

Minutes of Reconvened Meeting of the Development Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Monday 19 June 2023 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor McNamee, Chair

Councillors Bell*, Black*, W Buchanan*, F Burton (7.02 pm), Clarke, Corry, Forde*, Gildernew*, McLernon, McQuade, Molloy, Monteith (7.02 pm), Milne*, Quinn (7.02 pm)

Officers in Attendance

Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities and Place (SD: C&P)

Mr Gordon, Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing (AD: HL&W)

Ms Linney, Assistant Director of Development (AD: Dev)**

Mr McCreedy, Strategic Programmes Service Manager (SPSM)

Mr McKenna, Economic Regeneration Service Manager (ERSM)

Ms McKeown, Tourism Service Manager (TSM)

Miss Thompson, Committee and 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 McNamee welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor McNamee 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.

D081/23 Notice of Recording

This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site.

D082/23 Apologies

Councillor Wilson and Ms McKeown, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes.

D083/23 Declaration of Interests

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

D084/23 Chair's Business

The Chair, Councillor McNamee reminded Members of discussion at meeting on 15 June in relation to blue-green algae and water quality in Lough Neagh and proposal from Councillor Bell to invite NIEA to future Development Committee to discuss these issues. This proposal was seconded by Councillor McLernon.

Councillor Monteith stated he agreed with the comments previously made but that there was a further issue for commercial fishermen on the Lough who have been unable to make a living since the algae bloom has come up. The Councillor suggested that Council make contact with DAERA in relation to seeking compensation for the commercial fishermen in the area.

Councillor Bell stated he was content to include this within his proposal.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council –

- To invite NIEA to a future meeting to present on water quality in Lough Neagh.
- That Council make contact with DAERA in relation to any potential compensation for commercial fishermen on Lough Neagh who cannot make a living due to current issue of blue-green algae on the Lough.

The Strategic Director of Communities and Place (SD: C&P) provided update in relation to blue-green algae and Avian Flu. In relation to Avian Flu, he advised that there have been confirmed cases in Maghera, Ballyronan and Dungannon and that DAERA are taking lead in relation to advice for the protection of kept poultry and captive birds and PHA are leading on the advice on public health messaging. The SD: C&P advised that Council have been asked that where positive cases have been confirmed that signage is erected and he stated that this has been done and that reporting of dead birds is encouraged both by Council staff and the public and that external messaging from DAERA and PHA is shared on Council social media channels. The SD: C&P advised that DAERA will collect dead birds for testing but that there is criteria to be met, this criteria relates to whether there have already been positive cases in the area, if the birds are accessible and the length of time since the bird has died. Where DAERA won't collect birds they are advising landowners that they are responsible for disposing of the bird. The SD: C&P advised that the key messages that Council has been asked to promote is that no one should touch any dead birds, that pets should be kept away from dead birds, that suspected cases should be reported to DAERA and that risk of Avian Flu to humans is low.

With regard to blue-green algae the SD: C&P advised that there have been confirmed cases in Battery Harbour, Ballyronan Marina, Toome, Newferry and Portglenone and that there are suspected cases at Castlebay, Washingbay and Curran Quay. The SD: C&P advised that officers continue to engage with NIEA in relation to blue-green algae and will provide messaging at the sites where positive cases have been identified. It was advised that Environmental Health Officers have also visited other water bodies across the District and that no further blue-green algae has been identified. The SD: C&P advised that signs are available at Meadowbank for community groups who wish to erect signage to promote the key public messaging in relation to blue-green algae which is to stay away from it and to keep pets and animals away from it. The SD: C&P

advised that officers will continue to respond to public enquiries, to direct the public to the relevant agencies and engage with those agencies as the message changes to ensure Council sites remain compliant.

Councillor Burton stated that blue-green algae has been a problem at Brantry Lough in the past and asked if officers are checking all sites.

The SD: C&P advised that officers are checking other sites across the District and that Brantry Lough was one the sites visited as well as Round Lake, Black Lough, Eskragh Lough and that no evidence of blooms were detected.

Councillor Quinn asked if the recent rainfall has made any difference to the algae.

The SD: C&P advised he did not have up to date information in relation to the impact of recent rainfall but that he would hope that it has had a positive impact in terms of the dispersal of the algae and that officers will be seeking an update from NIEA.

D085/23 Deputation – Tbus Funding Streams

The SD: C&P advised that the rescheduled meeting did not suit Mr Gardner from Tbus to attend tonight but it is hoped he will be able to attend the July Development Committee.

Matters for Decision

D086/23 Development Report

The Assistant Director of Development (AD: Dev) presented previously circulated report to update members and to seek approval for the following:

- Community Grants – Rolling Programme
- DfC Hardship Funding – Allocation
- Government Funding TEO – Phased Good Relations Plan
- One World – Youth Conference
- Development Update

Councillor Molloy referred to a previously held, Council led, uniform exchange which was held in the Leisure Centre and allowed people to bring uniforms for exchange. The Councillor stated that uniforms are expensive and can be a big drain and asked if officers could look at holding a similar event again.

The AD: Dev advised that officers are carrying out an analysis at the moment to identify gaps and will look to take this forward.

Councillor Monteith agreed with Councillor Molloy's comments and stated that as we move out of the emergency situation of the pandemic, hardship and the cost of living is becoming a more permanent situation. The Councillor stated that whilst his comments are no reflection on the work of the groups involved he asked for some work to be done in achieving a consistent approach across the groups receiving funding. Councillor

Monteith stated that the various groups have different criteria for people they are helping but that depending on what the need is, a group may advise that they are not in a position to help that person. The Councillor stated that this is the third year Council has allocated funding and that there needs to be a level of consistency across the groups and that it is important for the groups, when contacted, to say they are in a position to offer help. Councillor Monteith stated that whenever someone is in hardship it takes a lot of courage to ask for help and if a person receives a negative on their first contact it is extremely difficult to build up the courage again. The Councillor stated that the situation needs to be regularised and that there needs to be consistency across the groups availing of funding.

The AD: Dev stated that whilst some organisations are not like for like they are all networked and that when a person makes contact if that particular organisation cannot help with what the person is asking for they should be able to provide link to organisation who can help. The AD: Dev stated that officers will bring the groups together to stress the importance of the network and having contact points in all organisations.

Councillor Monteith asked that a report be brought back to committee which sets out what is expected of the groups and what the groups can provide.

The AD: Dev agreed to this.

Councillor Corry asked if the hardship funding targets people in Mid Ulster.

The AD: Dev stated that the funding is targeted to people in Mid Ulster and would not be promoted outside of Mid Ulster. The AD: Dev stated there may be instances of people from outside of Mid Ulster receiving help but that most of the help goes to people within the District.

Councillor Burton referred to the community festival grants listed and that one group requested £4,250 whilst another group requested £1,500 and it is proposed that they both be awarded £600. The Councillor asked how this came about and what needs to be improved.

The AD: Dev advised that the maximum allocation to a group is £1,500 and the award is based on four set criteria and the level of detail on the application.

Councillor Monteith referred to report and events and activities being planned and delivered at Hill of The O'Neill and Ranfurly House and asked for a report on what the events and activities to ensure users and the wider community are aware of whats going on at this site. The Councillor stated that the issue of disabled access to the Hill of The O'Neill had also been raised with him and that he felt more could be done at the entrance such as the provision of signage on how to access the facility.

The AD: Dev noted the Councillor's comments.

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor Gildernew and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to –
- Agree the rolling community grant allocations as set out in report.
 - Agree the Hardship Funding Allocations as set out in report.
 - Agree the phased Good Relations Plan as set out in report.
 - Agree to sponsor a delegate to attend the One World Youth Conference as set out in report.

D087/23 Choose to Live Better Funding

The Assistant Director of Health, Leisure and Wellbeing (AD: HL&W) presented the previously circulated report which provided update on successful applications to the Choose to Live Better Fund and sought approval of the acceptance of the letters of offer from The Northern Healthy Lifestyle Partnership (NHLP).

Councillor Burton asked if the projects will be project wide and not just in the Northern Health Trust area.

The AD: HL&W stated that whilst the expressions of interest predominantly originated from the Northern Trust area it is the understanding that the projects will benefit district wide.

Proposed by Councillor McLernon
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to accept the letters of offer from the Northern Healthy Lifestyle Partnership (NHLP).

D088/23 Economic Development – June 2023 - OBFD

The Economic Regeneration Service Manager (ERSM) and Tourism Service Manager (TSM) presented previously circulated report to update on key activities as detailed below:

- Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023
- Lough Neagh Rescue (2023-2024) – Service Level Agreement
- Project Gigabit – Public Review
- Branded Jute Shopping Bags

Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023

Councillor Corry referred to the appointment of a delivery partner to manage the delivery of Enterprise Week and asked if it is possible that this could be done in house in the future.

The ERSM advised that the delivery partner is paid £6,000 of the £28k budget and that they have the contacts to bring people to the table and help Council work up proposals. The ERSM advised that the delivery partner will also carry out the marketing and promotion along with Council. The ERSM stated that whilst he was not saying it could not be done in house it would be difficult given resources but that it may be something that could be looked at in future.

Proposed by Councillor Corry
Seconded by Councillor Clarke and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council –
- To approve a budget of circ. £28,000 for the delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023 from within the existing Economic Development budget 2023/24.
 - To approve that Council proceed to seek competitive quotes to appoint a professional Management / Delivery Partner to manage and co-ordinate the delivery of Mid Ulster Enterprise Week 2023. The costs for such to be apportioned from within the budget detailed.
 - To approve that the Chief Executive be awarded delegated authority to appoint the successful Management/Delivery Partner following the procurement exercise to allow work to commence over the summer 2023 period.

Service Level Agreement: Lough Neagh Rescue 2023/24

Proposed by Councillor Milne
Seconded by Councillor Quinn and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council -
- To note Lough Neagh Rescue 2022/23 Progress Report outlining actions completed against their 2022/23 SLA Targets.
 - To approve Mid Ulster District Council's Service Level Agreement with Lough Neagh Rescue for the year 2023-24.
 - To approve the release of £12,000 to Lough Neagh Rescue from Council's Tourism budget (2023-24) subject to Council being provided with the requisite documentation – Progress Reports (12 months) updating Council on the work undertaken against that outlined in the SLA.

Project Gigabit – Public Review

The Chair, Councillor McNamee stated he thought it would be to the Department's benefit to let Council know where the not spots are.

Councillor Clarke stated he totally agreed and that it would be incumbent on DfE to allow more time. Councillor Clarke proposed the recommendations.

Councillor Burton seconded Councillor Clarke's proposal. The Councillor stated that she could remember the Chief Executive saying that if it was not done right this time it would be years before some people in rural areas can get broadband. Councillor Burton stated that there have been numerous rural businesses set up during the pandemic and that Council needs to ensure no stone is left unturned in trying to support people to get broadband.

Councillor Quinn stated that officers would be sick of him pointing out the failures of Project Stratum and that this was now a chance to set the issues right.

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council -
- To write to DfE to seek a two month extension to the consultation period, until 6 September 2023, to allow time for greater awareness raising to take place about the Project Gigabit consultation, especially throughout rural areas, thus ensuring our citizens are adequately informed and granted sufficient time to respond.
 - To request DfE to supply Council with the recent information they've collected from broadband infrastructure providers to help identify and map addresses / postcodes where remaining gaps in broadband provision still exist.

Branded Jute Shopping Bags

Councillor Burton asked if £55k is money well spent or is there anything else could be done with the money to provide support.

The Chair, Councillor McNamee stated that the money is spread across the towns listed therefore he did not feel it was an overly large amount directed towards each town. Councillor McNamee stated that the provision of bags benefits traders who can give them to shoppers and that it also encourages people to shop in those towns and helps to stop people buying plastic bags.

Councillor Burton asked if the bags are given to traders.

The ERSM advised that the bags are given to traders and the public at events etc. The ERSM advised that the bags are probably the best branding tool for the towns and that the bags are constantly in demand.

Proposed by Councillor Burton
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council -
- Approve a budget circ. £55,000 from existing town centre budget to purchase a supply of new jute branded shopping bags for Dungannon, Cookstown and Magherafelt; and obtain prices for Coalisland branded jute shopping bags, should these be required within the next twelve months.
 - Approve officers progress to seek competitive tenders from suitably qualified companies and provide approval for authority to be delegated to the Chief Executive to appoint the successful tenderer during the period when Council is in summer recess.

Matters for Information

D089/23 Minutes of Development Committee held on 5 April 2023

Members noted Minutes of Development Committee held on 5 April 2023.

Councillor Burton referred to item D069/23 – Granville Industrial Estate (Dungannon) Report and that she had welcomed the money spent in that area. The Councillor asked that it be put on record at the start of the electoral term that many of villages in the District have no decent footpath to walk on and that Council take this on board as the issue is raised regularly by Members. Councillor Burton asked that going forward in this term that Council supports villages in whatever way it can on these type of projects.

D090/23 Regional Public Analyst Contract for Environmental Health

Members noted previously circulated report which advised of an extension of the current regional Public Analyst contract with Eurofins Food Testing Ireland Ltd and Councils for the provision of public analyst services to Council.

D091/23 Affordable Warmth Scheme

Members noted previously circulated report which outlined correspondence received from Department for Communities on the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

Councillor Corry expressed disappointment that Council will no longer be targeting towards the Affordable Warmth Scheme. Councillor Corry stated that the Council and Councillors had one to one knowledge of those who needed support and could benefit from this Scheme. The Councillor asked if there were going to be contacts for Councillors to put people forward to the Scheme in the future.

Councillor Monteith stated that he felt the end of targeting is a retrograde step as Council staff provided an excellent service in relation to the Affordable Warmth Scheme and that he was not hopeful that where the Scheme is going the service will be the same. The Councillor felt that if this Scheme does not have a number of dedicated officers then it will grind to halt and proposed that Council should seek an urgent meeting with the management of Housing Executive locally on how they propose to deliver the Scheme in the future. Councillor Monteith stated that the Affordable Warmth Scheme has been excellent and that many residents across the District have availed of it. The Councillor also highlighted that the way Council staff have conducted themselves has been excellent and that feedback from those referred to the Scheme has been very positive and that this attitude and ethos needs to transfer across.

Councillor Corry seconded Councillor Monteith's proposal.

The Chair, Councillor McNamee stated he could not see the Housing Executive having the same energy towards the Scheme.

Councillor Burton concurred with the previous comments and the proposal to seek a meeting with Housing Executive. The Councillor stated that the Scheme has worked well to date and expressed disappointment in the decision to end targeting. Councillor Burton asked if what remains in the system has been delivered or if there was anyone still waiting.

The SD: C&P stated that the Scheme is one of the casualties of the central government budget process and that officers have raised concerns with DfC in response to the EQIA as there is potential risk whenever targeting is removed. The SD: C&P stated

that officers will seek meeting with Housing Executive so that they can provide overview on how the Scheme will be delivered going forward.

The AD: HL&W stated he would echo Councillor's comments and concerns and that officers have relayed these concerns with the Department and Housing Executive in recent weeks particularly when an SLA was agreed at Committee in March between Council and DfC for the delivery of the Scheme April 2023 to March 2024. The AD: HL&W stated that there was now a transition period for June, July and August and that the arrangements are that there is the capability to put through 20 referrals a month plus or minus five. It was advised that this Council and its officers have continually successfully demonstrated over the years the ability to maximise referrals on a monthly basis. The AD: HL&W advised that officers will continue to push hard and ask for an urgent meeting and also ask for local contacts which will be provided to Councillors. The AD: HL&W stated that there is still the Energy Efficiency Scheme which is funded through the Public Health Agency and also the Council Fuel Stamp Scheme and that these advisory services are still very important. The AD: HL&W advised that officers will take forward the actions and report back.

Councillor Monteith asked if detail could be provided for the meeting on the number of hours Council officers put into the Scheme on a weekly basis as the same equivalency is needed from the Housing Executive. The Councillor also put on record thanks to the officers who have worked on the Affordable Warmth Scheme to date.

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council –
- To seek meeting with Housing Executive on how they propose to deliver the Affordable Warmth Scheme in the future
 - That detail be provided on the number of hours Council officers put into the Affordable Warmth Scheme.

D092/23 Food Service Plan for 2023/2024

Members noted previously circulated report which outlined the Environmental Health Food Service Plan 2023/2024.

D093/23 Communities and Place Departmental Service Plan 2023-2024

Members noted previously circulated report which outlined the Communities and Place Departmental Service Plan 2023-2024.

D094/23 Economic Development Report – June 2023 – OBFI

Members noted previously circulated report which provided update on key activities as listed below:

- Events to Celebrate International Womens Day 2023
- Tourism Development Group Minutes – 25.01.23
- UK Tentative List Process of World Heritage Sites Update
- Mid Ulster Town Centre Summer Saturdays

Councillor Clarke referred to the UK Tentative List Process of World Heritage Sites Update and expressed his disappointment that Council's application was not successful. The Councillor stated he was also disappointed in the report that came back and felt that the point had been totally missed. Councillor Clarke stated that the Sperrins area is unique and has a unique timescale of over a billion years and that he felt this had been pushed to the side. The Councillor stated that he felt more research should be done as whilst a lot is known about what is there, there is also a lot which is not known about and that the report that came back said this was a disadvantage. The Councillor stated it was essential to review what has been done to date, the report that came back and explore how the matter can be taken forward. Councillor Clarke stated that Council is also involved with Sperrins Partnership and that this needs to be progressed as he had some concern that there has been no meeting of the Partnership for nine months and there needs to be a handle on where this is going as well.

The TSM referred to comments in relation to Sperrins Partnership and advised that an update report will be brought to the Development Committee in September and that an update will also be brought in relation to the AONB. The TSM advised that Sperrins Partnership are awaiting a letter of offer from Department of Communities and when received an AONB officer can then be appointed to undertake the completion of the action and management plans. The TSM advised that she will liaise with Sperrins Partnership to seek a board meeting of the Partnership as soon as possible. In relation to the UK Tentative List Process of World Heritage Sites the TSM stated that the report that came back was disappointing and highlighted that there was only one property in Northern Ireland who got on the list which was Gracehill Church Settlements and she was aware that they have been working on this for twenty years. The TSM stated that she took on board Councillor Clarke's comments and that a meeting will be set up to discuss a way forward and to look at Heart of Ancient Ulster again and how that can be taken forward

**D095/23 Departmental Service Improvement Plan for Chief Executive's Office
2023-2024**

Members noted previously circulated report which outlined the Departmental Service Improvement Plan for the Economic Development, Tourism and Strategic Programmes Service for 2023-2024.

Councillor Corry thanked officers for their work on the plan and asked if more could be included on heritage in order to progress in the future.

The TSM noted the Councillor's comments.

The live broadcast ended at 7.44 pm

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Clarke
Seconded by Councillor Burton and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 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 D096/23 to D099/23.

Matters for Decision

D096/23 Clean Neighbourhood Action Plan

D097/23 Economic Development Report – June 2023 - Cbfd

Matters for Information

D098/23 Confidential Minutes of Development Committee held on 5 April 2023

D099/23 Economic Development Report – June 2023 - CbfI

D100/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7pm and concluded at 8.00 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