

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 9 November in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown and by Virtual Means

Members Present	Councillor Corry, Chair Councillors Bell*, Brown*, J Burton, Cahoon, Gildernew*, Johnston, McAleer, McFlynn, McLernon, S McPeake*, Molloy*, Totten*, Wilson
Officers in Attendance	Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env) Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) Mrs Dyson, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)** Mr Gordon, Assistant Director Health, Leisure & Wellbeing (AD: HLW)** Mr Lowry, Head of Technical Services (HoTS) Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP)** Mr O'Hagan, Head of IT (HoIT) Ms McNally, Assistant Director of Corporate Service and Finance (AD: CS&F)** Mrs Grogan, Committee and Member Services Officer
Others in Attendance	Deputation: Carers NI & Carers Policy Forum Mr Craig Harrison & Ms Angela Philips

* Denotes members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

*** Denotes others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

PR179/23 Notice of Recording

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

PR180/23 Apologies

Councillors F Burton and McLean.

PR181/23 Declarations of Interest

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

PR182/23 Chairs Business

None.

PR183/23 Deputation: Carers NI & Carers Policy Forum

The Chair welcomed Mr Craig Harrison, Carers NI & Carers Policy Forum to the meeting and invited him to address the committee.

Mr Harrison provided members with a brief update on the organisation and the matter of Access to Leisure Facilities for Unpaid Carers in Northern Ireland (appendix).

He advised that there were a total 222,213 unpaid Carers across Northern Ireland with 15,729 relating to Mid Ulster. The contribution of unpaid Carers in Mid Ulster is worth £520m per year.

Impact on unpaid caring on health and wellbeing:

- 1 in 4 – unpaid carers in Northern Ireland describe their mental health as ‘bad’ or ‘very bad’
- 52% - say their health has suffered due to caring
- 48% - don't have the opportunity to exercise

Barriers to using leisure facilities:

- 6 in 10 unpaid carers in Northern Ireland say being more physically active would help improve their health; however:
 - Just 7% use local leisure services often
 - When asked why they don't use them more frequently, more than 1 in 3 said they are too expensive

The Chair thanked Mr Harrison for his impressive presentation and said that we all know the importance of our unpaid carers within Mid Ulster and throughout the whole North. She advised that there would be a huge impact on society if carers were not there to assist and also the vast amount of savings, they contribute towards the Health Service. The Chair advised that before the end of the last Council term, Carers were in attendance where some discussions had taken place and one of the things that was raised was the possibility of concessionary fees. She stated that at that time she was aware of a Carer's Card being available for our residents in the Northern Trust area, but it was no longer available in the Southern Trust area and enquired if this had changed.

Mr Harrison advised that like the Northern Trust, Southern Trust had started issuing ID cards during the pandemic but had stopped issuing them, Northern Trust continues to do so as the carers in that area were reporting to them that they were getting a lot of use and value out of them. He said that this could be the biggest downfall and would like to see another means to indicate that there were legitimate carers, i.e. paperwork that's associated with Carer's Allowance where people have to verify and prove the information to be in receipt of the benefit which would mean that there would be confidence that these were legitimate carers.

Councillor Brown thanked Mr Harrison for his presentation and referred to comment regarding Carers Allowance and enquired if there was any indication how many Carers there could be within the Mid Ulster constituency.

Mr Harrison said that he was fairly certain the data that the Department of Communities publishes on the recipients of Carer's Allowance is fairly limited and not sure whether it would be broken down by local government level but could certainly investigate and report back findings to the committee. He stated that just because it wasn't published it didn't mean that it wasn't collected.

The Chair advised that members complete a lot of benefit forms and come across issues relating to some carers being employed or being outside the criteria for Carer's Allowance but were still full-time carers and asked if this could also be investigated regarding concessionary rates.

Mr Harrison stated that in an ideal world, anyone that has a caring role should qualify, but there needs to be a way for Council to verify people coming forward requesting this. He advised that Antrim and Newtownabbey Council took a version of their own definition to approve those people who were in receipt of an ID Card as they had to verify with the Health Trust to avail of the card which was certainly a starting point. To put this in perspective the last update from Northern Trust indicated that less than 1,000 ID Cards had been issued which was a very small percentage of the unpaid carer population in the Northern Trust area never mind the ones living in the Southern Trust area as Mid Ulster cuts across both. Mr Harrison said that the ID Cards would certainly be a starting point but would only be capturing a very small proportion and felt if there were other methods of verification like being in receipt of Carer's Allowance, there could be a much bigger catchment, but agreed that there was no great solution which would meet the sort of verification criteria that the Council would have to impose.

The Chair thanked Mr Harrison and Ms Philips for attending the meeting tonight and said that the Council would try and do whatever they could to assist if required.

Mr Harrison and Ms Philips withdrew from the meeting at 7.13 pm.

Matters for Decision

PR184/23 Request to Illuminate Council Property

The Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP) presented previously circulated report to seek members approval to

illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Brake, Road Safety Charity: World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, and to mark the first day of Road Safety Week 2023
- Positive Life: World Aids Day
- NSPCC NI: Walk for Children
- Ehlers Danlos Support UK: Ehlers Danlos Syndrome Day
- The UK Foundation for Kawasaki Disease Society

Proposed by Councillor McAleer
Seconded by Councillor McLernon and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties as follows –
- Brake: World Day of Remembrance for Road Traffic Victims, and to mark the first day of Road Safety Week 2023: 19 November 2023: Colour - Yellow
 - Positive Life: World Aids Day: 1 December 2023: Colour: Red
 - NSPCC NI: Walk for Children: Friday 22 December 2023: Colour – Green
 - The UK Foundation for Kawasaki Disease Society: International Kawasaki Disease Awareness Day: 26 January 2024: Colour – Red
 - Ehlers Danlos Support UK: Ehlers Danlos Syndrome Day: 4 May 2024: Colour – Black and White

PR185/23 Member Services

No issues.

Matters for Information

PR186/23 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 5 October 2023

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 5 October 2023.

PR187/23 Update Elected Member Development Working Group

Members noted update regarding meeting of the Elected Member Development Working Group held on 19 October 2023.

PR188/23 Local Government Partnership on Travellers Issues: Subscription 2023-24

Members noted update on requests received from the Northern Ireland Local Government Partnership on Travellers Issues for annual membership subscription for period 2023-2024.

Councillor McFlynn advised that she had no issue with the subscription being made but would be interested to see when this group had met within the past year. She asked that a letter be sent to the group asking when the committee had last met.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that a letter be sent to the Local Government Partnership on Travellers Issues to seek confirmation on when the group had last met.

Live broadcast ended at 7.16 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor McLernon
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items PR189/23 to PR.

Matters for Decision

PR189/23 Animal Welfare
PR190/23 Connecting Pomeroy Project
PR191/23 Staffing Matters for Decision
PR192/23 Bellaghy Village Wi-fi Service Review

Matters for Information

PR193/23 Confidential Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 5 October 2023
PR194/23 Contracts and DAC Registers – Update
PR195/23 Financial Report for 6 months to 30th September 2023
PR196/23 Treasury Management
PR197/23 Staffing Matters for Information
PR198/23 Managing Employee Attendance
PR199/23 Staff Updates – Organisational Restructure and Other

PR200/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 7.53 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____

Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

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

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

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

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

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

Access to leisure facilities for unpaid carers in Mid Ulster

Craig Harrison

Public Affairs Manager

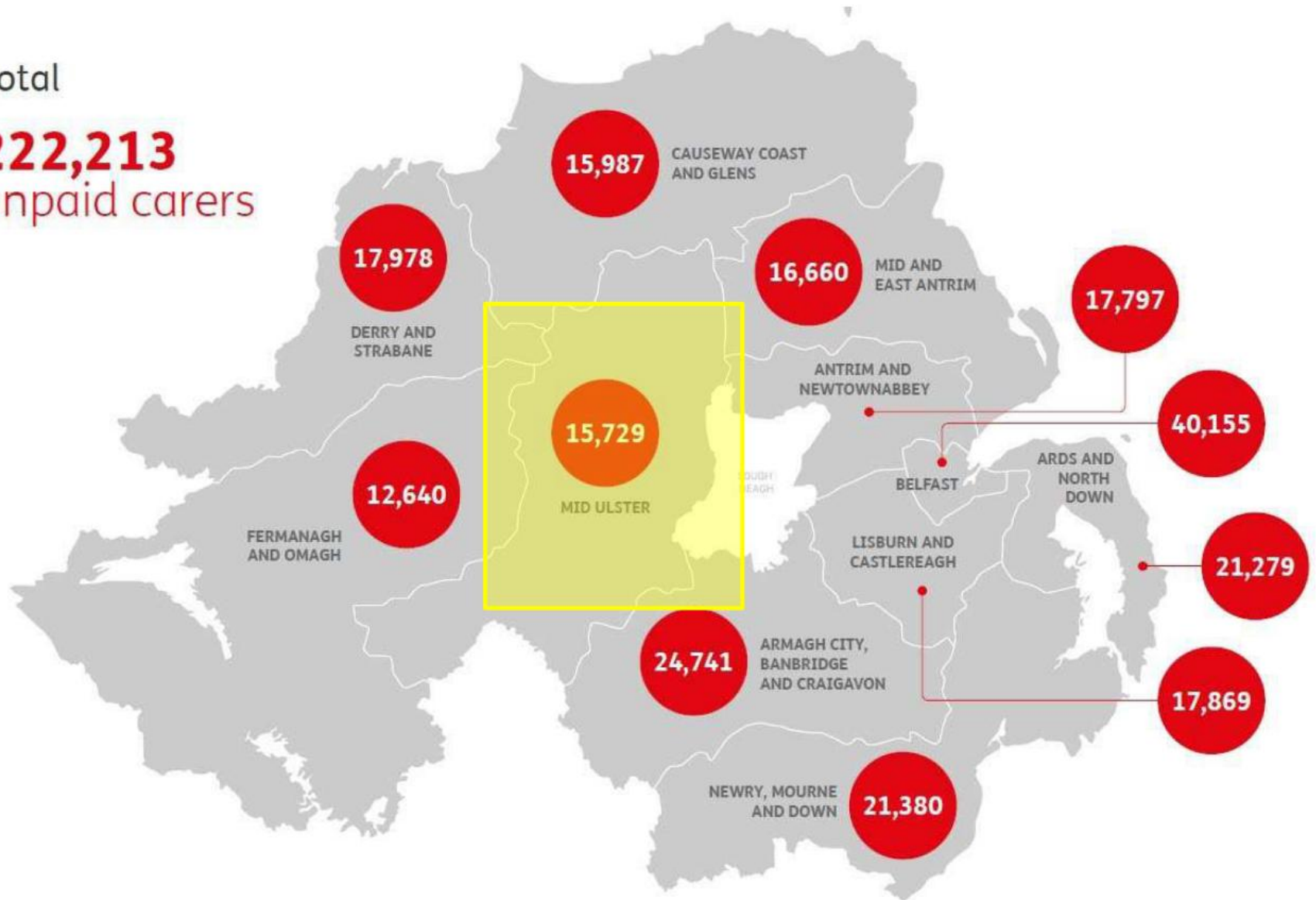
Carers NI

craig.Harrison@carersni.org



Total

222,213
unpaid carers



Source: NI Statistics and Research Agency (2023). Census 2021: Unpaid caring.

The contribution of unpaid carers in
Mid Ulster is worth...

£530m

per year



Impact of unpaid caring on health and wellbeing

- **1 in 4** unpaid carers in Northern Ireland describe their mental health as 'bad' or 'very bad'
- **52%** say their health has suffered due to caring
- **48%** don't have the opportunity to exercise



Barriers to using leisure facilities

- **6 in 10** unpaid carers in Northern Ireland say being more physically active would help improve their health; however:
 - Just **7%** use local leisure services often
 - When asked why they don't use them more frequently, **more than 1 in 3** said **they are too expensive**

“
I was a [gym] member
for six months, but it was
too expensive.”

“
I can't afford the
entry fee.”

“
Going to the gym and doing the
exercise classes was so important
to me. It was an opportunity to
forget about caring for a while and
have some 'me' time. But with the
cost of living now, I just can't afford
it. It's just too expensive.”



Wider context

- New unpaid carer leisure centre concessionary rate in Antrim and Newtownabbey
- £16 p/m – **nearly half the price** of a single adult membership in Mid Ulster (£29.95)

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Health

Council considers leisure discount for Antrim and Newtownabbey carers

Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council is to consider providing access for carers to its leisure facilities at a reduced rate.

By **Michelle Weir**, Local Democracy Reporter

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