

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 3 March 2022 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor McKinney, Chair

Councillors Ashton, Buchanan, Cuddy, Doris*, Elattar*, Forde*, Gildernew*, Kearney*, S McAleer, S McGuigan, McKinney, S McPeake*, Molloy (7.04pm), Totten*

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance
Mr Kelso, Director of Public Health & Infrastructure
Mrs Dyson**, Head of Human Resources
Mr Gordon**, Assistant Director of Leisure, Health & Wellbeing
Ms Linney**, Assistant Director of Development
Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance
Ms McNally**, Assistant Director of Finance, Legal, Governance and Transformation
Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT
Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance
Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer

Others in Attendance

NI Veterans Commissioner
Mr Danny Kinahan
Mr Alan Murphy

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

PR044/22 Notice of Recording

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

PR045/22 Apologies

Councillor McLean

PR046/22 Declarations of Interest

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

PR047/22 Chairs Business

None

PRO48/22 Deputation – NI Veteran’s Commission

The Chair, Councillor McKinney welcomed Mr Kinahan Commissioner of NI Veteran’s Commission to the meeting.

Mr Kinahan extended thanks to the Council for the opportunity to speak to the committee and said he had been in his part time post from September 2021 and had two supporting officers who were full time. He explained that the main aim of his role was to support veterans and ensure that they were aware and could access whatever help and assistance was available and that the delivery of same was efficient.

Councillor Molloy entered the meeting at 7.04pm

Mr Kinahan explained that his role had the sole purpose of helping veterans was non-political and although the appointment is made by the Secretary of State it does not report to same. He shared statistics of veterans and the wars they had encountered for example the Falklands, Iraq and Afghanistan. Mentioning the current conflict in Ukraine he said it highlighted what people do for peace and protection. He spoke of his brief in Northern Ireland which had approximately 10k veterans many linking back to the first and second world wars. Mr Kinahan referenced ongoing road shows to raise awareness of the work of the Commission and the quest to engage veterans in informative meetings that they are aware of and can access support available. He spoke too of the endeavours of his office in lobbying Stormont, Councils and other key agencies to get the message of support out to both veterans and their families.

Mr Kinahan referred to the Veteran Champions appointed by Councils and requested that Council promote the role in their area. He advised that his office had the desire to work closely with councils and the veterans’ champions in place. He further explained that the Councils Veteran Champions are linked to the Reserve Forces in NI who aim to promote the role as it is not within his statutory remit to do so. He concluded by encouraging Council to promote the Veteran Champion role on the website and indeed advise of it through newsletters and inclusion of positive stories. He also suggested that

websites have Veteran friendly links and spoke of the great support given by the armed forces in supporting the Health Service during Covid pandemic.

Councillor Cuddy thanked Mr Kinahan for the presentation and acknowledged that he had a challenging post and asked if other parts of the United Kingdom had similar posts and did he have links with them?

In response Mr Kinahan said yes that he works closely with the Scottish Commissioner who works to the Scottish government and the Welsh Commissioner who works jointly to the British Government and Welsh Assembly. He explained that he worked closely with them especially in relation to health and mental health issues and that they would meet bi monthly.

Councillor Ashton thanked Mr Kinahan for the presentation and requested that Council raise the profile of Councillor Wesley Brown the current Mid Ulster Veterans Champion on the website.

Councillor S McPeake said he would be frank and honest in that he was from a Republican background and whilst he would have no difficulty in people being helped there was a long history of oppression by the British Army and when it came to delivery of health services no one group should be prioritised. He continued that he had no difficulty with anyone championing their cause but said many were vulnerable and on waiting lists for years without receiving priority. He concluded that the Commissioner was right to lobby for what he believed in but as a Council they could not prioritise.

Mr Kinahan responded that he appreciated the comments with regards to health but highlighted that veterans' need assessed regarding health issues and were part of the struggle with waiting lists. He said everyone was a product of their environment but that veterans should be treated like others but cognisance needed to be given to what they had come through. He said that many of them seen their colleagues receive much quicker treatment across the water, his role was to highlight their quest and it was his hope that all in the Chamber would help them should they be required to do so.

Councillor Doris said that she was much younger than many in the Chamber and her early memories of the armed forces were not good and spoke of how her own family was treated. She spoke of how she had cousins killed and the many in Mid Ulster who were still looking for truth and justice and whilst inquests were heard the truth was not revealed and as such she could not support.

In response Mr Kinahan said that there were also many on the other side of conflict who don't know who made their families suffer.

Councillor Elattar congratulated Mr Kinahan on his appointment and said that it was her hope he could carry out his role as he wished to do so. She concurred with her party colleagues and said she felt sorry for veterans across the board including republicans. She said she felt sorry for the British sent to war and spoke of how the government send young men and women out to other countries to engage in conflict. She said the young people are pursuing a career in the armed forces and at a stroke of a pen they are moved and sent out under false pretences to participate in military campaigns concluding that the British Government was a war machine. She said she thought it was good that

there was a commissioner but urged that the bigger picture be addressed in that should these young people be sent out in the first place and not just taking care of them when they return.

Mr Kinahan said that many return and are capable of pursuing the rest of their lives whilst others need support.

In response to Councillor Buchanan's question Mr Kinahan advised the post come from the Justice Minister, that there was three staff in place, himself in a part time role and 2 full time officers.

The Chair, Councillor McKinney thanked Mr Kinahan for the presentation and wished him well in his post. He said there was a lot of people hurting and may lives' had been lost through various circumstances some to other countries and some at home going about their daily business.

Mr Kinahan thanked the Chair and Committee and acknowledged that Mid Ulster District Council had been the first to receive his presentation.

Matters for Decision

PR049/22 Women's Aid/Apex Moved On Support Housing Scheme

The AD: Development drew attention to the previously circulated report providing an update on Women's Aid/Apex Moved On Support Housing Scheme and requested that Members note update on the Women's Aid/Apex Moved On Support Housing Scheme and sought approval to provide agreement in principle to rescinding the lease from Women's Aid and potential sale of the Lands to Apex Housing, to allow officers to discuss with Apex in more detail, subject to legal advice, LPS valuation and further report(s) being taken back to Council to agree the disposal and main terms of the same; and to agree for officers to instruct LPS to carry out valuation of the Lands.

Councillor Doris proposing the recommendation said she had been in contact with Women's Aid earlier in the week and the facility was much needed as the current resource was oversubscribed. She concluded that it was a known fact that many people stayed in abusive relationships due to housing.

Proposed by Councillor Doris
Seconded by Councillor Molloy

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council that approval is granted to

- (i) note update on the Women's Aid/Apex Moved On Support Housing Scheme;
- (ii) provide agreement in principle to rescinding the lease from Women's Aid and potential sale of the Lands to Apex Housing, to allow officers to discuss with Apex in more detail, subject to legal advice, LPS valuation and further report(s) being taken back to Council to agree the disposal and main terms of the same; and

- (iii) To agree for officers to instruct LPS to carry out valuation of the Lands.

PR050/22 COVID Small Settlements Regeneration Programme

The AD: HLW drew attention to the previously circulated report providing an update on the Covid Small Settlements Regeneration Programme. He requested that Members note the content of the report and sought approval to allocate 10% match funding from Council Capital Reserves to the COVID Small Settlements Regeneration Programme of approximately £309,000 noting that this was subject to approval of funding from Department for Communities. He also sought approval that the officer team be permitted to progress the appointment of an ICT team to work up design details for project deliverables.

Proposed by Councillor Ashton
Seconded by Councillor Molloy

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to note the contents of the report and

- (i) Allocate 10% match funding from Council Capital Reserves to the COVID Small Settlements Regeneration Programme of approximately £309,000 – subject to approval of funding from DfC; and
- (ii) Permit the officer team to progress the appointment of an ICT team to work up design details for project deliverables.

Declaration of Interest

Councillors Cuddy and Molloy (Director) declared an interest in Dungannon Enterprise Centre.

PR051/22 Purchase of lands at Drumcoo from Dungannon Enterprise Centre

The SD:CSF drew attention to the previous circulated report regarding lands at Drumcoo Playing Fields and sought approval to purchase of the Lands adjacent to Drumcoo Playing Fields for £190,000 from DEC, subject to the usual due diligence and up to date LPS valuation.

Proposed by Councillor Gildernew
Seconded by Councillor S McAleer

Resolved That it be recommended to the Council to approve to purchase of the Lands adjacent to Drumcoo Playing Fields for £190,000 from DEC, subject to the usual due diligence and up to date LPS valuation.

PR052/22 Request to Illuminate Council Properties: March 2022

The AD: ODSP presented previously circulated report which considered request received to illuminate/light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness of and mark Action for Brain Injury Week. It was noted that with agreement the properties would be illuminated on Monday 16 May 2022 to mark the commencement of Action for Brain Injury Week the designated colours to be green/blue.

Councillor Cuddy highlighted that the requests to illuminate were becoming more popular and that as previously discussed many do not realise the significance of the colours displayed. He requested that Officers investigate how the message could be conveyed should it be advertised in media and perhaps further investment in lights.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council that Officers investigate how the services could be improved that people would know the significance of the building being illuminated and report on same.

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to light up the three designated Council properties on Monday 16 May 2022 to mark the commencement of Action for Brain Injury Week the designated colours to be green/blue.

PRO53/22 Member Services

Councillor Molloy drew attention to the Policy and Resources Committee scheduled for Thursday 5th May 2022 and requested that it be rescheduled as the NI Assembly Elections would take place on the same day.

In response the AD:ODSP advised that a report on the meeting schedule for the incoming year would be presented to April committee and this request could be incorporated within.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to reconsider date of the May Policy & Resources Committee as it falls on the day of an Election.

Matters for Information

PR054/22 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 3 February 2022

Members noted Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 3 February 2022.

PR055/22 Annual Subscriptions: NAC and LGSC

Members noted the content of the report.

Live broadcast ended at 7.35 pm

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

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 Member consider items PR056/22 to PR065/22.

Matters for Decision

- PR056/22 Staffing Matters for Decision
- PR057/22 ICT Software Contract extensions March 2022
- PR058/22 Gortgonis – Community Health & Well Being Hub
- PR059/22 Gortgonis – NIE Wayleaves/Easements
- PR060/22 Iniscarn Forest Project
- PR061/22 Insurances – 2022/23

Matters for Information

- PR062/22 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on Thursday 3 March 2022
- PR063/22 Staffing matters for Information
- PR064/22 Contracts and DAC
- PR065/22 Financial Report for 10 months to 31 January 2022

PR066/22 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 8.10 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.