

Minutes of Meeting of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 29 September 2022 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by virtual means

Chair Councillor Corry

Members Present Councillors Ashton*, Black*, Brown*, Buchanan, Burton, Cuthbertson, Elattar*, Glasgow*, Graham*, Kerr*, Mallaghan*, Martin*, N McAleer*, McFlynn*, B McGuigan*, S McGuigan*, McKinney*, D McPeake*, S McPeake, Milne*, Molloy*, Monteith*, Mullen, Quinn*

Officers in Attendance Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive
Mrs Forde, Member Support Officer

Agenda Item 5: Department for Infrastructure (Roads)

Mr Daniel Healy, Department for Infrastructure
Mr Neill Bratton, Department for Infrastructure
Ms Lesley Maxwell, Department for Infrastructure

* Denotes Members present in remote attendance

** Denotes Officers present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7 pm.

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

C191/22 Notice of Recording

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

C192/22 Apologies

Councillors Cuddy, Kearney, S McAleer and Totten

C193/22 Declarations of Interest

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

C194/22 Chair's Business

None

C195/22 Deputation: Department for Infrastructure (Roads)

The Chair, Councillor Corry welcomed the DfI (Roads) Western Manager, Mr Daniel Healy to the meeting. Mr Healy presented the previously circulated report. The Chair, Councillor Corry thanked Mr Healy for the presentation and invited Members questions.

Councillor Cuthbertson thanked Mr Healy for the report and extended thanks also to local officers for responding to queries. He drew attention to page 20 of the report "Mid Ulster District (South) Over the past year 4,290 notifications of intention to excavate in the highway were made by the various utilities in the Mid Ulster District (South) Council area, of which 222 were subject to inspection. Of those reinstatements inspected 2.4% were classified as unsatisfactory." Councillor Cuthbertson said he felt that this appeared to be very low. He also referred to the housing estates in Dungannon and throughout Mid Ulster that had had no investment for 40 plus years and said whilst he understood budget restraints, without a programme for upgrading/repair year on year the list would get longer. He emphasised the need for a programme to bring them up to standard.

Councillor Cuthbertson further outlined that prior to the covid pandemic the main road through Moygashel had been scheduled to be resurfaced together with Ranfurly Crescent area in Dungannon. He said these did not appear to be on the list. Councillor Cuthbertson concluded by welcoming the update on Dungannon Bypass and seeking clarification as to the date of the pending report.

In response Mr Healy stated that with regards to the Bypass schemes the Regional Strategic Transport Network Plan progress could not be made without a Minister in place. He highlighted that the Climate Change Act would also impact the scheme and reviews would have to be completed and that a publication date was unknown.

With regard to comments regarding housing estates Mr Healy concurred that they were suffering but the available budget was insufficient and critical roads or areas posing health and safety risks took priority. In relation to footpath inspections Mr Healy said the statistics referred to locations where inspections had been carried out but unfortunately there was insufficient staff to carry out inspections at all works. With regard to road schemes previously listed he said they were most likely victim of prioritisation as other roads may have deteriorated and thus the greater need dictates how funding is allocated. He said should DfI receive additional funding such schemes would be reconsidered.

The Chair, Councillor Corry stated that such schemes could be brought forward at DEA meetings.

Councillor Kerr highlighted that he had raised at the Council meeting the previous week the roundabout at upper Clonoe. He highlighted he would like to see a biodiversity scheme at the roundabout but said he would raise at the forthcoming DEA meeting.

Councillor Kerr drew attention to references to works planned for Torrent DEA throughout the report and said he would be disappointed should the works slip due to prioritisation of other jobs. He reflected on the Coalisland Public Realm Scheme and drew attention to roundabouts that had missed the scheme but required works which he would detail at the DEA meeting but again highlighted it would be good for both Council and DfI to progress biodiversity schemes.

In response Mr Healy concurred with Councillor Kerr that some of the schemes listed within the report may well slip again should greater priorities arise. He stated that he understood Members frustration when this happened and highlighted that a recent scheme in Cookstown had incurred a 40% increase in cost yet there had been no increase in works and the DfI budget remained static.

Councillor Kerr again referred to the Public Realm Scheme in Coalisland and the missed opportunity for improving the roundabouts as part of the scheme. He said he understood it had been as a result of problems within the remit of the tender but that he was happy for DfI to discuss further in the future.

Mr Healy said this would be followed up at the DEA meeting.

Councillor S McPeake thanked Mr Healy for the report and extended his thanks to all staff Conal, Neil, Donna, Johnny who are all responsive to Members requests. He drew attention to recent works on the A6 and said he had received calls requesting an additional right hand turning lane near the Broagh Road junction turnoff. He said that the resurfacing works will increase speed and motorists turning right were petrified as there was no refuge on the road from passing traffic. He stated there was right hand turning lanes at other junctions even one leading to a dead end. He said whilst they welcomed the upgrade on the A6 at this particular section of road it was important to get it right.

In response Mr Healy stated that he had been briefed recently on that road section had given an undertaking that Mr Bratton would look at the request within the context of the current road scheme to include the additional lane.

Councillor B McGuigan thanked Mr Healy for the presentation and said he would welcome an opportunity to meet with him in person. He commended the DfI officers whom he had worked closely with especially in relation to such schemes as the A6. With regard to the right hand turning lane he stated he would concur with and support Councillor S McPeake's request for one at the Broagh Road turnoff similar to that at Ranaghan Road turnoff. He said whilst the A6 is a good road from Belfast to Castledawson one section of road leading onto the main road to Derry had been left out and DfI and Council

should be lobbying to have this on the national network to complete linkage between the two cities.

Councillor B McGuigan expressed support for Active Travel Schemes which are well received on the ground but said there should be more connection between elected members and DfI on local schemes. He said Members are out on the ground, are aware of footfall and linkages and in partnership schemes could be identified and delivered. He said it was his understanding that the Minister for DfI had committed funding to top up the Active Travel Schemes initiative and it would be beneficial for all areas.

In response, Mr Healy said he would like to see the A6 dualled in its entirety but the cost benefit rationale does not give it high enough priority to secure funding. He said DfI would be happy to progress if funding did become available.

Mr Healy concurred with comments regarding the Active Travel Scheme and said that the Minister had been committed to developing it. He said DfI was currently interviewing for a director to lead the project and agreed with Councillor B McGuigan that Council and DfI should develop a partnership approach to integrate schemes.

Councillor McFlynn thanked Mr Healy for the presentation and commended staff at local offices for their ongoing work especially in what had been a difficult year. She welcomed the fact that contracts were now in place for resurfacing works and lobbied for the stretch of road between The Loup and Coagh. Councillor McFlynn welcomed the pedestrian crossing at Moneymore which had taken approximately 10 years to come to fruition and extended particular thanks to DfI Officers on getting the project over the line stressing that it would improve road safety for many.

Councillor McFlynn drew attention to King Street, Magherafelt and the need for a pedestrian crossing especially for children crossing the road to go to school and pedestrians attending places of worship. She said that she hoped that DfI would see the significance for the schemes aforementioned. Councillor McFlynn concurred with previous comments in relation to right hand turning lanes and the need for the complete dualling of the A6. She concluded emphasising that road markings are refreshed when required and stated that she hoped the local team received sufficient funding to carry out their planned road schemes.

In response, Mr Healy said that he would speak to his team regarding the request for a pedestrian crossing at King Street. With regard to road markings he said that DfI have a rolling contract to renew/refresh road markings but asked that if any were posing a safety issue that they are reported expediently either to an officer or online. He said there was budget to address safety issues.

Councillor Graham in Councillor Cuddy's absence raised the issue of the lack of footpath on Manse Road Dungannon at Eglis Road and Beechvalley. She

highlighted that there was a new housing development and asked why when it was being planned that the footpath had not been provided.

Also on behalf of Councillor Cuddy, Councillor Graham asked why the tunnel at the road of Dungannon Park had been filled in when Council had made representation to preserve same.

Councillor Graham sought clarity as to the extent of the road resurfacing scheme at Granville saying that it appears to stop at the 30mph sign and no indication of works until you reach the industrial estate. She asked why this stretch of road had not been included in the scheme.

Mr Healy said he had done some background reading regarding the issue raised in relation to the footpath at Manse Road, he said this did appear to have been a missed opportunity. He said that there would be opportunity to review under the Active Travel Schemes. With regard to the tunnel at Dungannon Park Mr Healy said he was unaware of the circumstances but there may have been a structural defect but he would report back.

With regard to Granville Road Mr Healy confirmed the scheme stretches from Murdocks at town side for 1.8km but he would outline it on a map and share with the Member. He said this could be further discussed at relevant DEA meeting.

Councillor Quinn thanked Mr Healy for the presentation and commended local staff but said that response times had slowed down somewhat. He said response times were perhaps three to four weeks but sometimes it would be helpful to have requests acknowledged quicker especially if the matters were urgent. He commended the Public Realm Scheme in Coalisland and stated you would not recognise the town but the glaring issue now was the state of the road and requested the promised resurfacing.

Councillor Quinn also drew attention to the Mountjoy Road at Brocagh football field and advised that three cars had come off the road over one weekend. He said the matter is raised regularly and there is a history of accidents and whilst no one has been hurt to date it was only a matter of time and thus he would beg to have the matter addressed.

In response Mr Healy said that the DfI Customer Charter says responses should be within 15 working days and it would be his hope that staff are achieving that, yet he did understand that sometimes a more immediate response is required and thus they would endeavour to be more expedient. Regarding the resurfacing in Coalisland Mr Healy stated it was most likely a casualty of prioritisation. With regard to the Mountjoy Road he said an assessment would be carried out especially in light of the accidents aforementioned.

Councillor Molloy advised that Manse Road had been raised on many occasions by both himself and Councillor Cuddy. He said there had been a missed opportunity to realign the road and put in a footpath and he would

welcome a scheme. He concurred with Councillor Cuthbertson's comments regarding roads in housing estates and said many had been ravaged by utilities and stated they had both raised this on occasions. He further highlighted that small towns and villages do not benefit from urban regeneration schemes and many were crying out for some form of investment especially in relation to footpaths and village squares. He said collectively councils and DfI needed to lobby DAERA and DfC to get a funding pot for improvements in small towns and villages.

Mr Healy said that again he would concur with the issues raised in relation to housing estates but the budget allocation simply did not stretch to permit works to be carried out. He said budget has to go to major roads which are priority. Mr Healy also concurred about the need for an investment fund for small towns and villages and said he had asked DfC but would welcome opportunity to work with council on the matter.

Councillor Burton welcomed the team to the meeting and expressed concern with regard to the ongoing condition of rural roads which often are listed for works, then due to priority budgeting slip off the list and remedial works are not carried out. She highlighted a section of road between Caledon and Aughnacloy where there appears to be a leak, advising that NI Water would also be involved. Highlighting that the route is protected, that Caledon Estate says that it is neglect of infrastructure but that if people hit the water after dark it is dangerous. Councillor Burton further highlighted that a new state of the art childcare facility had opened in Caledon but the road leading to it was full of potholes. Drawing attention to footpaths Councillor Burton said many in villages were not fit for purpose and shared examples such as a lady falling on uneven paving in Castlecaulfield and paving stones in Caledon whereby if you step on one they are flooded with water.

Councillor Burton asked if Main Street in Clogher was due to be upgraded and advised she had been lobbied for additional car parking bays. She also drew attention to the active travel scheme that had been delivered at Eglishe and stated it was great to see people using the footpath which had provided a safe route to the shops.

Councillor Burton said that there should be departmental funding for village improvements, she also drew attention to overgrown trees stating that DfI had the power to deal with such instances and advised she had also raised the matter with NILGA to lobby for improved legislation. Concluding comments Councillor Burton said that road signage especially at 'T' junctions and bad corners needed attention as some were actually lying in hedgerows and requested that an updated list of contacts be forwarded to Members.

Mr Healy speaking on the surface water issue in Caledon said in such instances Members should also flag the issue to NI Water to investigate leaks.

Councillor Burton said that both DfI and Members should write as it was a public safety issue and there was strength in unity.

Mr Healy said that DfI would inspect the road and ascertain the cause of the surface water. With regard to the potholes on rural roads he said that many of the potholes were under 50mm which was the criteria for repair. With regard to pavements in Castlecaulfield Mr Healy requested that such instances are reported online as, if it is, a safety issue DfI are duty bound to address but again work has to be prioritised and incidents have to meet the intervention criteria.

In relation to fallen trees Mr Healy advised that works within DfI were ongoing to formulate a new policy but this was currently not completed. He advised that DfI endeavour to work with landowners as to go down the route of enforcements takes resources from other tasks. Mr Healy advised that there were massive vacancies within the staff structure and until posts were filled only so much could be done but reassured that a recruitment process was ongoing. With regard to missing signage, Mr Healy advised that the online reporting system was the most expedient method of reporting. He also gave an undertaking that the section offices would forward updated contact lists.

Councillor McKinney thanked DfI representatives for the presentation and drew attention to the road improvements at Tobermore to Maghera and welcomed the project saying it was great to see the number of people on it. Councillor McKinney requested that DfI investigate the addition of a new third lane at junction Tobermore (from Glenshane side) heading towards Cookstown as this would alleviate traffic congestion. He said traffic coming from Draperstown had to wait and indicated there was a possibility of land availability to allow this and requested officers follow this up. He mentioned planned road improvements for Aughrim Road/Bells Hill Road which had been discussed for approximately ten years and highlighted there had been quite a number of accidents. Councillor McKinney sought clarity as to when works would be delivered.

Mr Healy advised that he would report back to the Council where on the list planned works for Aughrim Road was and the likelihood of delivery in the current year. He clarified the request for a third lane on the Tobermore A29 at the junction of Maghera Road and said he would have the request assessed.

The Chief Executive thanked Mr Healy, his team and Members for their contributions to discussion.

Speaking to Ms Maxwell the Chief Executive extended sympathy to her on the death of her father, Robert Mulligan who had passed away during the covid pandemic. He spoke of Robert, a true gentleman and how he had served as a local councillor both on Mid Ulster and the legacy Dungannon & South Tyrone Borough Council.

The Chief Executive drew attention to the A5 proposed works and advised that together with the Chair, Councillor Corry they had met with the Minister for Department for Infrastructure to discuss its progress an area of which had particular significance to the district. He also spoke of the A29 running through the heart of Mid Ulster and stated that DfI Western Division had it

listed as a priority but emphasised that it was imperative that central DfI recognised the importance of the A29 as it was one of three strategic cross border routes. He highlighted the importance of DfI estimating investment on more than volume stressing that economic and social factors needed to be prioritised otherwise funding would always go to the East and favour routes for example in Belfast.

The Chief Executive stressed that both Cookstown and Dungannon generate £2m to the NI Economy per annum which would be multiplied if heavy goods vehicles were moved from the main towns. He welcomed the partnership approach Council and DfI Roads had and advised that some £40m would be allotted to the project via the Mid Southwest Growth Deal and stressed the importance of having the SOB updated by Christmas. The Chief Executive said that economically Dungannon is the biggest town thus there is no point getting traffic around Cookstown to have traffic congestion from Carland on through Dungannon.

With regard to the possibility of a bypass for Dungannon the Chief Executive acknowledged that there was no line on the map for a bypass but planners were revisiting this and whilst there was previous attempts at defining a line Council was committed to the task and would invest to get the economic case over the line.

Referring to the discussion regarding financial support schemes for village projects he advised that Members had embraced Active Travel Schemes and Council would endeavour to work in partnership to bring schemes to fruition. He said Council would welcome village realm schemes for populations under 5k stressing that this 5k criteria had to be reviewed. He stated Council would endeavour to bring all relevant departments such as DAERA, DfC and DfI Roads to the table. He concluded that Coalisland Public Realm Scheme had been a game changer that would be a great legacy and welcomed partnership working to achieve such ends.

Mr Healy said that progress was being made on the A29 and the bypass scheme for Dungannon would be a game changer. He welcomed working in partnership with the Council and said he was more than willing to assist Council in negotiations and greatly appreciated the offer of Council working to identify a route and he would welcome round table discussions on same. In relation to village schemes Mr Healy said he would be glad to be part of round table discussions in order that DfI could play a role in delivery of regeneration schemes.

The Chair, Councillor Corry welcomed the success of Public Realm Schemes and stated she looked forward to the conclusion of the Maghera scheme. She too stressed the need for round table discussions to drive forward a funding scheme with criteria relevant to villages. She commended the Active Travel Schemes and spoke of the need for better road network linking Belfast and Derry highlighting the need for improvements on linkage roads Dungiven to Castledawson. The Chair, concluded welcoming progress on the Cookstown

Bypass and emphasised the need to progress a bypass for Dungannon together with works on the A5.

C190/22 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.26 pm.

Chair _____

Date _____