

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 7 September 2023 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor Corry, Chair

Councillors Bell*, Brown*, F Burton, J Burton (7.14 pm), Gildernew, Johnston*, McAleer, McLean*, McLernon*, S McPeake*, Molloy*, Totten*, Wilson

Officers in Attendance

Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Environment)**
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP)
Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E)
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP)
Mr Lowry, Head of Technical Services (HoTS)
Mr O'Hagan, Head of IT (HoIT)
Ms McNally, Assistant Director of Legal, Governance and Transformation (AD: LGT)**
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Services & Finance (SD: CSF)
Mrs Grogan, Committee and Member Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Deputation: TinyLife
Ms Rebekah Corbett***

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

PR134/23 Notice of Recording

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

PR135/23 Apologies

Councillors Cahoon and McFlynn.

Ms Dyson, Head of Human Resources.

PR136/23 Declarations of Interest

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

PR137/23 Chairs Business

None.

PR138/23 Deputation – Tiny Life

The Chair welcomed Ms Corbett from TinyLife to the meeting and invited her to address the committee.

Ms Corbett provided members with a brief update on the organisation and the impact of a neonatal stay (appendix).

She advised that 1,900 babies in Northern Ireland spend time in a neonatal unit each year – born too small, too sick or too soon. No additional parental leave entitlement is provided to parents when a baby is born premature or sick, with only two weeks of paternity leave given to fathers/non-birthing parents resulting in them having to return to work long before the child is well enough to return home. This is an impossible choice as it may be the case of returning to work too soon or take a financial hit to spend time with family at a stressful time.

Impact around work and mental health means that:

- Around 70% of families with a significant neonatal stay, at least one parent returned to work while their baby was still in hospital
- 91% of fathers who returned to work whilst their baby was in NICU struggled to concentrate at work
- 36% of fathers signed off sick in order to spend time with their baby on the neonatal unit
- 42% of Mums and 20% of Dads leave work altogether to become a full-time carer for their child or children
- 40% of parents experience anxiety and PTSD when their baby needs neonatal care – 25% are still affected a year after birth

Impact around family finances means that:

- 1 in 4 families had to borrow money or increase their debt because of their baby's neonatal stay
- More than half of families said their finances affected their ability to spend time with their baby

- At the start of 2022, the average additional cost of having a baby in neonatal care was around £405 per week – daily travel to and from neonatal units, high-cost food and drink, additional childcare costs and lost income of around £3,000 during the baby's stay

Neonatal Care (Leave & Pay) Act 2003

- Due to be implemented in GB in April 2025
- Entitles mothers and fathers up to 12 weeks of leave from work if their baby spends at least 1 week in a neonatal unit
- On top of maternity/paternity/adoption leave
- Leave must be paid at a statutory rate (currently £156.66 per week) – subject to minimum length of service and earning requirements
- Highly likely that when NI Executive is restored, Assembly will seek to implement same or similar provisions in NI

Benefits of voluntarily Implementing a neonatal leave policy:

- Ability to plan staff workloads – duration of neonatal leave in more predictable than unpaid leave and sick leave
- Improved staff retention
- Attracting new staff with family-friendly policies
- Improved staff performance

Ms Corbett concluded by asked that:

- Council consider proposing a motion to introduce paid neonatal leave
- Any new policy should follow GB Neonatal Care Act as closely as possible and then improve on it

Councillor J Burton entered the meeting at 7.14 pm.

The Chair thanked Ms Corbett for her impressive presentation and stated that it shows the impact that this has on families and workers when someone is going through such a traumatic period in their life. The Chair felt that it was unfair that many people may have to leave their work altogether and suffering anxiety about their finances or getting into debt and advised that it also shows the impact of the assembly being down and how once again we are being left behind. The Chair advised that Council members and Council will try and do what we can in Mid Ulster.

Councillor Wilson thanked Ms Corbett for her presentation. The member said that he was speaking as a Grandfather whose two youngest grandchildren were both born premature, one at 10 weeks and one at 5 weeks, the work TinyLife does to help and support the family is second to none and anything that this Council could do should be encouraged.

The Chair wished Ms Corbett all the best with her campaign going forward.

Ms Corbett withdrew from the meeting at 7.20 pm.

Matters for Decision

PR139/23 Annual Progress Return to the Equality Commission for 2022/2023

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report to seek members approval to accept the Annual Progress Report for the period 2022/2023.

The Chair thanked Officers involved in the preparation of the report as it was a very detailed report and something that we could be very proud of as a Council team in regards to equality. The member said that she had the pleasure of taking part in a lot of activities last year but one thing she felt was missing was the work, which was done on women, there were two very good events for International Women's Day and we also held our first Women's Health Day which staff found very useful and informative and asked if this could be also included.

Proposed by Councillor Corry
Seconded by Councillor McAleer and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the Annual Progress Report (2022-23) on the implementation and activity surrounding its Equality and Good Relations statutory duties.

PR140/23 Draft Response to TEO Provision of Free Period Products Public Consultation

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report to seek members approval of the draft consultation response developed on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in response to the consultation on Provision of Free Period Products.

Councillor Gildernew said that she was happy to propose the recommendation but asked that rural community venues be included in the recommendations for the provision of free period products along with not-for-profit childcare settings due to the fact that they are predominantly a female workforce from the lowest paid sectors.

Proposed by Councillor Gildernew
Seconded by Councillor McLernon and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that approval be granted for the draft response.

PR141/23 Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report to seek members approval to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Public Health Agency: Organ Donation Week
- SHSCT: Foster Care 'Children who wait'

- Age Friendly Communities: UN International Day of Older Persons (IDOP)
- Cancer Focus NI: Breast Cancer Awareness Month
- North West Migrants Forum: Black History Awareness & Show Racism the Red Card
- Out and About Community Transport: Celebrating 25 Years of Community Transport
- Action Mental Health & MU Libraries World Mental Health Day –
- NI Versus Arthritis: World Arthritis Day
- Parenting NI: Parenting Week
- Raising Awareness of Development Language Disorder (RADLD)
- Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) UK: Awareness Day
- Purple Tuesday: Promoting accessibility and inclusivity
- Diabetes UK NI: World Diabetes Day
- Disability Action NI: International Day of Disabled People
- The Encephalitis Society: World Encephalitis (Inflammation of the Brain) Day
- Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI (LLNI): 60th Anniversary of Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI

The HoSSE also sought members approval to include an additional request to light up the three buildings for Dyslexia Awareness Day on 8 October which had been received post the paper going out.

Councillor F Burton declared an interest in Community Transport.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor F Burton and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties as follows –

- Public Health Agency: Organ Donation Week Monday 18 September 2023 Colour: Pink
- SHSCT: Foster Care ‘Children who wait’ Tuesday 26 September 2023 Colour: Yellow
- Age Friendly Communities: UN International Day of Older Persons (IDOP) Sunday 1 October 2023 Colour: Purple
- Cancer Focus NI: Breast Cancer Awareness Month – Monday 2 October 2023 Colour: Pink
- North West Migrants Forum: Black History Awareness & Show Racism the Red Card Tuesday 3 October 2023 Colour: Red
- Out and About Community Transport: Celebrating 25 Years of Community Transport Wednesday 4th October 2023 Colour Blue
- Action Mental Health & MU Libraries World Mental Health Day – Tuesday 10 October 2023 Colour: Purple
- NI Versus Arthritis: World Arthritis Day – Thursday 12 October 2023 Colour Blue
- Parenting NI: Parenting Week - Monday 16 October 2023 Colour: Purple

- Raising Awareness of Development Language Disorder (RADLD) Friday 20th October 2023 Colour: Purple
- Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) UK: Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) Awareness Day Wednesday 25 October 2023 Colour: Purple
- Purple Tuesday: Promoting accessibility and inclusivity – Purple Tuesday 7 November 2023 Colour: Purple
- Diabetes UK NI: World Diabetes Day – Tuesday 14 November 2023 Colour: Blue
- Disability Action NI: International Day of Disabled People – Sunday 3 December 2023 Colour: Purple
- The Encephalitis Society: World Encephalitis (Inflammation of the Brain) Day 22 February 2024 Colour: Red
- Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI (LLNI): 60th Anniversary of Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI Colour: Red
- International Dyslexia Awareness Day: Sunday 8 October 2023 - Colour: Turquoise

PR142/23 Civic Recognition Working Group August 2023

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report to provide the outworking's of the most recent Civic Recognition Working Group meetings held on 9th and 31st August 2023.

Councillor S McPeake advised that he was not on the group himself but by reading the report he felt it was a good piece of work and no issue with the recommendations and commended the group with the urgency put into it as they held two meetings within the month which was good work as something needed to be done. The member was happy to propose the recommendation.

Councillor Wilson advised that he did not sit on the group or contribute to the work which was being carried out. The member said that prior to this group getting together this term a number of issues previously had arisen, one of the things which was being looked at was the awards which was felt were being devalued in the fact that somebody could get an award for U13, U14 or whatever age group it was and could end up with someone technically receiving 6, 7 or more awards and did not see anything within the report which would address that. The other issue was that we were looking at cost cutting so that this wouldn't be a drain on the ratepayer but recognising as well the whole issue of civic awards and was aware of the budget now being looked at and enquired if this was for an increase or decrease. The member agreed that some sort of mechanism was needed to select these people and had read within the minutes that 'not everyone could be invited to the Awards' but surely if they meet the criteria they should be invited to the Awards, even though it doesn't mean that they will win. The member said that these were his initial thoughts.

The HoSSE in referring to the queries advised that this was something which was discussed at the working group meeting and further work with the relevant Directorates was to be carried out to develop the criteria and specifics around each

of the awards. The HoSSE said that the matters raised would be certainly looked at and will form part of the detailed criteria which will ultimately go back through the working group and come back to committee in due course. In relation to budget, this was something that was being considered by the working group and any decisions or information agreed on this would be brought back through committee.

The Chair advised that she sat on the working group where a lot of good work has been done but took on board Councillor Wilson's concerns and this was why the working group was trying to make it more meaningful and prestigious. She stated that one of the things which was being talked about was having a 'team of the year' award and things like that.

Proposed by Councillor S McPeake
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the approach and recommendations of the Civic Recognition Working Group meetings held on 9th and 31st August 2023.

PR143/23 Corporate Performance Improvement Plan (PIP plan) 2023 to 2024

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report for members to consider Council's Corporate Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) for period 2023-2024.

Councillor Gildernew referred to page 27 of the self-assessment report and said that she was very concerned about odours emanating from Northway Mushroom Plant in Killeeshil. In relation to activity 5 within the report 'Monitoring and Review of Air Quality' asked how many of the 516 tubes were placed in the vicinity of Northway Plant. In relation to activity 6 within the report 'Environmental Impacts of Industrial Activities' 77 scheduled inspections completed, enquired how many of these involved Northway Plant. The member asked in general how many of these tests are related to the Northway facility and the impact that these odours are having on air quality in the Killeeshil and Cabragh areas.

The HoSSE advised that he would liaise with the relevant directorate in relation to the members queries and would ask for the information to be made available to the member.

Councillor F Burton concurred with Councillor Gildernew's comments as the smell which was unacceptable in the areas where people are trying to live and could only imagine the odour and stench it would be today in the hot weather where people were trying to open their windows and doors. The member stated that she had received numerous complaints in the last fortnight regarding litter and dog fouling in the Aughnacloy and Caledon areas and since WISE were no longer being employed by Council, these were the issues which were being left behind. The member enquired if these issues were built into the plan going forward as she felt as a Council, we have to take on board how people were totally fed up with people going out with their dog early in the morning or late at night so not to be caught and also take into consideration the health issue for children. The member felt that it was

important to look at this in the long term to ensure towns and villages are being looked after and not left for locals to deal with.

The HoSSE advised that one of Council's key CIP projects is the CIP2 Project to create cleaner neighbourhoods where everyone takes responsibility for their waste and environment, obviously there is a number of items listed which fall in under that area and he agreed to raise the issue with the relevant directorate and follow up on concerns raised.

Councillor Gildernew said that she hoped going forward that Northway Mushroom Plant would be factored into any of those tests which were being carried out to ensure that residents enjoy odour free air in the Cabragh and Killeeshil area.

Proposed by Councillor McAleer
Seconded by Councillor F Burton and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve e the Council's Corporate Performance Improvement (PIP plan) Plan 2023-2024 to 2024-2025.

PR144/23 Member Services

None.

Matters for Information

PR145/23 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 6 July 2023

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 6 July 2023.

PR146/23 Mid Ulster Community Planning: Progress Update

Members noted update on activity surrounding Mid Ulster Community Planning: April to September 2023.

PR147/23 Corporate Services and Finance Directorate Service Plan 2023-24

Members noted update in relation to the Corporate Services and Finance Directorate Service's Service Improvement Plan for 2023-24.

PR148/23 Working Groups

Members noted update on Review of current Working Groups established by committees of Council.

Councillor S McPeake said that he was hoping to see more detail when many of those groups would be meeting as it was more or less a stocktake on what was happening up to now. The member referred to the good work up to now on the Civic Recognition Working Group with two meetings within a month and advised that there were other working groups which hasn't met in two years plus, specifically the

Broadband Working Group which hasn't met from May 2021. The member stated that the Broadband Working Group would be a very invaluable group as it functioning would help the areas where broadband was being rolled out at the moment and referred to the issues which emerged through the roll out within his own area in South Derry that could have been brought to the table. The member said that thankfully this area was almost complete but if the working group was functioning, it would provide great benefit to those areas which were in the midst of broadband roll out at the moment. The member referred to the possible merging of the Community Wealth Building and the Transformation Group which was not mentioned within the report and enquired if there was any thought on that. The member felt that it was a good enough stocktake, but it must be moved on and refreshed with what is currently there.

Councillor Burton concurred with Councillor S McPeake's comments and referred to the Tourism Development Group where quite a lot of new businesses have come into the area and trying to engage with those to try and support people who are trying to create small to medium sized businesses in our locality. The member referred to the Modernisation of Waste Recycling and Grass Cutting and advised that this has been a big concern as to the way forward in providing services to the rural areas of the Clogher Valley area and wider across Mid Ulster and it was her understanding that the working group hasn't convened yet and was something that needed to be progressed.

The Chair advised that one meeting had taken place regarding the Modernisation of Waste Recycling and Grass Cutting Working Group and maybe didn't come in on time to have it included within the report.

Councillor F Burton said that she was content that the group had met.

Councillor McLean enquired whether this list was now defined as it was his understanding that a lot of these groups which hadn't met were really necessary or not as members had carried out a previous exercise.

The HoSSE advised that this was the list agreed as part of the working group and governance arrangements for the new Council but took on board comments made around the fact that some of these working groups haven't met for some time. It was correct that the Modernisation of Waste Recycling, and Grass cutting Working Group did meet on the 10 August with a further meeting taking place next week on that group and would certainly take on board and liaise with the relevant directorates who were responsible for each of these specific working groups in terms of when their next meetings would be coming up and progress them.

Councillor Wilson said that he wished to raise an issue which he had raised all along. The member stated that working groups were working groups and that was exactly what there were, but they were not representative of all the Council, although he did appreciate that under D'hondt that was the way it is but wished to make that point.

Councillor McLean felt that one of the reasons why the working groups were not meeting was that there still needed to be Councillors appointed to them and asked the HoSSE to check as he was unsure whether his party has nominated to all the

groups because it was felt that things were still going through that transition period, and he could be one of the guilty people in that sense. The member asked that the list be updated and sent out to him so he can get it sorted.

The Chair said that some good work had been done through the working groups and it would be good to get things progressed with the others who haven't met. The member referred to the Housing Forum which hasn't met for some time and felt that it would be important to get this meeting up and going again as she had witnessed through her office that housing is an issue.

Live broadcast ended at 7.37 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor F Burton
Seconded by Councillor Wilson 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 PR149/23 to PR159/23.

Matters for Decision

- PR149/23 IST Update Report – Derrynoyd – Drumcairn Forest Improvements
- PR150/23 Land and Property Matters
- PR151/23 Staffing Matters for Decision
- PR152/23 Information Technology Contract Extensions and Direct Awards

Matters for Information

- PR153/23 Confidential Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 6 July 2023
- PR154/23 Staffing Matters for Information
- PR155/23 Update on Shared Recruitment Advertising
- PR156/23 2023/24 Insurances
- PR157/23 Cookstown Chamber Upgrade
- PR158/23 Annual Accounts for 12 Months ended 31 March 2023
- PR159/23 Verbal Update on Legal Matters

PR160/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.15 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.

The importance of neonatal leave & pay

TinyLife briefing

7th September 2023



Impact of a neonatal stay

- **1,900** babies in NI spend time in a neonatal unit each year – born **too small, too sick or too soon**
- **No** additional parental leave entitlement when a baby is born premature or sick
- **Only two weeks of paternity leave** means that fathers/non-birthing parents return to work long before child is well enough to return home
- Impossible choice: **return to work too soon, or take a financial hit to spend time with family at a stressful time?**



Impact of a neonatal stay: work and mental health

- For around **70%** families with a significant neonatal stay, at least one parent returned to work **while their baby was still in hospital** ([Bliss](#))
- **91%** of dads who returned to work whilst their baby was in NICU **struggled to concentrate at work** (Leo's Neonatal)
- **36%** of fathers **signed off sick** in order to spend more time with their baby on the neonatal unit ([Bliss](#))
- **42% of mums** and **20% of dads leave work altogether** to become a full-time carer for their child or children (Leo's Neonatal)
- **40%** of parents experience **anxiety or PTSD** when their baby needs neonatal care – 25% are still affected a year after birth ([National Institute for Health and Care Research](#))



Impact of a neonatal stay: family finances

- **One in four** families had to borrow money or increase their debt because of their baby's neonatal stay ([Bliss](#))
- **More than half** of families said their finances affected their ability to spend time with their baby ([Bliss](#))
- At the start of 2022, the average additional cost of having a baby in neonatal care was around **£405 per week** –daily travel to and from neonatal units, high-cost food and drink, additional childcare costs and lost income of around £3,000 during the baby's stay ([Bliss](#))



Neonatal Care (Leave & Pay) Act 2023

- Due to be implemented in GB by **April 2025**
- Entitles mothers & fathers to **up to 12 weeks of leave** from work if their baby spends **at least 1 week in a neonatal unit**
- **On top of** maternity/paternity/adoption leave
- Leave must be paid at a **statutory rate** (currently £156.66 per week) – subject to minimum length of service and earning requirements
- Highly likely that when NI Executive is restored, Assembly will seek to implement **same or similar provisions in NI**



Local employers taking initiative...



Belfast councillors vote to give employees premature birth leave

🕒 2 days ago



FinTrU Announces New Policy for Parents of Babies Born Premature or Sick

THURSDAY 2 MARCH 2023

Benefits of voluntarily implementing a neonatal leave policy

- Ability to **plan staff workloads** – duration of neonatal leave is more predictable than unpaid leave and sick leave
- Improved **staff retention**
- **Attracting new staff** with family-friendly policies
- Improved **staff performance**



What can your council do?

- Consider **proposing a motion** to introduce paid neonatal leave
- Any new policy should follow GB Neonatal Care Act as closely as possible
- ... and then **improve upon it!**
- Council officers: contact TinyLife for a copy of our model neonatal leave policy (Rebekah@tinylife.org.uk)

