

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 24 March 2022 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means

Chair	Councillor McLean
Members Present	Councillors Black, Brown, Buchanan, Burton, Clarke*, Colvin, Corry*, Cuddy, Cuthbertson, Elattar*, Forde*, Gildernew*, Glasgow, Graham, Martin*, Kearney*, Mallaghan, N McAleer*, S McAleer*, McFlynn*, B McGuigan*, S McGuigan*, McKinney, McNamee*, D McPeake*, S McPeake*, Milne*, Molloy*, Mullen*, Oneill*, Quinn*, Robinson*, Totten* and Wilson
Officers in Attendance	Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive Ms Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development Strategy & Performance (SD:ODSP)** Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure (DPHI)** Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance (AD:ODSP) Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service & Finance (SD:CSF) Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer Mrs Mezza, Head of Communications**
Others in Attendance	Agenda Item 5 – Deputation: NI Water Dr Stephen Blockwell – Head of Investment Management Grahame Millar – Head of Living with Water Programme Valerie Crozier – Stakeholder Manager Marie McCartney – Senior Strategic Planner

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

The Chair, Councillor McLean 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.

C044/22 Notice of Recording

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

C045/22 Apologies

Councillors Ashton and Doris

C046/22 Declarations of Interest

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

C047/22 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor McLean drew attention to the a new tourism campaign promoting Mid Ulster to potential visitors from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland markets launched to showcase the unique offering of open spaces and outdoor recreation, positioning Mid Ulster as the ideal choice as a short break destination this spring. He further advised that the 'Unwinding Time' campaign aimed at supporting the recovery of the district's tourism industry in the wake of the pandemic, as well as reinforcing the wider message that the area's tourism and hospitality sector is good to go. The Chair drew attention to the visit of Department for Communities Minister Deirdre Hargey to Coalisland to mark the completion of the Public Realm Scheme which had seen £4.27m transform the town. He also advised that the Minister had also announced a further investment of £274,000 by her Department to deliver a revitalisation scheme in the town, funding that will make a huge difference to the town.

The Chair, Councillor McLean advised that he had hosted a small reception to recognise staff across the district and emphasised that Council needed to develop, award and acknowledge those who put effort, talent and ability to deliver better service to the community. He concluded that staff and people are the greatest assets the district boasts.

The Chair, Councillor McLean stated he had been honoured to welcome Royal Highnesses, The Prince of Wales and The Duchess of Cornwall to Cookstown on Tuesday as part of their two-day visit to Northern Ireland. He said the visit had been more special as it was during Her Majesty the Queen's Platinum Jubilee year. He said the town was alive with visitors and shoppers, as a thriving local town centre should be. The Chair advised that there had been a great crowd which gathered to wish them well and everyone, in particular the hundreds of school children who were there, had been delighted to have the opportunity to see The Prince and The Duchess. He concluded that Cookstown just like the town's slogan had looked great!

The Chair, Councillor McLean also advised that he had met with Minister Poots from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs who had provided funding for a project at the recycling centre in Magherafelt.

Councillor Cuthbertson said that sadly the war in Ukraine had been going on over one month and he commended the outstanding efforts of the local community in collecting and forwarding aid. He advised that he had been approached by a local

church offering their premises for use as a 'welcome centre' in the Dungannon area. Councillor Cuthbertson said it was the understanding that 'welcome centres' would be established across Northern Ireland and sought an update on progress on Council's response to the ongoing situation.

In response the Chief Executive advised that he would arrange for an update to be forwarded to Members regarding Council's response to the crisis. He also advised that the Communities team were working with the Department for Communities who had spoken of various welcome centres but was currently focusing on a substantial centre in Belfast. It was also noted that Barnardo's had been commissioned to take a key role in co-ordinating the response and they were working closely with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. The Chief Executive concluded that Council's ongoing response was where it needed to be.

Councillor Buchanan congratulated the Chair, Chief Executive and officers who had coordinated the visit of HRH Prince of Wales and Duchess of Cornwall. He said the visit had proved to be a great boost for the town and Mid Ulster and that Superstars Cookstown had put on a great show for the guests.

C048/22 Deputation: NI Water

The Chair, Councillor McLean welcomed representatives from NI Water to the meeting. Dr Blockwell delivered presentation on the overview of planned infrastructure investment during price control 21 for Mid Ulster Council area.

The Chair, Councillor McLean thanked the delegation for the presentation stating that what had been delivered is no surprise but based on Mid Ulster there is still a significant gap between what is in existence and what is needed. He said the district continued to grow faster than NI average and housing needs grew with that and there is housing developments being stalled due to lack of infrastructure. He asked where did NI Water see the district going in short term how would it move from the immediate impasse?

Mr Blockwell stated that NI Water encourage property developers to make contact with them early in the planning stage in order that impact assessments can be carried out and that other options can be explored. He stated that NI Water encourages developers to build over wider areas and over the past 18 months bespoke solutions had been identified for some sites. Mr Blockwell also advised that with permission developers can install waste water works and concluded by saying that NI Water have strategic plans but repeatedly receive under investment and the current situation is the result of this.

Councillor Cuthbertson thanked the delegation for the presentation and placed on record thanks to all the staff on the 'Elected Member Helpline' and spoke of the efficiency demonstrated by Kyle and Sinead. He welcomed plans for Dungannon area and said that investment plans for Dungannon had been talked about for a number of years but never seem to climb the list. He sought clarity as to where Dungannon would be on the priority list if the funding was available.

In response Mr Blockwell said that NI Water hope to receive a three year budget but without confirmation he could not give a cast iron guarantee but the area is one of NI Water's biggest investment areas which they wished to progress but could not do so without funds. He concluded that if NI Water receive funding it would be done.

Councillor Elattar thanked Mr Blockwell for the presentation and spoke of a local issue regarding an upgrade to water main in Draperstown. She advised work was supposed to commence in March 2020 and this was postponed and in February 2021 she had been told the work had been scheduled but had been removed. She concluded that the works had been considered essential yet two years on had not been completed and were not on plan.

In response Mr Blockwell said he would seek clarification on aforementioned and follow up with the Member.

Councillor B McGuigan thanked Mr Blockwell for the presentation and drew attention to comments regarding the hydrogen energy market and asked was there currently any projects on the ground and was there any customers requesting it using the example of Translink.

In response Mr Blockwell said they were staging a pilot which was in its early days and indicated that NI Water were leading the way in what would become a bigger picture. He said it was part of the road map which was being investigated and explored and whilst a great opportunity it is small in scale at present.

Councillor B McGuigan indicated that within Mid Ulster Lough Neagh would surely be an ideal site.

Mr Blockwell advised that currently the concentration was on waste water and quite a number of factors had to happen first. He said there would have to be a broad network in place and the project would be focused over three or four decades.

Councillor Molloy said that the Hill of The O'Neill was a strategic site in Dungannon for which Council had major plans. He said there was old reservoir tanks on site which were unused and also a communications mast which was an eyesore which with modern technology should be able to be relocated. He asked that Council and NI Water re-engage regarding the site.

Mr Blockwell stated he was not familiar with the site but would investigate same.

Resolved That a Dungannon DEA meeting to be called with NI Water to discuss the long term future use of the reservoirs adjacent to the Hill of the O'Neill, Dungannon

Councillor Clarke thanked NI Water for the presentation and spoke of lack of investment in smaller settlements in Magherafelt, asked how Members could explain to constituents that although works on water mains was taking place they could still not approve development which would provide accommodation for local people.

In response Mr Blockwell said that there was a number of areas for example the Loup shown on the presentation for which investment had been mentioned but indicated that although works was being carried out to bring infrastructure up to acceptable standard it was not upgrading nor increasing capacity.

The Chair, Councillor McLean indicated that Councillor Clarke should speak directly to NI Water regarding local issues.

Councillor Wilson thanked NI Water for the presentation and reiterated comments regarding those working on the Elected Member Hotline. He advised that earlier in the day he had met with a group of potential buyers for properties in a development in Cookstown. He said that people had paid deposits on homes almost a year ago but the development of the new homes could not progress due to water issues.

Mr Blockwell said that NI Water had engaged with the developer who had been advised he would have to have a pumping station to the nearest water course. He stated that NI Water were awaiting detail of the design which then has to be adopted. He concluded that NI Water had been awaiting the information for several months.

The Chair, Councillor McLean suggested that perhaps a meeting should be arranged to discuss.

Councillor Wilson advised a meeting had just taken place and stated an update was being sought from NI Water.

Councillor McKinney thanked NI Water for the presentation and said as a Member of the Planning Committee issues such as aforementioned were highlighted regularly. He said that NI Water needed to come back with a stiff answer in that if it is not suitable state that. He said that often drinking water was not the problem but waste water was and liaison was needed regarding the area plan. He asked was there any plans going forward to cater for the new area plan when the requirements of the previous plan had not been met.

Councillor Glasgow left the meeting at 8.00pm

Mr Blockwell said that problems arise from the sustained underinvestment from the NI Executive. He said NI Water had increased investment and had plans in place but could not fix everything. He said they were working on main hubs in Cookstown, Dungannon and Magherafelt, that there was major investment coming to Dugnannon but they could not press a magic button to upgrade networks. Mr Blockwell said if NI Water were not identifying solutions as they currently were there would be more people with waste water coming back up through toilets etc. He said it was key that they are contacted early in the plans for new developments but warned that there would not be a solution for everyone. He said there was massive capital programme planned.

Councillor Burton referred to similar issues as aforementioned whereby people could not move into houses being built close to a former PSNI station and were living in temporary accommodation and whilst NI Water are blamed some of the fault also lies with developers for a number of reasons such as work not completed to a suitable

standard or placed in the wrong location. She emphasised that NI Water and Council needed to work with the families who were left in 'no mans land'. She concluded by flagging up that the future development of homes in Fivemiletown and Ballygawley were also being restricted.

The Chair, Councillor McLean requested that NI Water respond to Councillor Burton directly.

Councillor McNamee said that the Sinn Féin office in Cookstown had also been involved in the meeting regarding Coolmount raised by Councillor Wilson and requested that they be copied into any update.

Councillor Wilson stated that Keith Buchanan MLA and Councillor Mallaghan had also been involved.

Councillor Martin stated that herself and MLA Patsy McGlone had arranged the meeting and would also appreciate inclusion in any update.

The Chair, Councillor McLean asked that the update be provided to Council who would circulate same.

Councillor Colvin reflecting on the Coolmount situation said he had picked up that solutions were temporary treatment works and said that such solutions allows the passing of responsibility. He posed questions such as how would such a solution work, how long would it work for? He stated that it was time not to blame the NI Assembly alone for someone needed to say stop, no more building. He concluded that the issue in its entirety needed to be seriously addressed.

Mr Blockwell said the temporary works do have to comply with all necessary health and safety standards and must be built to an adoptable standard otherwise the developer/management company would be responsible with such risks highlighted to buyers. He stated that currently there are 116 areas experiencing capacity constraints.

The Chair, Councillor McLean concurred with Councillor Colvin stating that his point was well made. He said that Council wished to work with NI Water to resolve issues as the area had a growing population and it would appear that waste water sewage was a major issue. He highlighted that no one was saying don't have solutions but that they should meet required standards and be fit for purpose. He said it was unacceptable that people had paid deposits and were unable to progress moving into their homes and that NI Water and Council should work to identify a solution.

Mr Blockwell stated that NI Water had worked to provide adoptable standards and do endeavour to resolve issues but unfortunately it was too late for some.

The Chair, Councillor McLean reiterated previous comments and said that NI Water need to ensure standards are met, that if they are not, people should be told and it was unacceptable that those purchasing properties were ending up penalised. He emphasised that all needed to work towards resolution.

The Chair, Councillor McLean thanked NI Water for the presentation and requested that responses were back within 7-10 days.

Mr Blockwell reminded Members of the 24-7 hotline.

NI Water representatives withdrew from the meeting at 8.15pm.

Matters for Decision

C049/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Council Meeting held on Thursday 24 February 2022

Proposed by Councillor Brown
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Council held on Thursday 24 February 2022 (C021/22 – C034/22 and C043/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, subject to the foregoing, were considered and adopted.

C050/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1 March 2022

Proposed by Councillor Black
Seconded by Councillor S McPeake and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 1 March 2022 (P025/22 – P033/22 and P041/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C051/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 3 March 2022

Proposed by Councillor McKinney
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Thursday 3 March 2022 (PR044/22 – PR055/22 and PR066/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C052/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Environment Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 8 March 2022

Proposed by Councillor McNamee
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Environment Committee held on Tuesday 8 March 2022 (E056/22 – E076/22 and E089/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C053/22 Receive and Consider Minutes of matters transacted in “Open Business” at the Development Committee Meeting held on Thursday 10 March 2022

Proposed by Councillor Wilson
Seconded by Councillor McNamee and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Development Committee held on Thursday 10 March 2022 (D039/22 – D052/22 and D054/22) transacted in Open Business having been printed and circulated, were considered and adopted.

C054/22 Civic Recognition Nominations

The AD: ODSP sought approval for the previously circulated report on civic recognition requests from Members, in line with the stated Council Policy, and as detailed within the report at appendix A.

The AD: ODSP drew attention to Brooke Scullion who had been recommended for a letter and upon receipt of further information this is now recommended for civic reception.

Proposed by Councillor Milne
Seconded by Councillor Colvin and

Resolved That approval be given to submitted requests for civic recognition detailed at appendix A as outlined in the report. With Brooke Scullion upgraded to Civic Reception Status.

C055/22 Conferences, Seminars & Training

The AD: ODSP sought approval for the previously circulated report on conferences, training and seminars.

Proposed by Councillor McKinney
Seconded by Councillor Black and

Resolved That approval be given to submitted requests for conferences, seminars and training as outlined in the appendix to the report.

Matters for Information

C056/22 Correspondence to Council

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

Councillor McKinney referred to the letter from the Permanent Secretary of the Executive Office regarding support for Ukrainian Refugees entering Northern Ireland and said whilst it had been mentioned in Chair's business he would like it noted that Maghera Activity Centre would be interested in becoming a Contact Centre. He said that Council should support however possible and spoke of the devastation Russia had inflicted upon Ukraine and whilst the situation was very much in people's thoughts and prayers action needed to be taken.

The Chair, Councillor McLean said many Members had raised the issue and cognisance would be taken of all comments and Council would within its remit do all it could.

C057/22 Consultations Notified to Mid Ulster District Council

Members considered previously circulated report on consultations notified to Mid Ulster District Council for comment.

Councillor Brown drew attention to the Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage and proposed that in light of the presentation earlier in the meeting that Council make a response.

The Chair, Councillor McLean concurred and requested that Members email the officer team with points raised earlier in the meeting that they may be included in the response.

Councillor Corry drew attention to the Department for the Economy: Consultation on Proposals to Raise the Eligibility for the Debt Relief Scheme and stated that Council should submit a response and do all within its remit to prevent people getting into debt especially given the current cost of living crisis.

Councillor B McGuigan drew attention to Department for Communities (DfC): Consultation on National Lottery Heritage Fund Policy Directions and stated that throughout the district there is much heritage for which there is little support especially for those who own such a property. He proposed that Council respond to the Consultation and also bid for funding remarking that Council now had a heritage officer and also a conservation planning officer and their knowledge should be included in the response. It was noted that the closing date was 25 April 2022 and thus delegated authority should be granted to the Development Committee if an extension re response was not granted by the department.

Councillor Burton seconded the proposal.

The Chair, Councillor McLean emphasised that it was essential that Members work with the officer teams to prepare the responses.

Resolved That with Member input Council make a response to

- (i) Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage
- (ii) Department for the Economy: Consultation on Proposals to Raises the Eligibility for the Debt Relief Scheme: Closing Date 28 April 2022;
- (iii) DfC: Consultation on National Lottery Heritage Fund Policy Directions. Delegated power be delegated to Environment Committee. Closing Date 25 April 2022 (delegated authority to Development Committee if extension not granted);
- (iv) Department for Infrastructure Consultation on Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Closing Date 3 June 2022

C058/22 Notice of Motion

Councillor Elattar explained that Councillor Mallaghan had received a 'call out' and sought confirmation from the Chair that she may move the motion.

The Chair, Councillor McLean agreed.

Councillor Elattar drew attention to the fact that the NI Executive had now shut down for the forthcoming election and that the motion. However she said that the cost of living is impacting all households and businesses and people were struggling especially in relation to heating oil and gas prices which have tripled in price in a year. She said that the high cost of fuels was particularly felt in rural areas where there was poor access to public transport and the costs were also impacting in care service provision. Councillor Elattar stated that there was already a shortage of care staff and the current crisis was bringing more pressure. She drew particular attention to the impact the soaring costs had on those relying on medical equipment for example oxygen to stay alive. Councillor Elattar said that the Tory Chancellor had the opportunity to take real action but instead continued to persecute the working man highlighting the rise in costs in National Insurance, the ongoing plans for restriction of red diesel usage and the failure to reinstate the £20 per week universal credit payment. Councillor Elattar concluded that the non participating NI Executive was accentuating this and that people needed support now and all political parties need to supply the support.

Councillor Elattar moved the motion,

This Council recognises with deep concern the cost of living crisis that is impacting hundreds of thousands of families across our society, and the rise in home energy and electricity costs which has placed a severe burden on already struggling households and businesses across our Council area.

The collapse of the Executive caused by the resignation of DUP First Minister Paul Givan is preventing a budget, or the allocation of £300m available from Treasury from being agreed and is hampering Ministers from using their full spending power to give people relief who rely and depend upon it.

This Council calls for the immediate restoration of the Executive in order to allocate and agree spending to support workers and families.

Furthermore this Council calls upon the Westminster Government to take action, where local Ministers cannot, by scrapping VAT on domestic energy bills and cutting duty on home heating oil, petrol and diesel, for the duration of the energy crisis; introducing a windfall tax on energy generators and redirect money towards supporting families; reverse the planned increase in National Insurance Contributions; and halt the planned change in red diesel entitlement.

Councillor Molloy seconded the motion and stated that Shell had announced pre-tax profits in the region of £19bn, BP £4bn and highlighted that BP had not paid tax in the past five years, SSE had £600m profits yet said customers should do star jumps to keep warm. He stated that energy providers were making huge profits on the back of the crisis whilst the cost of living is rising.

Councillor Wilson stated that the motion was rich coming from a party who together with the SDLP supported the largest rates increase in Northern Ireland. He stated whilst he could agree with parts of the motion he would refer the proposers to Article 8 of the NI Protocol, the third sentence, "The United Kingdom has a new power to apply VAT exemptions and reductions, including zero rating, to goods in Northern Ireland corresponding to those applicable in Ireland." Councillor Wilson said he understood this to mean that this could only be applied in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland so thus all parties who are championing the full implementation of the protocol needed to take a hard look at themselves. He said that the UUP had engaged with both governments on the issue. Councillor Wilson said that families were being pushed to the brink highlighting the emergency fuel scheme administered by Bryson Charity Group and also the £200 energy support released by the Minister for Department for Communities and said that this should be extended beyond March and the criteria revised. He said that the crisis required a response from both the NI Assembly and the Westminster governments. Concurring with Councillor Molloy he said that energy providers were making a fortune and more pressure needs to be put on them to help customers. He spoke of the role of Fuel Poverty Task Force and welcoming the reduction in fuel duty was emphatic that whilst it doesn't go far enough it should be passed on. He concluded that people having the choice to 'heat or eat' was totally unacceptable.

Councillor Clarke stated that 70% of the price of road fuel is tax and it was not that long ago since it was £1.20 per litre but had now risen to £1.70 thus the Chancellor reducing it by 5p per litre is not much help. He concluded that the Government was gaining massively from the people.

Councillor Quinn spoke of the rising costs prior to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Quoting statistics he spoke of rising costs since the invasion in fuel, food insurance the increased usage of local foodbanks and the dire straits some people were in as the country was coming out of pandemic. He said many had no option but to draw down benefits or engage in zero hours contracts as the stark choice people were left with was to 'heat or eat' drive or survive'. He spoke of £300m funding ready to be used and that many local government workers were currently on strike due to such low wage increases. He said that major companies were making a fortune and that

the Chancellors announcements had no reference to taxing oil companies. He called for increased government spending and was critical of the Prime Minister going from dictator to dictator for oil. He concluded that Stormont was closed for the election, and whilst politicians are talking people are struggling and some may die. He said he was happy to support the motion.

The Chair Councillor McLean said all were aware that the current crisis in rising costs was crippling working families. He said it was obvious that the motion is election manifesto in process and had the centre of the motion been omitted there would have been consensus across the room. He said that the motion was late in that the Assembly had now closed but all knew 'if there was a will there was a way' at Stormont therefore when suited they can come together and help people whatever can be done should be. He concluded that it was an election stunt and he would not take the same road.

Councillor McKinney reiterated Councillor Wilson's comments and said it was alright for Members to ridicule energy providers but the same parties had put the rates up taking more off the general public than necessary but now they talk of people suffering. He said he was saddened that there was nothing Council could do and speaking of climate change said that free public transport to and from work would be a help to people. He also spoke of the soaring oil costs and stated it would be his hope they will come down again in the coming weeks. He too welcomed the 5p reduction in fuel duty but said he hoped it would be passed onto the consumer.

Councillor Wilson said the motion was meaningless as the NI Assembly was not sitting.

In response Councillor Elattar said that in moving the motion she had indicated it would be an aspiration.

The Chair Councillor McLean called for a vote.

For	21
Against	13

The Chair, Councillor McLean declared the motion carried.

Councillor Elattar thanked everyone for their comments and stated that some had engaged in 'onboard' training earlier in the week which had highlighted that it is the responsibility of councillors/board members to ensure there is adequate reserves. She drew attention to the comments of some Members regarding the rise in rates and said Council had dipped into reserves the previous year and should not continue to do so. With regard to Councillor McKinney's comments regarding free transport asked how he proposed people west of the Bann getting anywhere when public transport is so poor a fact which also impacts on carers. Councillor Elattar concluded that when the election was over she hoped all parties would get around the table.

C059/22 Notice of Motion

Councillor Cuthbertson speaking on the motion said, "As I move this motion I don't believe I need to actually say a lot to introduce it. The motion is self-explanatory. These voluntary drivers who under contract from the NIAS and the Health Trusts are providing an invaluable service. They transport patients to hospital appointments and also educational settings. Many service users will pay testament to not only the transport but also the actual companionship they receive in talking to the driver during what can be a very difficult time attending hospitals for treatment etc. These volunteers have been operating on the same mileage allowance for the past 12-15 years. Every councillor in the room here will know what it costs to run a vehicle with the current cost of fuel and maintenance of a vehicle. While I am aware that if the allowance were to increase past a centre figure it could result in HMRC getting involved. But I believe there is scope for the Department to look at this to provide some degree of increase."

Councillor Cuthbertson moved the motion

'That Mid Ulster District Council recognises the invaluable service that voluntary drivers offer to the community. Many seriously ill patients, particularly living in rural areas, depend on this service to attend appointments. By using their own vehicles, these volunteers save the Department of Health, via contracts with the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service and the Health Trusts, significant amounts of money per year.

Further to this recognition, that Mid Ulster District Council writes to the Department of Health to urge them to increase the current mileage allowance of 38p per mile currently paid to these voluntary drivers, as it is inadequate in offsetting their fuel and vehicle maintenance expenses.'

Councillor Buchanan seconded the motion stating that the voluntary scheme is provided by volunteers who use their own vehicles.

Councillor McKinney said that the volunteers provide a very valuable service especially within rural communities and often the trips being taken are not ones to look forward to. He posed the question was there anything Council could do to assist especially when in recent discussions about rates it was noted that bank balances increased in the past financial year. He acknowledged that Stormont was closed.

Councillor Corry supported the motion and reiterated that volunteers provide an invaluable service especially to vulnerable residents who often live in rural areas who totally depended on it to attend vital appointments. Councillor Corry said that the cost of living increases were leaving many struggling especially with the cost of fuel and if volunteers simply could not afford to provide the service patients may miss appointments. She drew attention to the pressure the Health Service was under and said it did not make sense to risk losing the voluntary drivers many of whom had built up friendships with those they transport many of whom may already experience loneliness. Councillor Corry concluded that the volunteers were key workers who needed to be recognised and treated as such.

Councillor Quinn supported the motion acknowledging the importance of the volunteers who were essentially key health workers practically having to provide a

service at their own expenses. He said that both the Health and Finance Ministers needed to address the matter and all needed to set aside minor arguments and find a solution.

Councillor Cuthbertson clarified that some had mentioned health and care workers and stated he had not included them in the motion as they received a salary whilst volunteers did not and thus he felt it better to separate the two. He also advised that whilst the NI Assembly and Executive is down the motion requested a letter to the Department of Health which was still operational.

The Chair, Councillor McLean said there was obvious support for the motion and declared it carried.

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 broadcast concluded at 8.58 pm

Proposed by Councillor McKinney
Seconded by Councillor Brown and

Resolved That items C060/22 to C072/22 be taken as confidential business.

Matters for Decision

- (i) Council Confidential minutes of meeting held on Thursday 24 February 2022
- (ii) Planning Committee Confidential minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 1 March 2022
- (iii) Policy and Resources Committee Confidential minutes of meeting held on Thursday 3 March 2022
- (iv) Environment Committee Confidential minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 8 March 2022
- (v) Development Committee Confidential minutes of meeting held on Thursday 10 March 2022
- (vi) Audit Committee Confidential minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 15 March 2022
- (vii) Insurances – 2022/23
- (viii) Access and Inclusion Programme – Award of Supplier for Door Automation
- (ix) Conveyance - Purchase of lands at Old Ballygawley Road, Dungannon
- (x) Easement - Mid Ulster Council with NIE Networks Ltd for Undergrounding of overhead cables at Gortgonis, Coalisland
- (xi) Contract: Coalisland Canal Towpath – Active Travel – JPM Contracts
- (xii) Contract: Coalisland Revitalisation Scheme – Northstone (NI) Ltd

(xiii) Lease to Killeeshil & Clonaneese Historical Society at Killymaddy Centre, Dungannon

C073/22 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at Meeting ended at 9.14 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A - Introductory Remarks from Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to our meeting of Mid Ulster District Council in the Chamber, Dungannon whether you have joined us remotely or in the Chamber.

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 a roll call of members in attendance.