

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

Members Present

Councillor S McAleer, Chair

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

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive**
Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env)**
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP)
Mrs Dyson, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)**
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP)
Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E)
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F)
Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT (HoICT)
Mrs Grogan, Committee & Member Services Officer

* Denotes members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor S McAleer in introducing the meeting detailed the operational arrangements for transacting the business of the committee in the chamber and by virtual means, by referring to Annex A to this minute.

PR021/23 Notice of Recording

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

PR022/23 Apologies

Councillors Elattar and McLean.

PR023/23 Declarations of Interest

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

PR024/23 Chairs Business

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer advised members that she wished to raise an issue and asked for a project to be added to the Council's General Power of Competence scheme. She referred to an area of footpath along the A5 road at Glencull, just outside Ballygawley, the children board the yellow school bus at this location which has a very narrow footpath and at times the children have to step onto the main road which is extremely dangerous. She advised that when the bus is parked, the sightlines were blocked which was unfortunately an accident waiting to happen. She stated that currently she was in discussions with the Blue Green Active Travel DfI team in regard to a footpath from Ballygawley to Glencull, but this is proving to be a very slow process. The part of the footpath in Glencull that she was enquiring about is really a priority for safety and the local landowners have stated that they have no issues as long as the footpath area is made safe according to the local Principal. The Chair asked if this could be added to the scheme.

Councillor S McGuigan advised that the same issue had also been raised with him by some people as this was an ongoing issue. He said that the school and the businesses along that route have indicated that they were ready to assist with the level that's needed to allow this to happen and although initial discussions from this side is positive, it is slow on the other side and felt there was a need to keep pushing this forward.

Councillor Cuddy referred to the General Power of Competence and advised that Council had spent no money on this scheme from the very beginning and felt that there was very little chance of this happening.

The Chair advised that she was aware of the footpath at Eglish from Daly's shop being completed under the General Power of Competence.

Councillor S McGuigan advised that the Eglish footpath was completed under the Active Travel scheme and the only one done under the General Power of Competence was in Edendork.

Councillor Cuddy advised that the Edendork scheme was carried out before the new policy was written and nothing has been done since and wasn't confident that there would be much hope of proceeding forward.

Councillor Ashton referred to comments relating to DfI issue regarding the footpaths in Ballygawley. She said that this was coming up quite frequently about DfI not carrying out their duties and how their responsibilities were falling back to Council to pick up i.e. grass cutting and now footpaths and enquired if Officers envisaged any light at the end of the tunnel or was this the way things were going to be regarding DfI issues.

The Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env) in response to issues relating to Active Travel and General Power of Competence advised that she was aware of members enquiring about General Power of Competence in previous meetings. She said that Officers were currently looking at a list that had been compiled before and advised members that quite a few of the projects on that list had already been completed, although not necessarily under the General Power of Competence or Active Travel but with other projects Council had been involved in. She said that she was undertaking a review of this at present in line with the review of Capital Programmes and Capital Projects and stated that an update would be brought back to committee in the very near future for members consideration and discussion.

The SD: Environment advised that she had attended a meeting today with DfI in relation to greenways and Active Travel and they are proposing alternative ways on how they could work with Council more closely in terms of outdoor recreation and will be looking at preparing a more detailed plan of projects across the district, particularly around Active Travel. This would involve working with DfI to secure potential funding to take this forward, but the difficulty would be whilst there are individual requests being made, there isn't a complete picture of what is needed. She felt there was a willingness on behalf of the DfI, they have targets they have to meet in terms of Active Travel as well as Climate Change, so they have to allocate some funding into these types of projects and Council needs to have their lists ready to progress so that Officers can work in partnership with them to deliver. She was confident that there was light at the end of the tunnel, but there is still work needed to be done upfront to get ready to avail of anything that was coming forward.

Councillor Molloy said that we have witnessed the lack of investment over quite a number of years on footpath provision and now DfI were getting out of providing footpaths across the board, a contractor constructing houses has to provide a footpath, Council was also now getting involved in providing footpaths and felt that they were really getting off the hook. He advised that this can be witnessed across the Bann as he can go into villages across East of the Bann and you can see footpath provision away out into the countryside, linking up towns and villages across the board. He has raised this issue with DfI previously of how when you get to Portadown you can reach the Port of Larne or the airport in Belfast without leaving a footpath. When in Portadown and heading west it is impossible to link up towns and villages and felt that there was a school of work to be done on this provision.

The Chair concurred with Councillor Molloy's comments and referred to the footpath she had alluded to from Ballygawley to Glencull school which is also used by a lot of workers for employment and was very frightening to see them walking and stepping onto the main road as there was part of a footpath and then no footpath.

Matters for Decision

PR025/23 Draft Response to NH&SCT Consultation-Working with you to Transform Acute Maternity Services Consultation

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval from elected members of the draft consultation response developed on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in response

to the consultation on Working with you to Transform Acute Maternity Services Consultation.

Councillor McKinney advised that unfortunately he was unable to attend the meeting on the day and said that his Council area would be more involved with Coleraine hospital rather than those in Dungannon. He said that he had read the response with the lack of surgical teams and consultants and when his family used the hospital 13 years ago, it was the same position and they had to wait on a consultant coming in to deal with their situation. He said that this was a dangerous situation, we live in a claim conscious world and advised that Antrim could not take any extra women on top of what they already have and has seen what the report has been issued with from those within the Health Service and until such times there is facilities for extra capacity and at this present moment in time, the amount of children which was being born in Antrim is actually an over-capacity and understaffed. To do nothing and let this amalgamate under the Antrim part of the Northern Trust would have a detrimental effect on those from this area but even more so for those who travel from the North Coast area. In referring to the response that this is not acceptable on the way forward from the Health Board is the only way to proceed due to the danger of children's lives and risks involved if these issues are not sorted out. He was aware it was stated by the Health Board that they "hope to have provisions in place" and felt that he sometimes hoped to have something in place and never actually achieves it. He said that it was vitally important that these provisions were in place and although he was aware of extensions being carried out at Antrim at the moment, he was sure that it wasn't related to the Childrens unit. He also advised that Coleraine did not have a neonatal unit anymore which was previously there when it first opened resulting in only one neonatal unit being stretched to overcapacity in this moment in time.

The Chair advised that Councillor McKinney had raised valid points.

Councillor Kearney stated that he shared Councillor McKinney's views as he was also aware of this. He felt that this was a very fair and reasonable response which has been presented before members tonight.

Proposed by Councillor Forde
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the draft response "*that the Council does not provide support and is opposed to the Trust's proposals to centralise maternity services to Antrim Area Hospital*".

PR026/23 Request to Illuminate Council Properties

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Fair Trade Fortnight
- Action Meso: Go Blue for Meso Campaign
- Linking Generations NI – Global Intergenerational Week

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties on:

- 27 February 2023 – Fairtrade Fortnight – Colours: Pear, Black and Cyan
- 24 April 2023 - Linking Generations NI– Global Intergenerational Week Colour: Pink
- 7 July 2023 - Go Blue for Meso campaign – Colour: Blue

PR027/23 Improvement Objectives: - 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (proposed) and timeline for Public Consultation

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report to consider and agree the proposed improvement objectives for 2023/24 and 2024/25, as set in compliance with the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 (the Act) and subsequent guidance as issued by the Department for Communities (LG21/2016 onwards) and establish timelines for a public consultation exercise relating to the proposed improvement objectives.

Councillor Cuddy advised that he had recently listened to a programme on TV which talked about NHS productivity levels and improvements over the last few years which was at 1% but was still fairly positive even with all their pressures. He said that when talking about improvement objectives, enquired if there was anything in place that we can measure our productivity or improvement activity against within this organisation as he never envisaged any way productivity could be measured within the NHS.

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) advised that the report outlined the list of extensive project initiatives which have been rolled out throughout and these were the objectives which we were measuring ourselves on.

Councillor Cuddy said that he could talk about his shop all day long and how many people come in, but it was the people that don't come in he would be more interested in as it was all about numbers. He said that it would be the case of if you can't measure, you can't manage and there was a need for transformation and not do what was done in the past as the world is changing around us. He felt that it was a good project but there needed a smarter way of measuring productivity especially when there is rate increases of plus 7%.

The Chair said that she assumed that if there were environmental impacts that this was measurable, we were just starting off in this process and in due course measurements will mostly likely be implemented.

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) advised that data is collected and measured i.e. within Environment, measurements in recycling targets, within Finance, measurements taken in relation

to paying creditors, sickness absence, customers entering venues etc. There is a method of collecting data and tracking it which is carried out on a quarterly basis through the Performance Officer.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F) said that he totally got what the member referred to and noted his reference to the 7% rate increase, but by definition against raging inflation rate well in excess of 7% to deliver the vast majority of our services at a proposed real cut, reflects performance improvement efficiency gains, all be it being a long way short where we need to be to make the rate more affordable. He felt that the high-level figure does show that the Council were performing reasonably well, all be it that more statistics could be compiled.

Councillor Cuddy felt that there was a need to get the process of improvement objectives more slim-lined. When reference was made to waste etc. it is costing this Council a fortune, more year on year and there needed to be a better way of delivering for the ratepayer. In referring to comment made by SD: CS&F about being currently at 10%, he guaranteed that by the end of this financial year, we will be well less than 7% as overall the balance of inflation will decrease each month.

Councillor Kearney noted that this was for public consultation and a further report at agenda item 10 (Performance Improvement Update – Quarters One to Quarters Three - 2002 to 2003) and enquired when it was anticipated to have a review of our Community Plan as it would be a great instrument to measure our success.

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) advised that this was a very relevant report as there was an update on agenda item 11 (Mid Ulster Community Plan: Progress Update) for information. She said that it was like any plan, there was a need to review and try to streamline it to be more action orientated, with working groups. This has been brought to the Strategic Board and governance looked at around it, which would be constantly on review and now was an opportune time for Officers to review where we are at the moment as our list may have been too long at a time, however, it was the community which put them on the list and we don't want to knock them off, but there was an onus on Officers to find a way of streamlining it. A lot of the work that Council were doing in partnership with other external agencies was all part of community plan and processes also and there was a need to start tracking that in a better fashion also. She concluded by saying that this was going through a review period at the moment and that was what the update report related to.

Proposed by Councillor Kearney
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the four draft improvement objectives for 2023-24 to 2024-25, and the initiation of consultation together with associated timeline.

PR028/23 Member Services.

None.

Matters for Information

PR029/23 Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11 January 2023

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11 January 2023.

PR030/23 Performance Improvement Update - Quarters One to Quarters Three (2022 to 2023)

Members noted Performance Improvement Update – Q1 to Q3 (2022 to 2023) which provided monitoring information on the review of Council's performance against our seven statutory and three corporate performance improvement indicators and standards, along with an overview of the Corporate Health Indicators for the first nine months of 2022/23. The report also provides a performance progress summary against the Council's four corporate improvement objectives and their associated project plans (known as CIP plans). The indicators and standards, the 4 improvement projects and corporate health indicators are contained within our Two-Year Performance Improvement Plan (PIP plan) for 2021/22 to 2022/23.

PR031/23 Mid Ulster Community Planning: Progress Update

Members noted Mid Ulster Community Planning Progress Update which provided an update on activity surrounding Mid Ulster Community Planning following its movement across to Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance, stemming from the Council's restructure.

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) advised that updates and achievements would be brought to committee on a quarterly basis.

Live broadcast ended at 7.24 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items PR032/23 to PR038/23.

Matters for Decision

- PR032/23 Staff Matters for Decision
- PR033/23 Land and Property Matters: Northland Row Disposal and Gortgonis Wayleave
- PR034/23 Capital funded Repairs and Maintenance: Meadowbank Sports Arena and Bus Shelters

Matters for Information

- PR035/23 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 January 2023
- PR036/23 Staff Matters for Information
- PR037/23 Contracts and DAC Registers – Update
- PR038/23 Financial report for 9 months ended 31 December 2023

PR039/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 7.40 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

Good evening and welcome to the Council's [Policy & Resources/Environment/Development] Committee in the Chamber, [Dungannon/Magherafelt] and virtually.

I specifically welcome the public watching us through the Live Broadcast. The Live Broadcast will run for the period of our Open Business but will end just before we move into Confidential Business. I let you know before this happens.

Just some housekeeping before we commence. Can I remind you:-

- If you have joined the meeting remotely, please keep your audio on mute unless invited to speak and then turn it off when finished speaking
- Keep your video on at all times, unless you have bandwidth or internet connection issues, where you are advised to try turning your video off
- If you wish to speak please raise your hand in the meeting or on screen and keep raised until observed by an Officer or myself
- Should we need to take a vote this evening I will ask each member to confirm whether they are for or against the proposal or abstaining
- When invited to speak please introduce yourself by name to the meeting
- For any member attending remotely, if you declare an interest in an item, please turn off your video and keep your audio on mute for the duration of the item
- If referring to a specific report please reference the report, page or slide being referred to
- Lastly, I remind the public and press that taking photographs of proceedings or using any means to enable anyone not present to see or hear proceedings, or making a simultaneous oral report of the proceedings are not permitted

Thank you and we will now move to the first item on the agenda - apologies and then roll call of all other Members in attendance.