

Appendix 1

MINUTES OF COOKSTOWN TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 12.30PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

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|----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Councillor McNamee | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Councillor Wilson | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Councillor Mallaghan | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Sharon McGowan | Department for Communities |
| Ursula Marshall | Cookstown Disability Forum |
| Annette McGahan | Mid Ulster PCSP |
| Andrew McConnell | Large Retailer |
| Paul Wilson | Large Independent Retailer |
| Mary McCullagh |) Mid Ulster District Council |
| Adrian McCreesh | |
| Colin McKenna | |

In attendance: Deborah Ewing) Mid Ulster District Council

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Wilbert Buchanan, Mid Ulster District Council; TP Sheehy, Small Independent Retailer; Conall McKee, DFI Roads NI; John Downey, PSNI; Peter Beckett, Large Retailer; Roisin McAllister, Mid Ulster District Council.

2. MINUTES OF TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING 15 SEPTEMBER 2021

It was proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by Cllr McNamee to ADOPT the minutes of the Town Centre Forum Meeting held on 15 September 2021.

3. MINUTES OF TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING 19 OCTOBER 2021

It was proposed by Cllr Wilson and seconded by A McConnell to ADOPT the minutes of the Town Centre Forum Meeting held on 19 October 2021.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

5. UPDATE ON TOWN CENTRE RECOVERY PLAN/MID ULSTER TOWN CENTRE PROJECTS

The Town Centre Managers Progress Report had been circulated to members prior to the meeting. M McCullagh provided an update on Mid Ulster Town Centre Projects as follows:

a) Marketing & Promotion

The proposed marketing and promotion in the lead up to Christmas will include the following:

- Promotion of Mid Ulster Gift Card through local press, billboards, social channels and radio campaign
- Shop local campaign will target people to shop in the local towns over the festive period and during Small Business Saturday. This will include promotion via local press, billboards, social media channels, radio. Consideration is also being given to the development of a TV advert to promote shopping in Mid Ulster.
- Christmas lights switch on will take place on Friday 26 November 2021. This will be a virtual switch on this year due to the ongoing concerns with Covid-19. A company have been employed to facilitate the virtual switch on.
- Additional activities will take place on the 3 Saturdays in December (4, 11 and 18) from 12Noon – 3pm and will include live music, street theatre and a town trail.
 - Live music will be located in the retail core.
 - Street theatre will be delivered by the Bardic Theatre.
 - The town trail will involve approx. 10 local businesses based in the main retail core and will take place from 1st – 18th December 2021.

It was noted that there are additional activities taking place in Cookstown throughout the festive period:

- Saturday 27th November 2021 – Burnavon Craft Fayre
- Saturday 4th December 2021 – Hub Christmas event on Burn Road
- Saturday 4th December 2021 – Killymoon Castle Craft Fayre

Cllr Wilson agreed that moving the location of the live music would be beneficial as the previous location was further removed from the centre of the town. M McCullagh advised that Apex Music Centre have been employed to provide the live music and the music will be moved into the retail core.

It was noted that moving forward the future and promotion of the Cookstown Saturday Market will need to be reviewed and promoted accordingly. M McCullagh advised

members that Council are currently collating information on the market and that they are identifying a way forward. A McCreesh advised that there is a meeting being held tonight with DEA members and a way forward will be discussed.

b) Business Support

(i) Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme

Miconex have been employed to develop and deliver the Mid Ulster District Council's Gift Card Scheme. They hosted 3 webinars for businesses which provided an overview of the Gift Card Scheme and details of how to become involved.

To date over 100 businesses/venues have signed up to the Scheme and Council are actively promoting the Scheme to Mid Ulster businesses.

It is anticipated that the Scheme will launch on Monday 8 November 2021 and a promotional campaign will commence.

C McKenna advised that further clarification was sought after the pre-loaded Gift Card enquiry. He advised that at present this would be an online facility with the ability for customers to obtain empty gift cards from Council venues – namely Burnavon Arts & Cultural Centre, Cookstown; Ranfurly House, Dungannon; and Bridewell, Magherafelt, which then must be loaded by the purchaser through the gift card website.

JJ Tohill, Director of Finance advised that he requires satisfaction of the implications and safety for Council to be involved in this process. C McKenna advised that a meeting will be organised with Miconex to discuss the practicalities of Council involvement for selling pre-paid cards. Members will be advised of the outcome in due course. Cllr Wilson stated that it may be prudent for Council not to be involved in the pre-paid option.

(ii) Mid Ulster Business Marketing Scheme

M McCullagh advised that the small grants 'Mid Ulster Business Marketing Scheme' is still open for applications. Eligible businesses can apply for revenue grants of up to £300, on a first come, first served basis until the funding is fully allocated. Applications can only be accepted through completion of an online form.

The Scheme aims to assist businesses with their marketing efforts as they recover from the effects of the pandemic and includes support towards developing improved online presence, click and collect services, promotional activity, merchandising and window displays, use of influencers/vloggers/bloggers etc.

To date 556 Letters of Offer have been issued with £80,000 still available for allocation. There is a 14 day turnaround from application to Letter of Offer. M McCullagh requested members to advise any Mid Ulster businesses of the scheme.

C McKenna stated that funding must be claimed within the 2021-2022 financial year.

c) Physical Regeneration/Improving Infrastructure

(i) Rural Regeneration Projects

Under the Rural Development Programme a total of 37 villages accessed funding to develop and deliver projects identified through their respective village plans. To date projects have been identified through the village planning process and consultation with the local community groups to determine projects that can access grant aid through the Programme.

A professional led design consultancy team was appointed to commence design schemes for the various projects identified in the villages. A cross council working group has been established for the lifetime of the project. Economic Development Officers are working alongside Technical Services to deliver the schemes. Assistance has been provided to 10 of the 11 villages in the former Cookstown District Council area. Projects have been completed in Ardboe, Ballyronan, Orritor, Lissan, Drumullan, Coagh, Rock, Sandholes, Moortown and Pomeroy. Broughderg is the only outstanding village at present and it is anticipated that works are due to commence in the near future.

(ii) Mid Ulster Town and Village Spruce Up Scheme

Mid Ulster Town and Village Spruce Up Scheme offers discretionary grants of up to 75% eligible costs, capped at £5,000 per property for external and/or internal improvements. Knox and Clayton were appointed to assist in the delivery i.e. assessment of applications and management and monitoring of the successful projects.

The Scheme is now in year 3, Phase 3. Phase 1 and Phase 2 projects are now complete. In April 2021, 73 Letters of Offer were issued to businesses under Phase 3 to a total value of £250,000. To date 24 have been completed to the value of £84,610.81.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(i) SGN Works

M McCullagh advised that works on Drum Road are now complete.

Works are due to commence on 8/9 November 2021 on Fountain Road to establish a private connection. Works will take place during the hours of 9.30am to 4.30pm with a traffic system in place.

A meeting has been organised between Council and SGN senior officials on Tuesday 7 December 2021 at 3.30pm. This is an opportunity to discuss issues such as communication, permits and traffic management. M McCullagh requested members forward any issues they want to be addressed.

(ii) Reval 2023

M McCullagh advised that the deadline for businesses to complete their details for Reval 2023 is 31 December 2021. An email has been issued to Town Centre Database encouraging businesses to complete the questionnaire.

(iii) High Street Taskforce – Call for Evidence

The High Street Task Force call to evidence is now open. A workshop has been organised to take place in the Burnavon, Cookstown on Tuesday 9 November 2021 from 1pm – 3pm. M McCullagh has issued a registration link to members and encourages all to attend where possible. She advised that Council are seeking to employ a consultant to prepare Council's response. In order to facilitate this, it is recommended that a 1 item agenda is held on 29/30 November 2021 to review and sign off the final response. A meeting request will be issued in due course.

(iv) Membership

M McCullagh advised that she is currently working on the membership of the Forum. At present there is 1 vacant position for professional services and no recommendations have been received for the filling of the post.

It was agreed that M McCullagh provide a list of proposed businesses in confidence for the position and will issue to members for review and recommendation.

Cllr Wilson stated that it is imperative that the Forum is regenerated and invigorated to assist the town on the way out of lockdown. He requested that non-attendees are also contacted and membership reviewed.

7. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on 29/30 November 2021 on the High Street Task Force response and members will be notified accordingly.

The meeting ended at 12.55pm



MINUTES OF COOKSTOWN TOWN CENTRE FORUM MEETING HELD TUESDAY 30 NOVEMBER 2021 AT 12.30PM VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

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|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| Councillor McNamee | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Annette McGahan | Mid Ulster PCSP |
| Sharon McGowan | Department for Communities |
| Tom Jebb | Vintners Association |
| Peter Beckett | Large Retailer |
| Joe Connaghan | PSNI |
| Ursula Marshall | Disability Forum |
| Mary McCullagh |) Mid Ulster District Council |
| Colin McKenna | |

In attendance: Deborah Ewing) Mid Ulster District Council

8. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received on behalf of Councillor Trevor Wilson, Councillor Mark Glasgow and Councillor Wilbert Buchanan, Mid Ulster District Council; Sean MacMahon, Property Developer; Conall McKee, DFI Roads NI; Andrew McConnell, Large Independent Retailer and TP Sheehy, Small Independent Retailer.

9. HIGH STREET TASKFORCE CALL FOR EVIDENCE

Cllr McNamee welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that the purpose of the meeting is to discuss and review the draft findings of the response being prepared by Mid Ulster District Council in relation to the High Street Taskforce Call for Evidence.

M McCullagh provided a presentation to members on the findings to date. She provided a background on the High Street Taskforce, explaining that it was formed by the Executive Office to identify the challenges and issues that our high streets face and to oversee the development of solutions and actions that can be taken to support our high

streets. They identified 71 issues which were then grouped together and represented into 14 themes.

M McCullagh advised that a workshop was held in the Burnavon on Tuesday 9 November 2021 and an additional workshop with Cookstown Traders took place on Friday 26 November 2021. The results of each of these meetings, along with respective feedback from Dungannon and Magherafelt traders, enabled Council to pull together the findings which are being reviewed today.

M McCullagh provided an overview of each of the themes along with the findings received to date. Members were invited to comment at the end of the presentation.

Theme 1 – Partnerships

Overview - The HSTF will seek to encourage partnerships public, private and third sector partners locally, regionally and nationally.

Response –

- What is the definition of partnership – indication of the importance of partnerships
- Need to have partnerships with incentives
- Need cross border collaboration
- HSTF are too Belfast-centred, needs to be a wider reach.

Theme 2 – Follow Best Practice

Overview - The HSTF approach is to assess good practice from other places and adapt this so that 'best practice' becomes a unique 'right practice' for our High Streets.

Response –

- Need to have resources available to try to aspire to best practice principles.
- Place Shaping our towns
- Deliver initiatives such as 'Tidy Towns' (Republic of Ireland) – it was noted that Tidy Towns brought communities together and was a worthwhile project

Theme 3 – Investment

Overview - More specific funding streams and schemes are required to promote and encourage residential living

Response –

- Living Over the Shops Initiative – very successful in Cookstown
- Urban Development Grants – used to develop premises i.e. building on Burn Road
- Empty to Occupied Schemes
- Extension of Rates Holiday – or gradual re-introduction/increase in rates
- Strategic Sites Acquisition Fund
- Business Incubation Units – but provide an incentive to businesses to come onto the High Street from the units once their business has been established

Theme 4 – Planning

Overview – In addressing planning for the high street, our challenge will be to contribute to the delivery of a fair and inclusive planning system for people, communities and businesses.

Response –

- Town First approach
- Healthcheck our towns
- Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)
- Town & Village Masterplanning/Place Shaping

M McCullagh advised that Queens University provide work to companies to develop bids to help them attract to towns. She stated that there is potential for this to be utilised more.

Theme 5 – Public Realm

Overview – These are the everyday spaces that we move through and socialise within and the places where we live, work and play.

Response -

- Often resistance to change and move to pedestrian-only zones.
- Regular Cleansing Routines – making the town more attractive via regular cleaning
- Car Parking/Linkages need upgrading- create safe spaces
- Enhance gateways to our towns/villages
- Consideration of traffic management/bypasses

M McCullagh noted that upgrading the linkages in Cookstown has proven difficult in the past due to private ownership but advised members that it was an issue that was raised to be addressed.

Another area for consideration under this theme would be the Cookstown Bypass. She advised members that the plans for the preferred route in regards to the Cookstown Bypass will be available to view in the Burnavon Tuesday 7 December and Wednesday 8 December 2021. This is the consultation period for the Bypass and members are encouraged to attend and review the proposed plans.

Theme 6 – Fiscal including Rates

Overview - Fiscal policy is how government taxation and spending policies are used to influence economic conditions.

Response –

- Consider data from the COVID-19 rates holiday: - impact that has had on new businesses and for slow-down in shop closure rates.

- Online Sales Tax to large companies
- Ensure Property Tax is equitable
- Rates Relief/Holiday – M McCullagh advised that a report has been identified which will be quoted and used as a reference document in the final response

Theme 7 – Capacity

Overview - Capacity refers to the built, social, spatial, and infrastructural strengths and opportunities to transform to produce significant and measurable change

Response –

- Need to look at repurposing empty units, but also to incentivize businesses to come out of enterprise units and into the towns.
- Pop-up shops can work in certain towns
- Fresh and unique ideas for business areas, has to stand out and be different and unique. Flexible spaces - artisan markets, concerts etc. – also the potential of a business wrap around package for businesses in their first year
- The length of leasing terms should be addressed.

Theme 8 – Energy, Climate Change and Sustainability

Overview - Our environment is our most important asset and is crucial to each and every one of us. It is one of the main reasons that people from other countries and regions visit, bringing money into local towns?

Response –

- Practicalities of implementation – need investment and incentives by grants.
- Pedestrian streets hard to implement.
- Heritage assets – restrictive of change for heritage buildings
- Buildings not being utilised in prominent sites should be vested
- Environmental funding required

Theme 9 – Housing & Other Infrastructure

Overview - Good quality affordable and sustainable housing is central to reducing housing stress, homelessness and improving 'sing' solutions for the m f e.

Response –

- Green spaces for housing
- Night time economy essential on our high streets- café culture – it was noted that Cookstown had invested in the night time economy previously and this is something that will be included in the response as a lot of High Streets are not 9am-5pm
- Radical action need to be taken for Housing developments to tackle **deprivation in high streets, rural villages, town and city centres**

M McCullagh advised that Living Over the Shops also falls into this category.

Theme 10 – Getting To and From the High Street

Overview - Getting to and within villages, towns and cities is at the heart of urban regeneration and positively impacts local and regional economies.

Response –

- Transport costs
- Cycle lanes
- Pedestrian streets
- Enhance infrastructure of our Town Centres
- Implement Purple Flag Scheme

Theme 11 – Tourism

Overview - Tourism is a major contributor to the economic well-being of our villages, towns and cities

Response –

- Heritage – restrictions prohibitive
- No transfer of knowledge for communities.
- Need promotion of local assets.
- Towns have lost identity - need to be bespoke.
- Focus on main tourist attractions in area

It was noted that towns should be promoted with the link to local assets.

Theme 12 – Digital High Street

Overview - Online shopping has impacted our high streets

Response –

- Hubs in towns/villages no need for a long commute – derelict buildings repurposed
- Fibre to premises as soon as possible.
- No connectivity for 4g/3g
- Investigate implementation Parking App
- Bespoke solutions needed quicker as [Project stratum](#) will be obsolete by time of roll out
- Local businesses should be online to compete online

Theme 13 – Rural Settlements

Overview - Rural development is vital not just for individuals in rural areas but also for economic growth. Rural development will help improve productivity and stability in social and economic development

Response –

- Funding/support must be tailored to each areas and its needs
- Community initiatives must be supported, in rural and urban environments

- HSTF needs to get talking to rural people as they might not see their issues fitting with our call for evidence.
- Engagement with communities
- Require specific survey for rural settlements – the High Street Taskforce needs to engage with the rural areas also
- Villages local actions sustain the community

Theme 14 – People, Localism, Well-Being

Overview - Places need to be compelling, to encourage communities to support economies, products and services that promote and improve the local high street

Response –

- Rural initiatives need to connect with towns
- Localism is the core of 'place'
- Towns need a forward focus to keep the local connection and further develop
- Strengthening of Chamber of Commerce's/local community groups

It was noted that Theme 14 interlinks with a lot of the other themes i.e. working together.

Cllr McNamee thanked M McCullagh for the presentation and provided feedback as follows:

- Theme 1 Partnerships – the Council have had successful working partnerships with utilities and other departments in the past. Recently there has been issues with these partnerships which are now being reviewed. This breakdown only emphasises the importance of good partnership working.
- Tidy Towns is a great initiative which he advocates in taking forward
- There are not enough Urban Development Grants available to make significant impacts on the towns. He advised that businesses have approached him in the past complaining that the rural businesses have more funding opportunities open to them which is something that should be addressed.
- Bypass – he advised that Council's Growth Deal have provided the funding for the Cookstown Bypass and it is anticipated that the Scheme will commence within the next 2 years.
- Parking Charges – the pilot scheme which was planned to take place in Magherafelt for the 2 hour free parking and pay as you go options has been postponed due to the ongoing pandemic as it did not provide an accurate reflection of the parking requirements in the town. It is anticipated that if the scheme is successful that the pay as you go option will be located in the Union Street car park and the Burnavon side of the Burn Road car park.

U Marshall advised that one of the main issues is to ensure that the report is not Belfast centric. The majority of Mid Ulster is rural based and this needs to be reflected. She also advised that 21% of the Mid Ulster community is disabled and they should be taken into consideration and communicated with.

P Beckett stated that he had additional comments after his attendance at the workshop on Friday. He would like clarification on what is driving the shops to close and how support can be provided to stop this i.e. cutting costs such as rent/rates or increasing footfall to the towns. He stated that the Living Over the Shops scheme would provide additional income to relevant shops, which could be vital for them to succeed. Investment into the businesses would be beneficial and play a vital role in their sustainability i.e. assistance with exterior, interior and fit outs.

M McCullagh thanked the members for their input and advised that a report will be compiled and issued to them for their review. The report is being compiled from the Mid Ulster district as a whole. The report will be issued on Thursday and members are requested to submit any responses by close of play on Friday 3 December 2021. The final report is being issued to the High Street Taskforce on Monday 6 December 2021.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

M McCullagh advised that there will be light entertainment provided in the town centre on Saturday 4th, 11th and 18th December. This is to create an ambience in the town but is not an encouragement for crowds to gather as Council are acutely aware of Covid-19. Council have taken over the previous Poundstretcher store on William Street and this will be utilised as a street performance by the Craic Theatre. In addition there will be live music located outside Brewery Lane Grill and card shop which is being provided by Apex Music. They are bringing a small marquee and the artists will be self sufficient.

Members were also advised that there will be a food cart in place on Saturday 4th December with cooking demonstrations being provided by Sean Owens.

11. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Cllr McNamee thanked members and wished them a happy and safe Christmas and New Year.

The next date will be set and members will be notified accordingly.

The meeting ended at 1pm

Appendix 2

Minutes of Coalisland Town Centre Forum Meeting **Monday 29 November 2021 at 5.30pm** **Microsoft Teams**

Present

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|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Cllr J O'Neill | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Cllr Malachy Quinn | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Raymond O'Neill | Eden Blooms (Vice-Chair) |
| Ursula Marshall | Mid Ulster Disability Forum |
| Sharon McGowan | Department for Communities |
| Joe Connaghan | PSNI |

In Attendance

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------|
| Johnny McNeill | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Colin McKenna | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Catherine Fox | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Annette McGahan | Mid Ulster District Council |

| | DISCUSSION |
|-----------|---|
| 1. | Apologies Cllr Niamh Doris Mid Ulster District Council (Chair) Cllr Dan Kerr Mid Ulster District Council Cllr Niall McAleer Mid Ulster District Council Cllr Robert Colvin Mid Ulster District Council Adrian McCreesh Mid Ulster District Council Mark Kelso Mid Ulster District Council Fiona McKeown Mid Ulster District Council Michael McGibbon Mid Ulster District Council Raymond Lowry Mid Ulster District Council Oliver Donnelly Mid Ulster District Council Francie Molloy MP Coalisland Residents & Community Forum Brian O'Neill Coalisland Credit Union Aedamar McCrossan PSNI Peter Waugh PSNI Dermot McGirr Translink |
| 2. | In the absence of the Cllr Doris, the Vice Chair Raymond O' Neill chaired and welcomed everyone to the meeting. |
| 3. | Minutes of Previous Meeting - Monday 25th October 2021 Proposed by M Quinn Seconded by S McGowan and agreed: - The minutes of the meeting held on Monday 25 th October 2021 were a true and accurate record of proceedings. |

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| 4. | <p>Matters Arising from Previous Meeting – Monday 25 October 2021</p> <p>There were no matters arising that would not be dealt with in the Project Updates.</p> |
| 5. | <p>Coalisland Project Updates</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalisland Public Realm <p>M Leavey updated that the project is currently at the snagging list stage with the contractor. The Team were currently investigating the replacement of the Trees that had been vandalised. The Contractor was also to complete the planting in the planters and the paving at the Civic Space.</p> <p>At the previous meeting, it was highlighted that a buildout was required at Main Street as identified through the Road Safety Audit Stage 3. M Leavey advised following on street meetings with DfI and Traders, the build out was now not required. The car park on Barrack Street is now open and in use. NI water were carrying out some works in relation to the gullies on Kings Row.</p> <p>C Fox advised that once the snagging list has been completed, a launch of the project would be organised in conjunction with the Department for Communities (DfC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gortgonis <p>The re-advertised PAN was completed during August 2021 and the capital team have now received the PACC report for Gortgonis with a view to submitting an application for Planning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEACE IV Shared Spaces Project <p>J McNeill updated that the tender for a Contractor to complete the works was currently out to tender and Members would be updated once the procurement process had completed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revitalisation Project <p>J McNeill advised that the tender for this project is at the same stage as the Shared Spaces project and would update when process has completed. The project involves the upgrade to the 3m path with seating areas, resin bound gravel, links into the housing development, signage and some wildflower planting. New LED lighting would also be installed through the Active Travel project along the Canal.</p> <p>Cllr O'Neill asked whether they could link the path to Canal Quays and highlighted the flooding issued at the gate. J McNeill responded that they would be looking at the kissing gate and ensuring DDA compliant.</p> <p>R O'Neill raised the issue of flooding in the town and referred to his previously submitted 15-point objection letter. R O'Neill stated that the Town does not require</p> |

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| | <p>any trees as the leaves block the drains and stated that the Civic Space should be in front of the Cornmill Building. He also referred to the diversion of an ambulance through Gortgonis and the potential of monitoring the carbon monoxide levels on Main Street. J McNeill advised that he would seek an update from R Lowry in relation to Monitors.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town Centre Progress Report <p>C Fox delivered the Town Centre Progress Report highlighting that the Business Marketing Scheme was still open for applications and encouraged all businesses to apply.</p> <p>The Mid Ulster Gift Card Scheme had been launched on the 8th November with 120 businesses signing up for the scheme so far. Businesses can register at any stage and the Council Team were currently targeting corporate businesses to use the Gift Card for corporate gifts and employee rewards.</p> <p>The High Street Voucher project by the Department for Economy (DfE) had also been extended to the 14th December 2021.</p> <p>C Fox updated on the have scheduled a Revitalisation scheme for Coalisland Town Centre, focussing on the Festive lighting and the Branding. A specification had been prepared for the Festive Lighting and was currently progressing through the procurement process to issue to companies for tender proposals.</p> <p>In relation to the Marketing & Branding, McCadden Design had been appointed following the procurement process and were tasked with delivering a brand for the Town. This will involve stakeholder consultation and the company will present draft brands in the New Year to the Forum for comment. A site visit took place on 18 November 2021 in Coalisland in order for the company to get familiar with the Town.</p> <p>C Fox updated that the virtual switch on of the Christmas Lights took place on Friday 26th November 2021. Craic Theatre will be delivering on street activities every Saturday until Christmas, commencing on Small Business Saturday, 4th December 2021.</p> <p>A Town Trail will also be available for completion throughout the Christmas period. With festive window displays, families can follow an interactive trail through the town centre, (from Saturday 4 December 2021), stopping in at shops along the way to collect clues, and if you solve all the clues, receive a special message from Santa at the end. One winner will be picked to win a Mid Ulster Gift Card to the value of £50.</p> |
| <p>6.</p> | <p>High Street Task Force Call for Evidence</p> <p>C Fox outlined that the Executive Office had formed the High Street Task Force (HSTF) to identify the challenges and issues that our high streets face and to oversee the development of solutions and actions that can be taken to support our high streets.</p> |

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| | <p>The Executive Office has launched a call for evidence and the document could be viewed online. The call for evidence process will run from 25 October to 6 December 2021. C Fox advised that Mid Ulster Council would be submitting a formal response and took Members of the forum through a presentation highlighting the 14 themes and responses to each. A meeting had been held on the 25th November 2021 with businesses in Coalisland to seek their views on the call for evidence, which would be collated and issued to the Department.</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Cllr J O'Neill advised that there was green moss from the gutters on derelict buildings staining the pavements. J McNeill advised he would pass on to the Capital Team.</p> <p>U Marshall referred to the Disabled Peoples Parliament that was taking place on the 3rd December 2021.</p> <p>Meeting ended at 6.30pm</p> |
| <p>8.</p> | <p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Next meeting would be scheduled in the New Year.</p> |

APPENDIX 3

MID ULSTER TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP **Thursday 25 November 2021 at 9.30am via Zoom**

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| | Present |
| Cllr Frances Burton | Mid Ulster District Council (Chair) |
| Cllr Niamh Doris | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Cllr Sean Clarke | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Simon Wiggins | Education & Skills SWC |
| Norman Bell | Visitor Attractions |
| Claire Murray | Hospitality |
| Hugh McCloy | Tourism Services |
| Kieran Bradley | Hospitality |
| Dermot Friel/Cathy O'Neill | Hospitality |
| Richard Mulholland | Mid Ulster Cluster |
| | |
| Michael Browne | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Fiona McKeown | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Mary McGee | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Charmain Bell | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Genevieve Bell | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Allison O'Keefe | Mid Ulster District Council |
| Sharon Arbuthnot | Mid Ulster District Council |

| | DISCUSSION | ACTIONS |
|-----------|--|----------------|
| | <p>Apologies C Doherty, An Carn Mary McKeown, MUDC</p> | |
| 1. | <p>Minutes of Meeting held on 30th June 2021</p> <p>Proposed: xxxx Seconded: xxxx</p> | |
| 2. | <p>Matters Arising Lumfords Glen Water has washed away the landscape. Cllr Burton suggested that that Lumfords Glen be tied in with Slieve Beagh. It was agreed that Lumfords Glen be kept on the Agenda.</p> <p>G Derby from Lough Neagh Partnership would like to become involved with the Tourism Development Group.</p> | |
| 3. | <p>M Browne welcomed Fiona McKeown to the team. He announced that he is formally leaving on 17 December 2021 after 37 years with Council. He wished the Department and Tourism team and the Tourism Development Group every success in the future and is</p> | |

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| | <p>looked forward to seeing tourism in Mid Ulster continue to grow and flourish. Cllr Burton wished Michael well for the future and thanked him for all his work and dedication over the years.</p> <p>F McKeown said she looked forward to working with the team and continuing the great work delivered over the last 6 years.</p> <p>Cllr Clarke said M Browne has been a tremendous person to work with, showed great vision and had done a tremendous amount of work, leaving a great legacy. He said there is still a lot to do but tourism will continue to go from strength to strength and he is looking forward to a bright future.</p> <p>N Bell thanked M Browne for all his work and wished him well for the future. He said Michael has brought MUDC tourism to a new level and welcomed F McKeown to her new role.</p> <p>H McCloy wished Michael well for the future, noted it had been great working with him over the years.</p> <p>M Browne thanked everyone and noted that the sector is safe with this strong tourism team.</p> | |
| <p>4.</p> <p>4.1</p> <p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> | <p>Cluster Reports In addition to Officers report circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p><u>Seamus Heaney Cluster</u> M McGee outlined the report as circulated</p> <p><u>Archaeology, History and Heritage Cluster</u> G Bell outlined the report as circulated and noted that Mid Ulster had two winners in the UAHS Heritage Angel Awards namely Killymoon Castle for best maintenance of a historic building or place. St Macartan's, The Forth Chapel, Augher, overall public vote on favourite project. Cllr Burton extended her congratulations to both winning projects.</p> <p><u>Outdoor and Events Cluster</u> A O'Keefe outlined the report as circulated</p> <p><u>Hoteliers Cluster</u> C Bell outlined the report as circulated</p> <p><u>Mid Ulster Business awards</u></p> | |

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| | <p>Cllr Burton congratulated J McCloy, Glenshane Country Farm on winning 2 awards: Excellence in Tourism Award and Best Start-Up Business Award.</p> | |
| 5. | <p>Business Engagement Programme M McGee outlined the report as circulated. In addition noted that the Mid Ulster Tourism Team were successful in winning Best Digital Initiative award at the Mid Ulster Business Awards for the work delivered online through lockdown and the Covid pandemic. This included the Whatsapp group that now has 140 businesses included plus webinars delivered. M McGee and M Browne expressed their thanks to Hugh McCloy for all his support over the year with this initiative.</p> | |
| 6. | <p>District Wide Monitoring Results Report delivered as circulated. H McCloy enquired on July – Sept 2021 figures for Iniscarn Forest. He requested that this monitor be checked.</p> | M Browne agreed to review this monitor. |
| 7. | <p>TNI Market Led Product Development Programme Mid Ulster Council Tourism have been successful in securing £265,000 from this programme. M Browne outlined the core areas of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Living History animation • Food & Drink Programme – Fed & Watered • Enhancement at OM Dark Sky Park & Observatory with Light Show, • New Development Grant support for Experiences | |
| 8. | <p>Brown Signage M Browne confirmed a letter had been sent to Minister Mallon. It was agreed that this should be followed up on. Members spoke of ongoing vandalism of signs. Bellaghy to Ballyscullion Road, Ballydermot Road to Lough Shore</p> <p>Cllr Burton left the meeting at 10.15, H McCloy assumed the Chair.</p> | G Bell to follow up on this signage |
| 9. | <p>Website Development & Digital Collateral M Browne presented the new Visit Mid Ulster website to members. Developed by Simpleview who are market leaders in website development, it is very reflective of the EAGS brand and dovetails into TNI website.</p> | McCadden to be invited back to demonstrate how industry can utilize the new brand. Plan business workshops for Spring 2022 |
| 10. | <p>Update on Capital projects Blackwater to Ulster Canal</p> | |

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| <p>10.1</p> | <p>Scoping study on this project ongoing. The potential for this project was outlined to members and highlighted. Cllr Clarke noted the need for access in terms of roads and the critical issue that the entry to Blackwater River from Lough Neagh blocked.</p> <p>C Murray commented that local fishermen have lobbied the Department to look at ways to develop Ulster Canal.</p> <p>M Browne commented that MUDC through Department want a resource to get it dredged and it is hoped this will trigger the opening of the Blackwater.</p> <p>Cllr Clarke stated that the Shannon Erne waterway is now coming to Smithborough, Co Monaghan, and there is a need to really push for a linkage in our region through to Monaghan.</p> <p>Industry Updates</p> | |
| <p>11.</p> | <p><u>Killymoon Castle</u> Arts & Craft Fair planned for 4th December 2021 plus candlelight supper. Some coach trip bookings coming through.</p> <p><u>Friels Bar & Restaurant</u> ITOA workshop with Tour Operators excellent. M Browne passed on sympathy to D Friel on the recent passing of his mother.</p> <p><u>Deli on The Green, Loft Coffee Shop</u> Very busy in the run up to introduction of Covid Cert checks. Would be useful to have greater information out there to help people understand how to download cert and access hospitality.</p> <p><u>South West College</u> College are rolling out a new programme to schools to try and encourage more young people to choose hospitality. 15 catering students currently but the image of the industry is improving, hours more realistic and pay improving. Apprenticeships also becoming more important for the sector.</p> <p><u>Embrace Tours</u> Some very positive leads from ITOA, interest in Slieve Gallion mountain tours now.</p> <p><u>Walshs Hotel</u> ITOA good despite uncertainty around Covid, some cancellations but positive outlook for the future.</p> | <p>MMG to discuss this suggestion with C Neill, Hospitality Ulster & J Stuart, NITA</p> |

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| 12. | <p>Any Other Business</p> <p>H McCloy raised issue of speedboats at Portglenone.</p> <p>K Bradley asked about fishing on the River Bann, currently not great and requested that it be improved.</p> <p>Date of next meeting: Thursday 27th January at 10.00am</p> | <p>M Browne to raise these issues with Waterways Ireland at a meeting this afternoon.</p> |
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**Mid Ulster Council Tourism Development Group
Officers Cluster Report**

Thursday 25 November 2021

1. SEAMUS HEANEY CLUSTER – M MCGEE

The group are continuing to collaborate and work both individually and as a strong collective. Five of the members attended Irish Tour Operators Association workshop and sold both the region and their businesses across an average of 20 appointments each. Feedback has been very positive with members reporting strong bookings into next year and 2023. Operators note that enquiries and requests from groups are coming in very strong only in the past 4 weeks and next year all being well is looking extremely positive.

Key issues for many businesses are obviously Covid and staffing. The staffing situation is particularly grave with businesses not able to fully reopen due to lack of staff and no real pipeline for new people into the industry.

Members of the cluster met with representatives working on the Mid Ulster District Council Two-year Employability Action Plan for the Mid Ulster Labour Market Partnership (LMP) and fed back their concerns and suggestions to help support the sector in terms of employability going forward. We have also agreed to survey the sector on this to help inform this work.

The group are working on the recruitment process for their Phase 2 Invest NI Collaborative Growth Programme facilitator. They have tendered this piece of work and are awaiting submissions.

2. OUTDOOR & EVENTS CLUSTER – S ARBUTHNOT / A O’KEEFE

Outdoor

It was agreed that meetings will only be held as and when required. Officers are always available to assist with any query on a daily basis. Additionally, cluster members have access to the What’s App group to receive regular updates and also receive the weekly e-zine with updates from the Business Engagement Officer. This will be reviewed in the New Year and meetings will resume to organize the Wild Adventure Weekend.

Events

Due to safety reasons and a number of uncertainties council agreed back in June not to host any large corporate events attracting mass gatherings. Council worked in partnership with a number of community groups over Halloween to enhance smaller more localized activities in addition to hosting a number for free Children’s Workshops.

On Friday 26 November 2021 the Christmas Lights will be Switched on virtually in our five town centres in the Mid Ulster District. This will be followed up with atmospheric activities on Saturday 04, 11 and 18 December 2021. A TV campaign and Economic Development’s Gift Card initiative will run concurrently over the festive season to promote small businesses, including tourism and hospitality.

3. ARCHAEOLOGY, HISTORY & HERITAGE CLUSTER – G BELL/M MCKEOWN

The cluster group met virtually on Thursday 11th November 2021.

DEARA Collaborative Experiential Programme – Rural Tourism, Heritage

Kate Taylor is continuing to work with the heritage businesses successful in Phase 1. The group were informed to forward any ideas they may have for their own businesses as this experience concept is ever evolving.

Kate Taylor is working on the following concepts: The Emigrants Trail, An Apple a Day, The Milky Bar Commando - Killymoon’s Military History, The Good Old Days of Donaghmore, Poetry & Painting, Immersive Coal Island Experience, The Windows to our Souls, Ahead of Her Time, Authentic Eel Fishing Experience, High Cow Tales, Poetry and Prayer, The Soul of the Shore, Sacred Spaces and Thin Places and The Lough Neagh Camino. An invitation will be forwarded to cluster members hopefully in Jan/Feb to allow them to come and trial and test the experiences.

Tourism NI, Delivery of Market Led Product Development Programme 2021-22TNI

Under the Heritage element a script writer will be appointed to develop scripts for tours and/or living history at a selection of existing and new visitor experiences across Mid Ulster.

Also under the Heritage element there will be the provision of costumes/period costumes across a number of attractions and sites in Mid Ulster.

Heritage Angel Awards 2021

The cluster group were informed that 2 local Heritage sites in Mid Ulster have been shortlisted in the Heritage Angel Awards and to get voting. Killymoon Castle have been shortlisted under Category One: Best Maintenance of a Historic Building or Place and St. Macartan's Church (Forth Chapel) has been shortlisted under Category Five: Best Craftsmanship or Apprentice on a Heritage Rescue or Repair Project. Officers and cluster members sent their best wishes to the 2 nominees.

Update from Cluster Members

Interaction in the group continues to be very positive with most cluster members continuing to improve on their product and experience.

4. HOTELIERS CLUSTER – CHARMAIN BELL

All hotel virtual tours have been completed and issued to each hotel for use. The removing of restrictions for the hospitality industry in October was a huge relief for the sector.

Although no cluster meeting has taken place communication continues with the hotel cluster members with regards to industry updates and other tourism programmes, such as the new TNI Kick Start Programme, participating in industry offers aligned with the Spend Local Scheme, and encouraging to sign up to the new Mid Ulster Gift Card.

Paula Wilson from the Glenavon Hotel participated in the Mid Ulster Enterprise Week as a guest speaker at the 'Light at the end of the Tunnel' webinar, along with Joanne Stuart from NI Tourism Alliance and James McCloy from Glenshane Country Farm. Paula discussed how they adapted their business to survive the pandemic, and what changes are here to stay for the hotel industry. The Glenavon have a number of tour groups and Tourism NI fam trips staying in the region to coincide with a visit to the nearby OM Dark Sky Park & Observatory.

As mentioned at previous meetings, there is a poor attendance at the cluster meetings, mainly due to the constraints on finding time to get released from the day to day operation of the hotel. With the development of a Mid Ulster food programme there will be the opportunity to expand the cluster.

Appendix 4

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 7th December 2021 at 11.00 am Venue: Zoom

Present:

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| Industry | Damian Power, Chair Susan Kuhn, Linden Foods Julie McKeown, Henry Brothers Kieran Bradley, Mid Ulster Tourism Development Group Angela Givan, Emerson Group |
| MEGA | Maria Curran, Project Director |
| Education Sector | Emma McKee, Northern Regional College Shane McKinney, CAFRE Brigid Heron, Area Learning Partnership (Magherafelt) Catherine McHugh, Area Learning Partnership (Dungannon & Cookstown) Jill Cush, South West College |
| Public Sector | Margaret Gallagher, Magherafelt Jobs & Benefits Office Bernie Broderick, Dungannon Jobs & Benefits Office Niall Casey, Invest NI Ethna McNamee, Invest NI Regional Office Colleen McCaughey, Department for the Economy Dawn Connolly, Southern Health & Social Care Trust Brian MacAuley, Mid Ulster Enterprise Partnership Fintan McAliskey, STEP Dungannon |
| Elected Members | Cllr Catherine Elattar, Mid Ulster District Council Cllr Trevor Wilson, Mid Ulster District Council |
| Trade Union | Aaron Hoey, Mid Ulster District Council |

In Attendance:

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| Council Officers | Marissa Canavan, Director of Organisational Development Fiona McKeown, Assistant Director of Economy, Tourism & Strategic Programmes Paul McCreedy, Funding & Investment Manager Celene O'Neill, Community Planning Officer Joanne Millar, Economic Development |
| Consultancy | Alan McKeown, Food for Thought Emma Nelson, Food for Thought |

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| Apologies: | Cllr Dominic Molloy, Mid Ulster District Council Jill Robb, Cicli Sport Colin Conway, Newell Stores Dawn Ferguson, Southern Health & Social Care Trust Lorna Currie, Cookstown Jobs & Benefits Office |
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| | DISCUSSION |
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| 1. | <p>WELCOME AND APOLOGIES</p> <p>D Power opened the meeting, welcomed new attendees and invited them to introduce themselves.</p> |
| 2. | <p>MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING</p> <p>The minutes of the last meeting held on 26 October 2021 were proposed by N Casey and seconded by J McKeown.</p> |
| 3. | <p>MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES</p> <p>No matters were arising from the minutes.</p> |
| 4. | <p>MID ULSTER LMP TERMS OF REFERENCE</p> <p>P McCreedy presented an amended version of the LMP Terms of reference for approval, which was proposed by B MacAuley and seconded by M Canavan.</p> <p>P McCreedy agreed to issue an updated final version to members.</p> |
| 5. | <p>ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRPERSON</p> <p>D Power advised that the election of the Vice-Chairperson was postponed until the December meeting. He referred to the Terms of Reference in that a Vice-Chairperson shall be elected from the private sector and subsequently requested nominations from the partnership.</p> <p>Cllr T Wilson commented on the importance of the local construction sector to the Mid Ulster economy and nominated J McKeown (Henry Bros) as Vice-Chairperson. M Curran seconded this nomination.</p> <p>J McKeown accepted the position of Vice-Chair and thanked members for the opportunity.</p> |
| 6. | <p>UPDATE ON MID ULSTER EMPLOYABILITY ACTION PLAN Alan McKeown, Director, Food for Thought</p> <p>A McKeown delivered a presentation to the group providing an update on statistical analysis, the key findings from stakeholder engagement and emerging themes.</p> <p>6.1 Update on Statistical Analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research showed that the Furlough Scheme, which ended in September, had no significant impact on unemployment-related benefit claims within the MUDC district; this does not correlate with the demand for labour. |

- Mid Ulster saw a significant improvement in rankings within recent years regarding the impact of qualification on labour market structure, with an Economic Activity rate of 76.6% and a decrease of those with no qualifications from 17% to 13.1% in 2020.
- Mid Ulster is ranked second-best performing region in Northern Ireland in assessing the gender gap in economic activity, noting that 25% of economic inactively are women illustrating the requirements to reduce the barriers to employment.
- MUDC district was ranked lowest in employability for Disability Employment Gap (DEG).

6.2 Key Findings from Stakeholder engagement

A McKeown reported that Stakeholder engagement is now completed and encompassed all Key Industry, Enterprise, Education & Careers, and Community sectors. He thanked all parties who took part and reported that the sessions were highly constructive.

The key messages from Industry:-

- Facing a 'People Crisis' resulting in orders being declined, lost revenue, services under pressure and jobs unfulfilled.
- Mid Ulster has a very hungry labour market.
- Need to penetrate economically inactive labour pool.
- Loss of migrant workers is not being replenished.
- Government schemes such as Job Start are not aligned to industry needs.
- Industry would require assistance to employ staff with greater support needs.
- Careers advice over focuses on university pathways.
- There is a lack of engagement with JBOs (Jobs and Benefits Office).

The key messages from other LMP partners:-

- There is a need for a clearer and timelier understanding of industry and skills needs.
- Industry need to inspire young people with high impact resource & content.
- Offering young person/apprentice rates will not attract 16-18 year olds.
- Schools approach to career services with Industry engagement whilst bridging the engagement gap created due to Covid.
- Improving the working circumstance of 16-18year olds to entice alternatives to University.
- JBOs have appointed Employer Liaison Officers and are keen to engage.

6.3 Key areas of focus:-

- Availability of people is a major constraining issue for Mid Ulster's continued economic growth.
- Unemployment benefit claimants (2,700 claimants in the context of labour market demand).
- Bridging the gap for economically inactive women (25% in Mid Ulster).
- Removing barriers to target Disability Employment Gap (DEG) - a 10% improvement in Mid Ulster performance = 500 potential employees.
- Continuing the success in adult learning/ upskilling.

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building confidence, social, and employability skills of young people. • The development of interconnections between schools, colleges and JBOs. <p>D Power thanked A Mckeown for his presentation, commenting that the comprehensive detail would be of great value in formulating the Action Plan. D Power invited questions from members to A Mckeown.</p> <p>C McHugh advised that the perception of career advisors forcing people down an “A-level” route is not a fair representation and acknowledged that more work is required to build the confidence of parents about options other than a university route. She also made the following comments:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Circumstances regarding school leavers need to be improved to attract school leavers, as the University lifestyle is appealing. • Graduates do not know where to get jobs so a recruitment drive for graduates would be beneficial. • It is important to get the right people onto the right pathway for progression to avoid a stalemate. • Many young people not achieving A-Level grades needed to progress to higher-level courses enroll on lower-level courses. • More work needs to be done to develop engineering and manufacturing partnerships with the schools. • Young people need to see where they will fit; companies should employ people to meet the needs of schools and to work within the school curriculum. • Graduates do not know where to go for jobs/experience resulting in young people floating. <p>C McHugh reported that St Patrick’s College would be launching a Careers Connection Programme in January 2022 and businesses should contact her if interested in participating.</p> <p>N Casey commended A McKeown on the quality of data and analysis. He highlighted the key theme of alignment with employer needs and there is an opportunity for the LMP platform to identify what jobs are available over the next 12-24 months and build the pipeline. He also commented on the need to create quality work experience opportunities that meet employer needs.</p> <p>C McGaughey referred to the mapping section and the missing connection between skills and careers. She advised that independent and impartial Careers Advisors speak with year 12 students to assist with skills pathways.</p> <p>A McKeown advised that he would now be focusing on developing the Action Plan in line with the timescales required for Council and DfC approvals.</p> <p>It was agreed that a copy of the presentation slides would be circulated to members.</p> |
| 7. | UPDATE ON FUNDING/STAFF RESOURCES |

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| | <p>P McCreedy reported that DfE has allocated £50,000 to each Council to support the delivery of their LMP Action Plan. Council is currently awaiting more information from the department.</p> <p>He reported that recruitment of a staff team would commence in the new year.</p> |
| 8. | <p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>P. McCreedy referred to the LMP Members Code of Conduct and specific guidance on declaring a conflict of interest. He advised that all serving members would be required to declare a personal or business interest, financial or otherwise, immediately upon becoming aware of the potential conflict or before discussion on an agenda item begins. It is a requirement of the LMP Secretariat to maintain a Register of Interests for each Member. It was agreed to reissue the LMP Members Code of Conduct document to members.</p> |
| 9. | <p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>Tuesday 18th January 2021 at 11.00 am.</p> |
| | <p>ACTIONS</p> <p>LMP Terms of Reference to be circulated to members</p> <p>Draft Employability Action Plan to be issued ahead of the next meeting for consideration.</p> <p>LMP Members Code of Conduct to be reissued to members.</p> |