organisations

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Kerr

Resolved That the Minutes of Development Committee held on Thursday 14 January 2021 (D001/21 – D015/21 and D019/21) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C009/21 Conferences, Seminars and Training

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

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

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

The meeting adjourned for a short time due to technical issues

C010/21 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.

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor McNamee 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

C011/21 Community Development

The Head of Community Development drew Members attention to the previously circulated report and sought approval for the undernoted proposal.

Councillor Monteith in proposing the recommendation stated it had not been an easy task and the proposal was a reasonable reflection of discussion at the committee.

Councillor McNamee seconded the proposal and commended officers on the work undertaken.

Councillor Molloy concurred on the work completed to reach an equitable settlement stating that they should continue to signpost families to support.

Councillor Cuthbertson concurred also but expressed concern in relation to those who miss out on school meals or fuel poverty payments by a marginal amount and thus be continually overlooked. He referred to heating payments and some missing out by 50p per week and that perhaps if Council is allocated future funding families such as aforementioned could be identified and supported.

Councillor Cuthbertson also highlighted that some people were still not in receipt of their £200 fuel payment and proposed that Council write to Minister for Communities to seek clarification as to how many people in Mid Ulster District are still to be paid the £200 heating payment allocated prior to Christmas.

Proposed by Councillor Cuthbertson
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

Resolved That Council write to Minister for Communities to seek clarification as to how many people in Mid Ulster District are still to be paid the £200 heating payment allocated prior to Christmas

Councillor Kerr welcomed the report and concurred with previous comments.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Kerr declared an interest in Coalisland Foodbank.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That Approval granted to the Department for Communities - Emergency Support Funding to tackle fuel poverty as outlined in the report

Matters for Information

C012/21 Consultations Notified to Mid Ulster District Council

Members considered the previously circulated report.

Councillor S McPeake drew attention to Department for Infrastructure: Consultation on NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-27 and proposed that a Council departments progress a response.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved That Council submit a response to Department for Infrastructure: Consultation on NI Flood Risk Management Plan 2021-27, Collective Departmental Response to be compiled

Councillor Corry drew attention to Department of Health: Introduction of Statutory Soft Opt-Out System for Organ Donation and advised that one organ donor can save nine lives and it was most important that the Council make a response. Councillor Corry proposed that Council make a response.

Councillor McNamee drew attention to NIHE: Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan and proposed that a draft response be brought to the Environment Committee for approval.

Councillor Cuthbertson stated that Members were inundated with calls from Northern Ireland Housing Executive with complaints regarding damp and mould on walls due to faults in insulation.

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Cuthbertson and

Resolved That Council prepare a response to NIHE: Draft Cavity Wall Insulation Action Plan - Draft response to be brought to Environment Committee for approval

Councillor Monteith referred to Councillor Corry's proposal and seconded same.

In response, the Head of Democratic Services drew attention to the motion previously passed by Council in relation to Soft Opt-Out Organ Donation arrangements and if Council were minded, the response could be formed around points made during this discussion.

Proposed by Councillor Corry
Seconded by Councillor Monteith and

Resolved That Council submit a response to Department of Health: Introduction of Statutory Soft Opt-Out System for Organ Donation and based around the motion passed at Council 28 November 2019 (C240/19 minute refers)

Councillor Elattar drew attention to the Department of Health: Draft Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031 and proposed that Council submit a response. Councillor Elattar stated it was imperative that the response reflected the sharp rise in the need for support and advised that in speaking to local support networks they all are saying that support does not go far enough to address the issues for example deprivation, new benefit system. She further advised that a support group in Ballinascreen from 2016-2020 had 392 people seeking help and this is just one group of many in Mid Ulster and there was no funding from the Department of Health to support them. Councillor Elattar highlighted that throughout the pandemic people are being signposted to smaller groups for help and are not receiving a proper referral which is a major issue especially in rural areas. Councillor Elattar suggested that Council liaise with local groups to feed into Councils response.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan seconded the proposal.

Resolved That Council respond to the Department of Health: Draft Mental Health Strategy 2021-2031: Council to host workshop with elected representatives and community organisations dealing with mental health issues to draft response

Declaration of interest

Councillor Glasgow declared an interest in the Department of Health: Introduction of Statutory Soft Opt-Out System for Organ Donation as the company he is employed by moves organs for the Health Service

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Colvin declared an interest in the Southern Local Commissioning Group.

Councillor Colvin welcomed the response to the Department of Health: Introduction of Statutory Soft Opt-Out System for Organ Donation and stated the UUP supported this. Councillor Colvin spoke of the Council delegation meeting the Chief Medical

Officer early in 2020 at which time good plans had been laid down in relation to mental health but unfortunately COVID 19 had overtook but it was vitally important to get back on agenda.

Councillor Kerr concurred stating that post COVID the mental health crisis would deepen and supported the proposal for liaison with local organisations to prepare the response as they were daily dealing with the issues.

Councillor McLean concurred with Councillor Elattar's comments and subsequent proposal but asked if given the closing date there was sufficient time to have a workshop and collaborate a response.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan sought assurance from the Director of Public Health and Infrastructure who advised a virtual workshop could be organised and a draft response prepared for the Environment Committee in March.

Councillor Ashton concurred with previous speakers and the motion brought by former councillor Ronan McGinley which led to the meeting with the Chief Medical Officer. She stated however that another strategy did not instil confidence and proposed that Council seek a meeting with the Mental Health Champion

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan seconded the proposal

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved That Council seek a meeting with the Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland.

Councillor Monteith stated he shared Councillor Ashton's frustrations and said Council must take any opportunity it could as the mental health crisis is now going to be exacerbated with COVID and proposed that there should be training for Members in dealing with such issues highlighting that he was aware the Samaritans delivered excellent training.

Councillor Kerr seconded the proposal.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan welcomed the proposal for Member training as it was vital Members looked after their own wellbeing to be in a position to help others especially given the situation faced over the past year and human nature is to 'kick the politician'.

Proposed by Councillor Monteith
Seconded by Councillor Kerr and

Resolved That Council to organise mental health training for Elected Representatives

Councillor Colvin reiterated it was difficult to believe a year had passed since Council had met with the Chief Medical Officer and made the presentation on mental health crisis in the district and sought ways forward.

Councillor McKinney stated the issue was close to his heart and spoke of the struggle people have 24/7 trying to support people suffering from mental health issues. He welcomed the announcement from the Minister for Health and concurred that people do 'kick the politicians' and all were aware of people who had reached the end of the line and life's journey had come to an end. He stated that Council needed to do all it could as with COVID issues and constant changes people were under greater stress and Members may be the only link in the chain to wellness especially given the isolation many are enduring at this time.

C013/21 Correspondence

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

Councillor S McPeake drew attention to the response from the Department for the Economy regarding Project Stratum. He referred to a meeting of the Broadband Working Group and acknowledged the newly appointed Chair, Councillor Ashton. He highlighted that there was major issues with people accessing the hyperlink to know if their property is included, then one house could be included and a neighbour not. He reflected on the white and grey lists and highlighted that Council was going to have a mammoth amount of work in relation to the project, compiling the anomalies and responding to queries and that although he had not spoken to the head of service, Council would need to ensure there was adequate resources in place to cope with the workload and stressed the importance of this particular stage of the project and the planned meeting with the Department.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stressed the importance of encouraging people to come forward with the information.

Councillor Clarke highlighted that from his findings it was difficult to ascertain where the project begins and ends and he anticipated there could be gaps between current infrastructure providing fibre optic broadband and the project stratum. He seconded the proposal for a dedicated officer to cope with the impending workload. He reflected that Fibrus had commenced work in Coalisland on 17 November and were scheduled to complete in the spring but then there appeared to be no work programmed until works commenced in Maghera and Magherafelt in the Autumn. He stated that Cookstown only appeared on the scheme in 2022 -2023 with maybe one part of a road programmed for autumn 2022 and the rest of it autumn 2023. He stressed the need of an officer to be solely engaged in this work as it was a major opportunity to deliver across many statutory services.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Quinn declared an interest as his house was one of the properties not included in Project Stratum as it was built post 2018.

Councillor Quinn stated that as his house was not built until post 2018 it was not included for Project Stratum thus his neighbours would have fibre optic broadband and he would have to pay to have the infrastructure in place to his home. He stated this was an equality issue and spoke of students living in these areas who cannot access adequate broadband and it was imperative that Council was proactive at this stage to get properties left out included in the scheme. He stated his party was raising this at Stormont level for additional funding to be allocated.

Councillor S McAleer spoke of new build properties in her area which had fallen through the list and the issues needed to be addressed. She stated that Clogher Valley area would be very hard hit and it was a reality that some people did not have mains water supply and much work was needed to ensure this did not happen with broadband.

Councillor Kerr concurred with previous speakers and emphasised the importance of broadband especially with home schooling/home working and it was a fact that COVID situation would last for some time to come. He stressed the need to lobby to have the project widened to include missed properties and concurred with the proposal for adequate resources to be allocated to the project.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

Resolved That in relation to the Project Stratum consideration be given to allocating officer resource to deal with the extensive project issues such as boundaries of project; inequalities for those eliminated from inclusion due to houses/developments not being built until post 2018.

Councillor Molloy drew attention to correspondence received from Department for Infrastructure (DfI) dated 7 January and expressed disappointment that the draft Regional Strategic Transport Network Transport Plan would not be published until the end of the year. He stated he did not know if the glass for the Dungannon Bypass was half full or half empty and proposed Council must press on in its quest.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan seconded the proposal and included that Council should write to the Department of Finance and request that adequate funding be allocated to the progress of a Dungannon Bypass.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Chair, Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved Council write to Department of Finance to seek funding to progress Dungannon bypass.

C014/21 Notice of Motion

Councillor Cuddy speaking on the motion said that as a party the UUP foresees difficulties ahead especially with the amount of food processing in the area. He stated issues needed to be addressed and resolved as Brexit had brought difficulties. He stated that the United Kingdom had left the EU and moving forward people needed to make the most of the new rules presented. He reflected that it was new and daunting and many wondered would we get through. He stated that the barriers to trade should have been sorted long before as there has been at least 16 months lead in yet on 1 January it had become a massive issue. Councillor Cuddy continued that the Northern Ireland Executive needed to step up and the MPs want to press article 16 and stressed the importance of the need for high profile leaders to work together as the N Ireland protocol let the EU off the hook. Councillor Cuddy said he challenged the First Minister to get it sorted and more time was required to iron out the difficulties and stressed the importance of the matter to industry.

Councillor Cuddy moved the undernoted motion:

“This Council notes with concern the hugely detrimental impact that the trade border in the Irish Sea has had on supply chains between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; creating obstacles to trade where previously there were none; removing products from our supermarket shelves; putting extra pressure on struggling businesses and creating a trade imbalance between Northern Ireland and its biggest export market Great Britain; and notes with further concern that the free movement of pets between Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been restricted by the agreement reached between the EU and the UK Government. This council regrets that the UK Government’s proposals of 2 October 2019, which included a border in the Irish Sea and border inspection posts, have led us to where we are today. The current situation is totally unacceptable and this Council should be sending a clear message to the EU and the UK Government that derogations should be in place for a period of at least one year to protect Northern Ireland’s economy.

In view of the very serious impediments to the Northern Ireland economy being created by the Trade and Co-operation Agreement and the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland, this Council will write to the Secretary of State Brandon Lewis MP calling on him to recommend that the United Kingdom Government applies safeguard measures for a period of at least one year; and for the EU and UK Government to urgently engage to remove the barriers that are disrupting trade and could lead to further problems in the future.”

Councillor Glasgow seconding the motion stated

“Since the Northern Ireland Protocol has been implemented it has done nothing but bring bureaucracy, obstacles and disruption to the flow of produces from Great Britain to Northern Ireland. This protocol will always be remembered as the biggest betrayal to the people of Northern Ireland and one of the biggest barriers to unfettered access for products to Northern Ireland. In 2018 Boris Johnston

made the comment at the DUP Conference “No British Government could or should sign up to putting a border in the Irish Sea between mainland UK and Northern Ireland” was anyone surprised only a few months later he did do what he said he wouldn't. On the 10th December 2019 the co-chairs of the Withdrawal agreement joint committee reached the agreement in principle in what we are seeing today the Northern Ireland Protocol, it was clearly evident that the once influence in Westminster was let go and Boris Johnson was setting sail from Liverpool heading up the Irish Sea to Cairnryan to then heading back home leaving behind the Irish Sea border along with its disruption, obstacles and its bureaucracy. In Tuesday's News Letter Nisa had written to 100 small shops to inform them that they will be losing at least 400 items from their shelves due to the added bureaucracy between GB and NI and just this morning Sam McBride tweeted Sainsbury's has reduced its Honey selection from 30 to 4. Quotes have been thrown out into the public that the Protocol is the “best of both worlds” well to date I'm not seeing it when it comes to unfettered access from GB to NI. The most realistic, effective and quick action to be taken is the UK Government urgently engaging with the EU through the already set up committee that is supposed to be dealing with these issues as after all it is their responsibility to look at implementation issues raised by the UK Government. The Northern Ireland Ministers in the relevant departments must step up and be very clear to the Secretary of State and say listen this isn't working and it's about time the denial of the protocol by the Secretary of State ends and get with reality this is happening, it's not working so do your job.

This motion voices the concerns and experiences of traders, lorry drivers and farmers and referencing the ongoing issues with the protocol and the detrimental impact this is having on trade between GB and NI. These past few days have provided clear evidence that the situation is now beyond a dust pan a brush clean up it's at the point that Northern Ireland, Westminster and EU officials checked their job description and see their part in the formation and implementation of the Irish Sea Border. Evidence recently has been the movement of pets from GB to NI, the movement of eels from GB to and NI to GB and the movement of pedigree cattle and sheep from GB to NI. These are things that have and will continue to be obstacles and disruption to the unfettered access from GB to NI and we need to take action. I therefore second this proposal.”

Councillor McLean commenting on the motion said,

“The proposer of this motion had a choice their focus could be on the Northern Ireland Protocol, those who championed it, voted for it and demanded its “rigorous implementation”. Instead the real focus of the motion is on attacking our party something that the UUP has continually focused on this term trying to reflect away from their poor performance in recent elections. They never seem to learn, from the past that attacking their fellow unionist doesn't sit well within the unionist sector. The reference to proposals on the 2nd October 2019 is disingenuous and unfortunately demonstrates that petty politics is more important to some than the economic and constitutional future of Northern Ireland. Rather than allow my Party's position to be misrepresented by others,

let me quote from the statement released by the DUP on 2nd October 2019.

"The DUP has always indicated that the United Kingdom must leave the EU as one nation and in doing so that no barriers to trade are erected within the UK. "In December 2017 we insisted that democratic consent was required in circumstances where Northern Ireland would align alongside specific sectors of the EU Single Market. They (the proposals) ensure democratic consent to the specific alignment proposals before they enter into force and thereafter on an ongoing basis.

The DUP has consistently opposed the Northern Ireland Protocol indeed we warned both the current and previous Prime Minister against going down this path. DUP MPs voted against the Protocol in Parliament, contributing to its defeat, before the Prime Minister then called a General Election with the specific aim on getting his "oven ready deal" through Parliament. What the DUP was prepared to support were proposals that would have seen the Northern Ireland Assembly give specific consent to anything being introduced and that consent would have ensured both unionists and nationalists were content. Similar cross-community consent would have been required on an ongoing basis for those arrangements to continue. The European Union had already agreed to consent from the Northern Ireland Assembly being necessary. All that we were asking for was that paragraph 50 of the Joint Report between the UK and EU, published in December 2017 be implemented. None of that is present within the Northern Ireland Protocol which has been imposed upon Northern Ireland without the consent of either the Assembly or the Executive.

The focus of this motion should have been on those who describe significant economic damage as "teething problems" some of which are second-hand car dealers were hit with a 20% price increase because of VAT imposed on them (resolved only as a result of DUP action); businesses importing steel to Northern Ireland were faced with 25% tariffs (resolved only as a result of DUP action); one haulage company that sent 285 lorries to Great Britain reported that only 100 were able to return - with the others restricted due to problems with paperwork and red-tape; Marks & Spencer have removed product lines from their shelves due to the NI Protocol and legal disputes have arisen in relation to commercial contracts based mainly on who pays for additional costs caused by checks & delays resulting from the Protocol.

Future problems have also been identified at the end of the three month grace period including potential food shortages in our schools and hospitals and Amazon have already outlined a range of goods that will be withdrawn from sale to Northern Ireland at that point. The Northern Ireland Protocol is harming businesses and customers' right across Northern Ireland. We are focused on finding solutions and resolving the economic and constitutional damage created by this agreement between the UK and EU. It's a shame others can't join with us in that. "

Councillor McLean proposed the undernoted amendment:

“This Council notes with concern the hugely detrimental impact that the trade border in the Irish Sea has had on supply chains between Great Britain and Northern Ireland; creating obstacles to trade where previously there were none; removing products from our supermarket shelves; putting extra pressure on struggling businesses and creating a trade imbalance between Northern Ireland and its biggest export market Great Britain; and notes with further concern that the free movement of pets between Great Britain and Northern Ireland has been restricted by the agreement reached between the EU and the UK Government.

This Council resolves to write to the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland requesting the government take steps to comprehensively and permanently deal with the economic and societal problems caused by the Northern Ireland Protocol, including if necessary through the use of Article 16 of the Protocol.”

Councillor Ashton seconded the amendment saying that the aforementioned were major issues for businesses and consumers and this was not a time to play party politics but everyone needed to join together and find a way forward. In closing Councillor Ashton commended Council’s economic development team who would have a lot of work on their plate dealing with issues.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan asked Councillor Cuddy if he accepted the amendment.

Councillor Cuddy stated he did not accept the amendment. He stated that the Ulster Unionist Party promoted business and would propose the original motion.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan put the amendment to vote

For	9
Against	29

Councillor Molloy stated that Sinn Féin led by the Member of the European Parliament had worked to instil numerous mitigations to ensure there was no custom controls in relation to the six counties. He stated that the NI Assembly would have the vote on protocol but for four and half years some had procrastinated but now at the eleventh hour we are hearing all about business. Councillor Molloy said as an island Ireland could produce more than it needed to eat and times were becoming reminiscent of the famine when millions had to go hungry. He stated that many had championed Brexit as the chance of a lifetime but their silence was now deafening, yet at the time they had drawn many along by sweeping promises of the money all boosting the NHS and once they had got what they needed they showed their true loyalty. He stated that despite misgivings it would have been better to remain in the EU than be out of it.

Councillor Quinn advised that the SDLP would not vote for the motion stating that

“Brexit was always about creating trade borders. By nature Brexit creates obstacles to trade where previously there were none – this was the entire point of the Brexit project, one which was opposed by the majority of people in Northern Ireland, but supported and cheered on by the DUP, TUV and PBP. All the disruptions mentioned by the motion were created by Brexit. While we will certainly work to mitigate negative consequences, we must be clear that the origins of the problem are Brexit itself and those who were led blindly into it by Farage, Boris and the DUP. It was a project that our party and the majority of people in Northern Ireland opposed. The SDLP is the only party who registered to campaign against Brexit. It has created trade barriers, extra pressure and increased prices across the UK and further afield. That is the very unfortunate reality of the Brexit project and one that we now have to deal with today. Rather than calling for the premature and reckless removal of the Protocol that protects us from some of the worst consequences of Brexit, we should be calling for the Executive and the Department of Economy to proactively work with Invest NI and Intertrade Ireland to promote the benefits of the Protocol in terms of EU-UK market access for businesses choosing to locate in NI. Access to both the EU single market and the UK market afforded by the Protocol gives us an advantage – it is critical that the DUP Economy Minister is not too blinded by ideological opposition to the Protocol to maximise the benefits of our unique position. At the weekend it was reported that UK small businesses are being told by advisers working for the Department for International Trade that the best way to circumvent border issues and VAT problems is to register new firms within the EU single market. These businesses should be advised to set up in Northern Ireland. The Protocol, as has been said time and again, is not perfect but it is necessary to protect our economy and society here from the worst of Brexit. Fixes to specific problems should be worked on collectively by parties here, and they should collectively push the UK Government and EU where necessary. Issues like pet passports are a direct consequence of Brexit. The UK Government could have negotiated with the EU. It chose not to, it made a decision that pet passports should be necessary for pets crossing the Irish Sea or the English Channel. It is an unfortunate consequence. However, the choice of the UK Government to pursue the hardest possible Brexit has produced results that cause significant disruption to the lives of people across NI and the UK. Much has been made about the detrimental impact of new checks at the Irish Sea on garden and horticulture businesses here. There are understandably concerns about barriers to importing plants that contain British soil. Again, this is a direct result of the UK’s decision to diverge from EU rules on plant and animal health. The island of Ireland has long been a single zone for plant and animal health. Based on the simple facts of agriculture and ecology that exist on an island it has to continue to be a single zone.

The loss of EU funds - not being matched by the UK government - is seriously concerning for people and businesses here. Brexit itself -not the Protocol- is the source of disruption and harm. Despite the earlier promises from the UK Government, in 2021/22 the UK Shared Prosperity Fund will not be equivalent in value to EU structural funds. There is anticipated shortfall of around £69m

across the Executive. £45m of this shortfall is understood to sit with the Department for the Economy. We do not know what specific programmes will be impacted or stopped due to the lack of funds. Minister Dodds' performance has been poor on both the COVID and Brexit crises. The DUP Economy Minister needs to take some responsibility for this shortfall, push the UK Government to match funds and provide clarity for people and businesses here on what the practical implications of any loss will be. Going forward, Department of Economy initiatives are critical to both the COVID recovery for example the anticipated voucher scheme worth £92 million and promoting the benefits of the Protocol in terms of EU-UK market access for businesses choosing to locate in NI. The loss of such a large amount of funding in this Department will have significant consequences for business survival, our COVID recovery and the wider economy. The discontinuation of EU structural funding will have considerable impact on both European Regional Development Fund and European Social Fund projects involving district councils. If a UK Shared Prosperity Fund was properly resourced and allowed for strategies to be determined at both the NI and sub-regional level it could create positive and regionally balanced outcomes for local government. But it will certainly not be positive if it is administered from Westminster with reduced funds for NI."

Councillor Cuthbertson said like 17.5 million others he voted for Brexit not the protocol. He said while the DUP Ministers are working hard that article 16 is triggered Sinn Féin, the Alliance and the Green party signed a joint letter for full implementation of the protocol and then they say they are friends of industry. He stated that the DUP are seeking to make a difference and it will be clear to the people of Mid Ulster who is harming their businesses.

Councillor Colvin said he thought he had fell into a time warp listening to the old arguments that the DUP had lost the opportunity and that there is a time to be supportive and clever but they are trying to catch up. He said the UUP were their favourite target and that he believed Brexit would work as Britain is the fifth largest economy in the world. He said people would be better off living in Northern Ireland than the south and noted that it was England that was supplying the money. He said he would support his colleague.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan said he would go back to the 5 December 2017 when Tony Connolly from RTE tweeted comments about the Irish backstop. He said the Prime Minister then Theresa May was at lunch to sign off on this which if agreed would have made the north a power house. The DUP leader interrupted the meeting and halted it. He said it marked the beginning of the end of the union, the Tories would stop sending money to the north and there will be an exit out of Ireland. He said unionist parties repeatedly trust the Tories and it always end in tears.

Councillor Cuddy said the motion was on day-to-day issues everyone was looking at different angles and the UUP were asking was to try and talk to the UK government. He said at the end of the day everyone was stuck with each other and had to make the best of it. Councillor Cuddy said they needed to get the best deal for all the citizens of Mid Ulster as looking to the future the area would not get £10 million and

Dublin would not be paying. He stated that all the UUP was asking was to go to the Minister and ask rather than waiting until the next accident happens then do something. He concluded that Dungannon was the engine room of Northern Ireland and all they were asking for was a bit of slack to deal with issues that Brexit was done and everyone had to deal with the here and now.

The Chair Councillor Mallaghan put the motion to the vote

For	6
Against	23
Abstained	9

Councillor Cuddy stated it had been a good debate and it was important to talk.

Councillor Ashton left the meeting 9.12 pm

C015/21 Notice of Motion

Cllr S McAleer moved the motion undernoted:

“This Council recognises that hospice care is a vitally important part of our care system; considers it necessary that people approaching the end of life, their families and carers get the right care and support where and when they need it; notes that hospice staff deserve recognition for the world-class medical care and emotional support they provide not just to patients but also to their families; and looks forward to the hospice movement going from strength to strength in years to come

Accordingly, this council agrees to write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, calling upon him to ensure fair and transparent funding in line with demand, and continued high quality palliative and end-of-life care.”

Councillor S McAleer moved the motion stating:

“If the subject palliative or end-of-life care hasn’t already touched you, it is almost guaranteed that it will one day and in a profound way. It is probably only when one goes through that process personally that they then fully understand just how wide and deep provision is in the hospice movement. In Northern Ireland we have four Hospices, Marie Curie Hospice: Southern Area Hospice Services, Foyle Hospice and the Northern Ireland Hospice, Adult & Children’s: Hospices are not add-ons; they provide core services. They provide structured outpatient day services, holistic respite care for people living with any terminal illness including all Cancers, COPD, Motor Neurone Disease, Multiple Sclerosis, and Dementia amongst other illnesses meeting individual patient needs and providing holistic family support.

Children's hospice provides palliative care to children with life-limiting conditions including conditions such as neurological and genetic disorders and life-threatening conditions such as cancer type diagnosis.

We are so lucky to have hospices that provide high-quality, innovative, world-class care. They also play a significant advisory role for other health professionals on palliative care and provide bereavement care for those who have been left behind and need help to see a way forward. The demands on hospices are increasing all the time as people are living longer. Since April last year, Northern Ireland Hospice alone has seen a 20% increase in referrals from Health and Social Care and Primary Care for community specialist services and in-patient unit, which in real terms is approximately 800 additional new patients and their families.

The hospice service is growing, but the percentage of annual expenditure funded from Government sources is falling. Funding for these vital services is in no way keeping pace with increasing demand. The present funding methodology is flawed and devoid of evidence base or up-to-date benchmarks. We need to find urgent sustainable solutions. Without urgent support, the additional cost of appropriately supported palliative care can only be found by either increasing the call on already hard-pressed communities to give more support to their hospices, and/or by hospices reducing the services they provide. Hospices have faced unprecedented financial challenges while caring for greater numbers of people than ever before and waiting lists and bed closures are simply not acceptable, especially at the end of life.

This week the Health Minister Robin Swann announced additional COVID funding of £1.65m for our hospices. This funding will be very welcome. As Covid has impacted on every facet of our hospices, not least of all fundraising capacity. The funding will help hospices to survive this difficult time during the Pandemic but it doesn't resolve the gap between present funding and the cost of care which is growing year on year. Hospices need more long term recurrent funding. Years of chronic underfunding must end. What our Hospices need is a fair funding system based on patient need. Demand for our Hospices is rising at a surprising and steady rate but annual expenditure from Government sources is falling.

We must never forget that hospices are lifting the burden from the NHS, which is why core funding is so important. If independent hospice services ceased to exist, the NHS would have no option but to pick up the slack. The Executive should be acutely aware of that fact and address the funding shortfall while there is still time.

We must ensure that future funding arrangements are flexible enough to enable hospices to continue to provide high-quality sustainable services, whether in a hospice building or in the patient's home to ensure services are not reduced. Hospices are not asking the Government to meet all their costs, but just to give fair payment for services that the NHS would otherwise have to provide.

Members, I urge you to support the motion so that we can ensure that the most vulnerable in our society get the help and support that they need.”

Councillor Ashton returned to the meeting at 9.17pm

Councillor Kearney seconding the motion stated that care either in the home or wherever played a vital part of the care system. He stated that it delivered world class care to patient and families bringing end of life as pain free and dignified as possible. He reflected that COVID has brought great uncertainty to many households which has led to operating on a much reduced budget which left little to donate in turn leading to the most vulnerable people missing out on vital care. He spoke of the high quality care hospice services provided and stressed the need for them to have freedom in planning for the future.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated that hospices are a vital sector of the health care system caring for people at their weakest.

Councillor Wilson stated he was happy to support the motion commenting that £1.65 million was a small recognition for what hospice staff and volunteers were providing. He proposed that Council also write to the Minister for Health to make a bid for available funding at Stormont to support the Hospice sector.

Councillor S McAleer stated she was happy to accept the proposal.

Councillor Doris stated that she was happy to support the motion and highlighted the support hospice staff provide and highlighted that no price could be put on the compassion they bring. She too supported Councillor Wilson’s proposal.

Declaration of Interest

Councillor Cuddy declared an interest as he had a family member working for the Southern Hospice.

Councillor Cuddy said that he supported the motion and spoke of the recent death of his mother and the circumstances at present which only allows one person to be with a loved one when they die. He advised that hospices have to generate much of their own funding and that it was a good motion and Councillor Wilson was right a bid should be made for additional funding.

Councillor Monteith concurred with previous speakers and said he too would support the motion. He commended Councillor S McAleer on the palliative care work that she carries out and how the community is extremely appreciative of the services given. He spoke of how the local community rallied around during the pandemic to ensure they had adequate PPE and stated the local community holds palliative care and the hospice close to its heart. He said everyone had experienced its need and Council should do all it could to support. He also spoke of the tree in the Council grounds which was lit up at Christmas time to support hospice services.

Councillor Ashton said the DUP would support the motion and commends the great work of the hospice and welcomed Councillor Wilson's proposal. She stated however that a move was needed that services did not need to bid for money and the NI Executive needed to get around the table and agree funding for hospices as they should not have to rely on the community. She reiterated bids should not have to be made for funding it should be streamline funded.

Councillor Kerr concurred with the motion and the praise to Councillor S McAleer and spoke of the importance of the service which had been overwhelmed due to the pandemic.

Councillor Colvin reflected that Councillor Ashton has championed the fact this idea of the assembly paying for services which at present rely on community donations. He spoke of many organisations relying on community funding such as Marie Curie, Hospices and that money should not be handed back to the treasury but should be spent on funding such services which currently depend on voluntary workers and have to source their own funding.

Councillor Cuthbertson commended Councillor S McAleer and whilst he welcomed the £1.65 million allocated to hospices for COVID he was shocked that the Minister ad discovered £90m not spent in the budget.

Councillor S McAleer thanked everyone for their support of the motion.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated that the motion as undernoted was carried.

This Council recognises that hospice care is a vitally important part of our care system; considers it necessary that people approaching the end of life, their families and carers get the right care and support where and when they need it; notes that hospice staff deserve recognition for the world-class medical care and emotional support they provide not just to patients but also to their families; and looks forward to the hospice movement going from strength to strength in years to come

Accordingly, this council agrees to write to the Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, calling upon him to ensure fair and transparent funding in line with demand, and continued high quality palliative and end-of-life care.

Council also to request that the Minister for Health bids for additional funding.

C016/21 Notice of Motion

Councillor Quinn speaking on the motion said,

"I done a play last year, in which to save an argument between a priest and a drunk my character exclaimed that Poverty is a worldwide problem, even the richest country in the world have people living in abject poverty. That play was

comedy, sadly poverty in our own country is anything but. Council this motion tonight is something I know we are passionate about. There is not a Councillor in this Council, nor a Council staff member that has been untouched by the realities of poverty in our communities. Last Thursday I was representing SVP Clonoe at a meeting along with other members from Foodbanks and SVP conferences right across Mid-Ulster. Each one telling the same story, about those desperately in need, not just for food, but for heat, for fuel. I want to take a minute to pay tribute to all those in Mid-Ulster, such as SVdP in Clonoe/Coalisland, the Coalisland Foodbank, , as well as many other community groups, GAA clubs and services, who have done their utmost since the outbreak of coronavirus to help those in need. I'm sure council will agree they have shown the best of us during extremely hard times.

It goes without saying that this last year has been extremely difficult. The outbreak of the pandemic has firmly stacked the deck against families who were already on the verges of mounting financial pressures. Covid-19, along with archaic welfare reforms introduced in 2016 such as the two-child tax rule and the benefit cap, have sadly pushed many families over the financial cliff edge leaving many children living in poverty. The Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 shows that 122,000 children in the North live in relative poverty (that's 24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty, it also indicated that 81,000 children living in relative poverty live in a household with at least one adult in employment. That is nearly 2/3 of all children living in poverty:

I have quoted Dr Julie-Ann Maney before in this chamber, but her words still haunt me, she said that Poverty effects children from the moment on conception. It effects their development in the womb, it effects their care when they are born, the food they will eat, which has knock on effects on their development in early years (as a new father I know how important that period is), it then spirals, as poverty not only has a detrimental effect on children's educational and health outcomes, the experience itself is traumatic: studies suggest the mental strain of stigma, shame and stress associated with poverty and social exclusion can have a neurological impact on a child. But Council, poverty is not inevitable nor is it inescapable; through delivering person-centred legislation, removing barriers to accessing welfare, ending the structural problems of Universal Credit and introducing affordable childcare we have the potential to create a space where families become less and less likely to fall into poverty.

You will have all been familiar with recent photographs on social media of families in England receiving inadequate - and quite frankly shameful - food packages as a replacement for free school meals. These photos included pictures of peppers cut in half, a few spoonful's of tuna heaped into used coin bags, and one or two rounds of dry bread. It was like something from another century. But here we chose a better way. We chose to put money straight in to the bank accounts of families eligible for free school meals. We trusted families to budget. We give them choice. And ultimately left their dignity intact. To me this says that we in Northern Ireland are a compassionate people, who want to do well by the least well off in our society.

Council that is why we must act where and when we can. A child poverty taskforce, though not a panacea, has the potential to put us on the right footing. Any strategy must include social security and labour market policies, things like maintaining the £20 Universal Credit uplift, like SDLP MPs voted to do, we need primary legislation for the next package of welfare mitigations when it comes to bedroom tax, two-child rule and benefit cap. We need to be looking at increasing overall wages, increasing number of hours parents can work, availability of affordable childcare etc.

Far be it from me to quote Manchester United player but Mr Marcus Rashford said - *"This is not about politics; this is about humanity. Looking at ourselves in the mirror and feeling like we did everything we could to protect those who can't, for whatever reason or circumstance, protect themselves. Political affiliations aside, can we not all agree that no child should be going to bed hungry?"*

Councillor M Quinn moved the motion having agreed to a modification received.

This Council acknowledges the response by the Minister and the department to the COVID crisis. Notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which show that 122,000 children in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children.

This Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force as part of her anti-poverty strategy, as set out in New Decade New Approach.

Councillor McFlynn seconded the motion stating that all were aware of the cruelty of poverty across the world and the food banks which had experienced massive increase in use. She stated that it was a shame when we enjoy success in many ways that children are going hungry and this fact needs to be eradicated.

Councillor Monteith stated he was content with the motion and had no difficulty raising the plight of people living in poverty. He spoke of a recent report that highlighted that due to the pandemic it would take the 1000 richest billionaires 9 months to recover whilst it would take the worst off ten years. He stated that some promote the phrase 'we are all in this together' he stressed this was not the case, if you are poor and experiencing poverty you will incur ill health earlier. He said that an economic system where people run out of necessities is wrong, that what was needed was proper work, proper pay and benefits and stressed that people should not be forced into poverty because they are sick. He emphasised the need for affordable housing stating that no one should have to make a decision to pay rent,

eat or have heat, the need for a health service that works on the ground not one where you have to wait 3-5 years for an appointment. He further spoke of student poverty, the need for a welfare system that supports the vulnerable and how universal credit had been fashioned in London and enforced through Stormont. He said he supported the motion but also proposed that it include that Council convene a local Anti-Poverty working group to address issues and look for a strategic line. He said fuel stamps were but a sticking plaster over a gaping wound and stated that an antipoverty task force across the district was required.

Councillor Quinn agreed to the addition that Council lead a local Anti-Poverty Working Group.

Councillor Kerr concurred with Councillor Monteith and commended Councillor Quinn on the motion. He spoke of the foodbank in Coalisland and the regular users who were simply trying to feed their children. He stated that capitalism is repugnant and ugly and it was not for the many but for few, meaning the rich get richer and the poor get poorer. Councillor Kerr stated Council should do all it could to combat poverty and enhance the lives of working class people. He seconded Councillor Monteith's proposal for a local Anti-Poverty Working Group.

Councillor Colvin stated it was a worthwhile motion with a proposed way forward. He said he was not happy with the comments about the rich as the rich was needed to distribute wealth or the country would be like Venezuela.

Councillor Ashton stated the DUP would support the motion as poverty was an issue that impacts all communities. She stated she saw no benefit in the amendment but they would support.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan stated that they were extremely concerned about poverty and the pandemic was not the cause of it. He stated the Department for Communities (DfC) Minister 'New Decade New Approach' aimed to identify issues and barriers to people and many organisations such as trade unions had fed into it. He spoke of the support received from DfC highlighting the example of the food box scheme and stressed the commitment for systematic change.

Councillor Quinn thanked Members for their support, he spoke of the forthcoming Anti-Poverty Strategy and how it had come to his attention that in his community a person who had died from COVID had prior to his illness visited an individual and brought groceries up to three times a week but this had been unknown. He said eventually it had been brought to the attention of local organisations and the need had been addressed but highlighted that it was depressing such situations existed and as a Council everyone must do their best to eliminate poverty in Mid Ulster.

The Chair, Councillor Mallaghan declared the motion as undernoted carried.

- (i) This Council acknowledges the response by the Minister and the department to the COVID crisis. Notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which show that 122,000 children in Northern

Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children. This Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force as part of her anti-poverty strategy, as set out in New Decade New Approach.

- (ii) Council lead a local Anti-Poverty Working Group

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 9.52 pm

Proposed by Councillor Kerr
Seconded by Councillor Colvin and

Resolved That items C017/21 to C021/21 be taken as confidential business.

Matters for Decision

- (i) Council Confidential minutes of meeting held on 17 December 2020
- (ii) Planning Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 11 January 2021
- (iii) Environment Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 12 January 2021
- (iv) Policy and Resources Confidential minutes of meeting held on 13 January 2021
- (v) Development Committee confidential minutes of meeting held on 14 January 2021

C022/21 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 10.11 pm

Chair _____

Date _____