

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 5 November 2020 in the Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor Quinn, Chair

Councillors Ashton* (7.18 pm), Buchanan*, Cuddy*, Doris*, Elattar*, Forde, Gildernew*, Hughes*, McFlynn* (7.07 pm), S McGuigan*, McLean*, S McPeake*, Molloy*, Totten*

Officers in Attendance

Mrs Campbell**, Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation
Mrs Canavan, Director of Organisational Development
Mr Cassells, Director of Environment and Property
Mr Kelso**, Director of Public Health and Infrastructure
Mr McCreesh, Acting Chief Executive
Ms Mezza**, Head of Marketing and Communications
Mr Moffett**, Head of Democratic Services
Mr O'Hagan, Head of IT
Mr JJ Tohill, Director of Finance
Miss Thompson, Democratic Services Officer

Others in Attendance

Agenda Item 4 – Deputation – Raise Your Voice Campaign – Louise Coyle*** (NI Rural Women's Network) and Elaine Crory*** (Women's Resource and Development Agency)

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

PR177/20 Apologies

Councillor McKinney.

PR178/20 Declarations of Interest

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

PR179/20 Chair's Business

None.

PR180/20 Deputation – Raise Your Voice Campaign

The Chair, Councillor Quinn welcomed Ms Coyle and Ms Crory from the Raise Your Voice Campaign and invited them to make their presentation (Appendix 1).

Ms Coyle advised that Raise Your Voice is a project funded by ROSA, the UK fund for Women and Girls and is the only one of its kind in the UK and Ireland. The campaign is designed, delivered and run by four women's organisations in Northern Ireland, namely, Northern Ireland Women's Resource and Development Agency (WRDA), Reclaim the Agenda (RTA), Women's Support Network (WSN) and Northern Ireland Rural Women's Network (NIWRN). The aim of the campaign is to challenge sexual harassment in communities in Northern Ireland by working for a cultural shift and to try to shift attitudes. Much of the work of the campaign is done through the delivery of workshops as well as a public awareness campaign. Ms Coyle went on to outline the positive outcomes from the training they provide, their lobbying for legislative advances and the debate brought via Motions to Council and the other activities the campaign is involved with.

The Chair, Councillor Quinn thanked Ms Coyle for the presentation which he felt was particularly relevant given the recent media coverage of a high profile trial in London. Councillor Quinn asked how such a trial would impact the work of the campaign ie. Do more women come forward to report domestic abuse as a result or does it have the opposite effect and keep women from saying anything.

Ms Crory advised that high profile trials can be a double edged sword as some people may feel their case will be taken more seriously whilst others see how difficult a trial process can be and will be put off. Ms Crory advised that following the rugby trial in Belfast there was a large number of cases being reported, some of these historical. Ms Crory stated that it often depends how a case is reported and presented in the media, in that, the more intrusive a trial is the more unlikely it is an abuse case will be reported. Ms Crory stated that the campaign encourages people to share their stories and that in itself along with getting emotional support can be very rewarding.

Councillor Doris referred to the recent motion brought to Council which she had seconded and stated that she was confused as to why other parties did not see misogyny as an important issue to be considered as a stand alone hate crime and that they would maybe change their minds following tonight's presentation. Councillor Doris stated that she did not think there would be one woman here tonight who did not have some experience of misogyny and that it was a serious issue. Councillor Doris expressed her full support of the campaign.

Councillor Hughes asked how the work of the campaign had been affected by the pandemic and if training could take place virtually.

Ms Crory advised that training quickly moved online and that this training is open to the public in general. Ms Crory advised that training could be delivered to Councillors online and that training has been arranged to take place with Belfast City Councillors in the near future. Ms Crory advised that recent training has been working well and there has been a good uptake and in fact the online training is reaching some people that would not have been reached before COVID 19 ie. Those with childcare

responsibilities or those with disabilities. Ms Crory stated that the campaign would be more than happy to deliver training to Councillors.

Councillor Elattar asked if training could be delivered to Council officers as well as Councillors.

Ms Crory stated that the campaign would be more than delighted to deliver training to whatever group is interested.

Councillor Molloy referred to recent presentation made at Development Committee by Mid Ulster Women's Aid and that discussion had taken place around the Healthy Relationships programme they are delivering to primary schools. Councillor Molloy felt that this programme should be delivered to all primary schools and indeed secondary/grammar schools age groups as well. Councillor Molloy stated that it was agreed at that meeting that Council would engage with the Department of Education and Department of Justice to lobby to get the Healthy Relationships programme up and running.

Ms Crory stated that this would be an ultimate goal and that whilst the campaign currently reaches into communities by targeting primary and secondary schools this is when the real attitude changes can take place so that it is prevention rather than cure. Ms Crory stated that if Council were interested in promoting the work of the Raise Your Voice campaign in that same way as the Healthy Relationships programme they would welcome this. Ms Crory stated that the Raise Your Voice campaign is trying to reach people as young as possible as currently there is limited education around such topics and she felt it should be an essential part of the curriculum.

Ms Coyle stated that feedback from participants of training is that while they may have felt they knew about the subject before the training they have come away knowing a lot more. More worryingly, most women are reporting that they would have experienced some form of sexual harassment before the age of 18 so children are therefore experiencing sexual harassment which is why the conversations need to start as early as possible.

Ms Crory stated that there is also a whole new way of experiencing sexual harassment ie. Through the internet or social media and by the time the curriculum catches up a large number of young people have been missed.

Councillor Forde asked if someone came forward who had been sexually harassed where would they be signposted to.

Ms Crory advised that it would depend on the circumstances in that if it happened in the workplace there are various bodies who could assist such as Labour Relations Agency or Trade Unions. If the harassment takes place in public, often there is no formal process apart from contacting the police and unfortunately the police can't help as the person will not know who the perpetrator is. This then means that the person will not take the formal route as they feel the authorities will not take them seriously. Ms Crory advised that this was one of the reasons for the Council motion in making misogyny a hate crime as it would require police to record certain instances as an incident of misogyny even if the perpetrator cannot be caught. This would mean an incident would be recorded and the statistics will reflect this in the way racist or homophobic incidents are recorded.

Ms Crory advised that there are also a number of support agencies who can often advise where to signpost people and that this signposting information is available on their website as well as being handed out at workshops.

The Chair, Councillor Quinn thanked Ms Coyle and Ms Crory for their presentation and stated that there was a will to take up the offer of training and that this will be taken back to officers to be arranged. Councillor Quinn stated it was vitally important that everybody understands the issues being talked about and can also recognise when it might be happening to someone else.

Ms Coyle and Ms Crory left the meeting at 7.25 pm.

Councillors Ashton and McFlynn joined the meeting during presentation and discussion of this item.

Matters for Decision

PR181/20 Henderson Play Park, Stewartstown - Lease Agreement

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation presented previously circulated report which sought approval for the formalisation of lease agreement in relation to parcel of land adjacent to 29-41 Henderson Park, Stewartstown from Northern Ireland Housing Executive.

Councillor Cuddy asked if an LPS assessment had been obtained.

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation advised that NIHE worked with LPS and that the valuation sum is the amount which will cover a 25 year lease.

Proposed by Councillor Cuddy
Seconded by Councillor McFlynn and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to accept the one-off valuation sum of £8,800 from Northern Ireland Housing Executive in relation to a proposed 25 year lease for the designated land at Henderson Park, Stewartstown for the development of public play facilities.

PR182/20 Railway Park Action Plan

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation presented previously circulated report which sought approval for planned actions associated with addressing issues in relation to anti-social behavior in Railway Park, Dungannon.

Proposed by Councillor Gildernew
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council –
▪ To approve the proposed actions outlined within report to address anti-social behavior in Railway Park, Dungannon and the associated costs.

- To approve the allocation of additional financial resources estimated at £14,325 in addition to existing budgets to facilitate the identified short term action plan works.

Councillor Cuddy stated that there was a job of work to be done and that he would be supportive of the recommendations. The Councillor advised that Railway Park is almost 20 acres and stated that he hoped the proposed actions would be carried out over the entire park area - from Donaghmore Road to Mark Street as there are bushes overgrown everywhere and it is important to make the whole park safe for users.

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation stated that it was agreed that there would be regular meetings between Council, Councillors and the various departments and that all of the issues raised will be considered as part of the process.

Councillor McFlynn stated it was good to see the report coming through and that concerns had also been raised at PCSP in relation to anti social behavior at the Park. Councillor McFlynn referred to estimated cost of £4,800 within the report for the clearance of vegetation and asked who would be doing this, whether it would be Council staff or contractors.

The Director of Leisure and Outdoor Recreation stated she was unsure whether it would be council staff or contract teams that would undertake the clearance of vegetation but that she would come back to the Councillor on this.

PR183/20 Policy on Room Hire

The Head of Democratic Services presented previously circulated report which considered the application of the Council Policy on Room Hire.

Councillor Molloy stated that the reason the review was requested was specifically around point 5.3.1 of the policy as detailed in the report as regards the hire of Council buildings. The Councillor stated that you could have independent members of the public who would lobby on issues and can have meetings in Council buildings whereas an elected representative isn't allowed to. Councillor Molloy stated that MPs and MLAs are also excluded from hiring rooms and felt that it is prudent that the policy is reviewed and proposed that point 5.3.1 be removed from the policy.

Councillor McLean stated he would like some clarity as he believed the policy was worded at the time so that council buildings would not be used for political rallying. The Councillor stated that Council needed to be careful on how it proceeds and that he would be reluctant to remove the point within the policy in totality. Councillor McLean proposed that more time be permitted to consider the policy to ascertain if something can be brought forward which is more acceptable to all political parties.

Councillor Doris seconded Councillor Molloy's proposal.

Councillor Molloy stated he took on board Councillor McLean's comments and that he did not have an issue if the matter was brought back to the next Policy and Resources Committee with a review of the Room Hire Policy.

Councillor McFlynn felt that it would be foolish to remove point 5.3.1 of the policy completely and that consideration should be given to the rewording of the policy as to what Councillors can use rooms for.

Councillor Ashton stated she echoed the comments of Councillors McLean and McFlynn and would second Councillor McLean's proposal.

Councillor McLean stated that Councillor Molloy seemed to be agreeable to the matter being brought back to Committee and felt that it would not be in the best interest of the Council to allow a political party to hire a Council venue for a political rally.

Councillor Molloy stated he was content for the matter to be brought back for further consideration and that he did not have issue with any political party using council facilities.

The Chair, Councillor Quinn stated that the matter would be brought back to Committee and asked that the existing policy to be emailed to the party leaders in order for discussion to take place within parties prior to coming back to Committee.

The Head of Democratic Services stated he would arrange for the policy to be emailed and that in advance of the next Policy and Resources Committee he would also research what other Councils currently do in respect of room hire.

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to bring a further report back to Policy and Resources Committee which reviews this Councils Room Hire Policy and details what other Councils do in respect of room hire. Existing Room Hire Policy to be emailed to party leaders.

Live broadcast ended at 19.40 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 – Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Doris

Seconded by Councillor Molloy 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 Member consider items PR184/20 to PR200/20.

Matters for Decision

PR184/20 Tender Report for the supply of ICT Infrastructure
PR185/20 Member Services

Matters for Information

PR186/20 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 October 2020
PR187/20 Local Government Partnership on Travellers Issues: Subscription 2020-21

PR188/20 Performance Improvement: Six Month Update (Q1-Q2)
2020-2021

Matters for Decision

PR189/20 Staffing Matters for Decision
PR190/20 Staff Issues – Allocation of Staff Resources – Community
Development
PR191/20 Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) for Chief Executives of
Local Authorities (NI) – Model Disciplinary Procedure and
associated guidance
PR192/20 Cot Lane Footbridge; Condition and Options
PR193/20 Cemetery Development and Safety Improvement Works
PR194/20 General Power of Competence
PR195/20 2021/22 - Rate Estimates
PR196/20 Leisure Services VAT Update

Matters for Information

PR197/20 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee
held on 8 October 2020
PR198/20 Staff Matters for Information
PR199/20 Financial report for 6 months ended 30 September 2020
PR200/20 Contracts and DAC

PR201/20 Duration of Meeting

The meeting commenced at 7 pm and concluded at 9.15 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.