

Minutes of Meeting of Policy & Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Tuesday 4 November 2014 in Magherafelt District Council Offices

Members Present: In the Chair, Councillor McPeake (Chair)

Councillors Ashton, Bateson, Buchanan, Elattar, Forde, Glasgow, Mallaghan, McFlynn, S McGuigan, McLean, Molloy, M Quinn (7.07 pm), Reid (7.07 pm) and Totten

Officers in Attendance: Mr A Tohill, Chief Executive
Mrs Canavan, Lead HR Officer
Mrs Mezza, Marketing Communications Manager
Mr Moffett, Change Management Officer
Mr O'Hagan, ICT Manager
Mr JJ Tohill, Lead Finance Officer
Mrs Smith, Council Business Manager (D&STBC)

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm

PR50/14 Apologies

Councillor McGinley

PR51/14 Declarations of Interest

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

PR52/14 Receive and confirm minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 7 October 2014

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

Resolved That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 7 October 2014 (PR32/14 – PR46/14 & PR49/14) were considered and were signed as accurate and correct.

Matters for Decision

PR53/14 Media Protocol

The Marketing Communications Manager presented a report seeking Members' approval for the adoption of a Media Protocol. The Protocol provides guidance on the release of information about the work and decisions of the Council, it recognises councillors' rights to express their own views and engage in their own communications' activity and acknowledges that the Council will also wish to be proactive in its communications' activities. The Protocol provides clarity around the Council's decision-making processes, when information should be treated as confidential and the timing of Council communications, as well as identifying spokesperson(s) in different communications' situations. The Protocol would apply during the transition period and post April 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it is recommended to the Council that the Media Protocol is adopted.

PR54/14 Email Migration Provision

The ICT Manager presented a report, the purpose of which was to inform members on the email provision and migration for the new council and implications for members and staff. Emails currently used will become obsolete and will no longer be maintained as a Clouded Email solution on Office 365 for Mid Ulster District Council in quarter 4 of this financial year will be implemented. Email will be provided in the format "firstname.lastname@midulstercouncil.org" or similar. The ICT Manager said the withdrawal of email for the old domains will mean members and staff will no longer have access to the current email provision.

Assistance will be given to members of existing councils not continuing on in the new Council to migrate existing information to a new email.

Many of the continuing Mid Ulster District Council members affected by the withdrawal of current emails may require an alternative new email service. Members have a choice to use a council provided email midulstercouncil.org or to use a self-provided address.

The business analysis carried out by Kelway identified the retention and access to existing email and file archival solution within Cookstown be extended to all users migrated to the new infrastructure. The email solution provides a core solution that captures every mail sent or received regardless of deletion at a local user level. This facility currently costs £5,085 and there will be increased cost of £12,000 per annum.

The ICT Manager sought approval for email provision and migration and the extension of a file and email archival system for all future Mid Ulster District Council staff.

Councillors M Quinn and Reid arrived at 7.07 pm

In response to a question from Councillor Mallaghan the ICT Manager confirmed that from 1 April 2015 all email information will be retained in archive and there will be no loss of data.

Councillor Ashton asked, if members accepted the change will information sent to old email address be automatically directed to new address and also if member used personal email would it have reduced security.

The ICT Manager stated that during transition in quarter four it is hoped that email users will use this opportunity to promote change of address and after 30 April it would be recommended not to keep relays open and that anything received by old email would receive a failure notification. The ICT Manager further stated that personal email addresses can be protected with password and security pin and it was recommended that both are used.

Councillor McLean stated that for migration system to work would need clear cut off date and thought a better image would be portrayed if all members went with new email address and that a decision should be taken around this.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, asked if a dual email could be operated with email received via the Mid Ulster address being automatically forwarded to personal email.

The ICT Manager stated that auto emails can be arranged but responses will go back from personal email address unless the user uses the default option each time when responding.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to proceed as outlined above.

PR55/14 Occupational Health Services

The Lead HR Officer presented a report seeking approval to procure Occupational Health Services for Mid Ulster District Council. This service is currently provided by the 3 Councils within Mid Ulster Cluster. As an employer Mid Ulster District Council has an obligation to provide Occupational Health which includes services such as pre-employment medicals, absence management, health surveillance, health & wellbeing, drug and alcohol testing etc. The three Councils currently have a combined spend of approximately £10,000 per annum on this service. Members are requested to approve the procurement of Occupational Health Services for Mid Ulster District Council.

Councillor McGuigan questioned the value of such a service as a recent presentation to Dungannon Council by a provider had shown that it was hard to quantify the benefits and asked if an audit of the current systems could be carried out.

The Lead HR Officer stated absence rates in the three councils are quite low in current league tables, Cookstown and Dungannon provide a nurse led unit and employees are able to self referral. One of the objectives is absence management and service provides a degree of independence.

Councillor McLean asked for explanation in relation to the procurement of the process and stated that important that mechanism that would promote health and wellbeing be incorporated in the process.

The Lead HR Officer stated that Terms of Reference on what the Council required would be agreed and include; pre-employment checks; health surveillance; and drug and alcohol checks as common parameters that would be included.

Councillor Reid stated that it would be important to consider mental health issues and that for members to make an informed decision more information on the number of referrals, benefits, value for money would be required.

Proposed by Councillor Reid
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that it agree in principle, to the procurement of Occupational Health Services, subject to receiving a report on the audit of the current three systems to give a better understanding of benefits and value for money.

The Lead HR Officer agreed to collate information and bring back to a future meeting of the committee.

PR56/14 Administration of Burial and Cemeteries in Mid Ulster

The Change Management Officer presented a report on the administration of burials and cemeteries within Cookstown, Dungannon and South Tyrone and Magherafelt Councils. The report analysed the current situation and identified the provision of burial plots within respective cemeteries as a priority service requiring convergence and harmonisation of existing administrative arrangements, inclusive of fees charged, becoming effective from 1 April 2015.

The recommended cemeteries and burial fees for application from 1 April 2015 were presented as:

Fee Category	Proposed
1. Purchase of grave plot	£130
2. Interment Charge	£160
3. Burial of Ashes	£60
4. Exhumation	£310
5. Approval Fee: Erection of Headstone or Memorial	£40
6. Administration fee: search/ re-issue/ transfer of certificate	£25

In respect of items 1 to 3 it was proposed that in cases of non-residents the fees be doubled.

Councillor Molloy stated that exhumation occurs under very trying circumstances and proposed that the charge for exhumation be waived.

Councillor Reid agreed that the fee for exhumation should be waived and asked if all issues were taken into account when recommending charges as interment charge appeared high.

The Change Management Officer stated that fees were not set on cost recovery basis. Proposed fees have been identified following consideration of those currently in place, when each council last reviewed their fees and an inflationary increase has been applied. He added that the fees as presented would be effective from 1 April 2015.

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Forde and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the proposed fees are adopted subject to the fee for exhumation being waived and that the Council authorise the initiation of activity to standardise the administration of burials.

PR57/14 Area within Dungannon & South BC not transferring to Mid Ulster

The Change Management Officer presented a report giving update on the area within the current Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council area not transferring to Mid Ulster District Council and to seek input from members on the transfer process. The area is located at the south east boundary of Dungannon and South Tyrone Council and the report provided a profile of the area and detailed the current council activity and service delivery arrangements in the area. The area will become the responsibility of the Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council on 1 April 2015. Based on the 2011 census data the identified area has a population of 1,213 and it has been calculated that £250k of rates income will be lost due to this boundary change. It was recommended that members give consideration to the approach to be taken and authorise that formal discussions commence between Mid Ulster and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Councils to make preparations.

Councillor McGuigan felt that option 3, Mid Ulster delivering all the services in the area for a period under a Service Level Agreement permitting sufficient time to transfer service arrangements, be implemented if necessary.

The Chief Executive indicated that it would be easy to say to residents in the identified area that they would not be part of Mid Ulster but it would be important that former ratepayers are catered for in service delivery, particularly in respect to refuse collection from 1 April 2015.

Councillor Molloy advised that residents in this area are receiving notification of consultations on community planning under the auspices of the new Mid Ulster District Council which is confusing and proposed a community meeting to address any concerns.

The Chief Executive stated that this could be considered in conjunction with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council.

In response to a question from Councillor Reid the Chief Executive stated that this is the only area transferring out of Mid Ulster Council and there is no gain of any other geographical area.

Councillor Ashton stated that businesses in the area had also received consultation communication with regard to local engagement on the Mid Ulster Economic Development Plan.

Proposed by Councillor McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the approach as outlined in option 3 be explored and that formal discussion commence between Mid Ulster and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon District Councils to make the necessary preparations.

PR58/14 Corporate Plan

The Change Management Officer presented a report which provided an update on the preparations being made for the development and finalisation of a Corporate Plan for the period 2015-2019. He stated that the Council must have a corporate

plan in place as a business tool to guide members and staff on delivering the suite of local government services it will assume responsibility for from 1 April 2015.

A timeline has been compiled for the development of the corporate with sufficient flexibility to ensure a plan is in place for April 2015. The development of the plan will involve a series of sequential work strands starting with a desktop review and analysis. This will draw upon existing council corporate plans, corporate plans held by transferring in functions and while a full blown consultation will not be undertaken, as currently doing that for various strands of work, the review information from council engagements to date, community planning, the economic development action plan and corporate branding exercises, will be considered. A performance framework will form part of the plan.

Members will be involved throughout the process with facilitated discussion and engagement taking place on the emerging findings coming from the desktop analysis.

External support to assist with elements of the process is required to bring a level of expertise and capacity currently not present. The Local Government Training Group (LGTG) regional support programme will be used to provide this support with no cost to Council.

A final corporate plan for the period 2014-2015 will be brought to Policy & Resources Committee in March 2015 following engagement within and across the three councils.

It was recommended that members consider and agree upon the approach being taken to develop the new Corporate Plan for Mid Ulster District Council.

Proposed by Councillor S McGuigan
Seconded by Councillor Mallaghan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to adopt the approach being taken to develop the new Corporate Plan for Mid Ulster District Council.

PR59/14 Rates Estimates Timetable 2015-1016

The Lead Finance Officer submitted a report informing Members of the Rate Estimates timetable and to seek agreement to dates scheduled therein for Member engagement. The Officer stated that each year the Council is required to strike a rate by 15 February a date prescribed by the Department. The Officer further stated that there continues to be great uncertainty surrounding the budget allocation in respect of transferring-in services. It was recommended that the proposed schedule for Member engagement is adopted.

Proposed Date and Time	Venue	Purpose	Suggested Attendees
Monday 15 December 2014 – 6pm	Dungannon	Party Group Leaders' Meeting to discuss Rate proposals	Party Group Leaders and Chief Executive
Thursday 22 January 2015 – 7.00pm	Dungannon	"In Committee" full Council discussion	All Members

		re Rate proposals	
Tuesday 3 February 2015 – 7.00pm	Cookstown	“In Committee” Policy and Resources Committee to discuss ‘final’ Rate proposals	All Members
Thursday 12 February 2015 – 7.00pm	Dungannon	Special Council meeting to strike Rate	All Members

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, referred to a meeting held regarding capital expenditure and asked if there were any plans to follow this up as decisions would need to be made to inform the rates setting process.

The Chief Executive stated that a date for a further meeting is being sought and all comments made at the earlier meeting will be fed into the process.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Buchanan and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the proposed schedule for member engagement in the rates estimates is adopted.

Matters for Information

PR60/14 Risk Register for HR, Communications and ICT

The Chief Executive submitted a report advising that Risk Registers for each of the HR, Communications and ICT working groups for the transitional period to 31 March 2015 had been prepared which identified high level risks. Members were asked to note and reflect on the Registers.

PR61/14 Charters and Borough Status Consultation

The Change Management Officer submitted for information a report on the DoE consultation on Charters and Status. This consultation is seeking comment on its proposals relating to district, borough and city status of the eleven new councils. The consultation document sets out proposed Departmental Regulations to facilitate those councils wishing to seek the continuation of or granting of new borough charters in respect of new local government districts. The committee was asked to note the receipt of the consultation document with comments to be submitted by 12 December 2014.

Councillor Reid stated that this is something that the Council should consider. Dungannon currently has borough status which is important to the residents and should support the document that has been brought forward. The Councillor further stated that members should not be put off because it is a Royal Charter. He stated that Darren Clarke was awarded Freedom of the Borough and this is something that should be retained.

Councillor Mallaghan did not think there was any great benefit and could see no merit, advantages or strengths that come along with being a borough. Councillor S

McGuigan agreed with the comments and stated that a strong business case would have to be made. Councillor Mallaghan added that comments were nothing to do with being a Royal Charter but to do with what the people in the area get from being a Borough.

Councillor McLean stated that to put this in context the Council has a lot to do over the next few months and considering the workloads of officers this was not something that would add value at the moment and should be set aside and maybe considered when Council was up and running.

Councillor Molloy stated that Council should be concentrating on getting policy and procedures up and running so as to have a smooth transition of services come April 2015.

Councillor Glasgow asked if those that have received the Freedom of the Borough, which is an acknowledgement of outstanding achievement, and if the Council does not take on the charter would that be lost. The Member stated that this would be something that party colleagues would find insulting.

The Chair, Councillor McPeake, stated that award was given in different times.

The Change Management Officer stated that consultation document outlines that existing charters will be annulled on April 2016 if not enacted.

Proposed by Councillor McLean
Seconded by Councillor Reid and

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that the consultation be noted and the matter be revisited at a later date

IN COMMITTEE

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor Bateson and

Resolved That item P62/14 is taken in committee.

PR63/14 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm.

CHAIR _____

DATE _____