



09 March 2023

Dear Councillor

You are invited to attend a meeting of the Policy & Resources Committee to be held in The Chamber, Magherafelt and by virtual means Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, BT45 6EN on Thursday, 09 March 2023 at 19:00 to transact the business noted below.

A link to join the meeting through the Council's remote meeting platform will follow.

Yours faithfully

Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive

AGENDA

OPEN BUSINESS

1. Notice of Recording
This meeting will be webcast for live and subsequent broadcast on the Council's You Tube site [Live Broadcast Link](#)
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
4. Chair's Business

Matters for Decision

- | | | |
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| 5. | Review of Equal Opportunities Policy | 3 - 16 |
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Matters for Information

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11	Local Government Staff Commission & National Association of Councillors NI - Annual Subscription 2023-24	43 - 48
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Items restricted in accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014. The public will be asked to withdraw from the meeting at this point.

Matters for Decision

13. Mobile Network Choice for Contract 2023-2025
14. Procurement Policy – Review
15. Insurances – 2023/24
16. Lands at Feeney’s Lane, Dungannon
17. Staffing Matters for Decision
18. Local Election Count Arrangements: Appointment of Count Centre Staff and Rates of Pay
19. Thomas Street Gardens Acquisition
20. Gortgonis Health and Wellbeing Hub – Phase 1 Enabling Works
21. Capital Planning Governance and Capital Programme 2023-2027

Matters for Information

22. Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 9 February 2023
23. Customer Service Alignment and Developments - For Information
24. Staff Matters for Information
25. Contracts and DAC Registers - Update
26. Financial report for 10 months ended 31st January 2023

Report on	Review of Equal Opportunities Policy
Date of Meeting	9 th March 2023
Reporting Officer	Marissa Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development
Contact Officer	Marissa Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek Members approval of the noted revisions to Mid Ulster District Council's Equal Opportunities Policy.
2.0	Background The purpose of this policy is to:- ensure Council is compliant with current employment legislation and reflects the provisions of the law relating to Section 75 groupings. The policy covers but is not limited to:- recruitment and selection, pay and conditions of employment, training and continuous professional development, promotion, one to one reviews, grievances and disciplinary matters, finding employment, redundancy, re-organisation, re-deployment and termination of employment and giving references.
3.0	Main Report The Equal Opportunities Policy statement makes clear the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity to its ratepayers, employees and applicants for employment, describes methods which the Council will use in order to give effect to this policy and defines responsibilities within the Council for ensuring equality of opportunity. Revisions have been made to the policy to update in line with current employment legislation, developing caselaw, new and revised Council policies and best practice guidance as per the Labour Relations Agency and Equality Commission.
4.0	Other Considerations
	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
4.1	Human Resources: - To make clear Council's commitment to equality of opportunity for all (including Officers, Job applicants, Agency and Casual workers, Placement students, Apprentices, Contractors and Consultants).

	Council will not discriminate unlawfully against job applicants or employees on any of the following protected grounds:- marital or civil partnership status, sex, pregnancy or maternity, gender reassignment, religious or similar philosophical belief, sexual orientation, age, political opinion, disability, racial group, trade union membership or non-membership and criminal record (only offences relevant to post in question will be considered).
4.2	Financial: - To ensure that all managers and staff are adequately trained in relevant areas including:- Equal Opportunities, Recruitment & Selection, Dignity at Work, Managing Grievances etc.
4.3	Risk Management: The implementation of Council's Equal Opportunities Policy expresses Council's commitment to equal opportunities to attract, develop and retain a diverse and suitably skilled workforce to ensure the continued delivery and development of key Council services. The Policy expresses Council's commitment to positive employee relations and supports the implementation of key employment policies and procedures e.g. Council's Dignity at Work Policy, LGSC Code of Procedures on Recruitment & Selection, Learning and Development Policy, Re-organisation, Re-deployment and Redundancy Policy.
4.4	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
	Members are asked to approve the revised Equal Opportunities Policy.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Mid Ulster District Council's Equal Opportunities Policy



Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
 District Council

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

Document Control			
Policy / Procedure Owner (name, role & section)	Sinead McAleer, Corporate Learning & Development Manager, Organisational Department, Mid Ulster DC		
Policy/ Procedure Author (name, role & section)	Sinead McAleer, Corporate Learning & Development Manager, Organisational Department, Mid Ulster DC		
Version	v1.1		
Consultation	Senior Management Team	Yes	
	Trade Unions	Yes	
Equality Screened by	Yes/No	Date	
Equality Impact Assessment	No	Date	
Rural Needs Assessment	Yes or No or N/A		
Approved By	Policy & Resources Committee	Date	
Adopted By	Council	Date	
Review Date		By Whom	
Circulation	Mid Ulster DC staff		
Document Linkages - Labour Relations Agency Policy Template Equality Commission – Model Equal Opps Policy	Code of Procedures on Recruitment & Selection NJC Conditions of Employment Grievance Procedure Dignity at Work Policy Managing Attendance Policy Flexible Working Arrangements Policy Menopause Support Policy Data Protection Policy Re-organisation, Redeployment & Redundancy Policy Data Handling Policy Recruitment of Ex-Offenders Policy Pay Protection Policy		

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1.0 SUMMARY

This policy is compliant with current employment legislation and reflects the provisions of the law relating to Section 75 groupings. It covers but is not limited to:- recruitment and selection, pay and conditions of employment, training and continuous professional development, promotion, one to one reviews, grievances and disciplinary matters, finding employment, redundancy, re-organisation, re-deployment and termination of employment and giving references.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Mid Ulster District Council is opposed to all forms of unlawful or unfair discrimination and is committed to providing and promoting equality of opportunity for all i.e. all persons will be afforded equality of opportunity with regard to recruitment and selection, training, promotion etc. being purely on the basis of merit and ability.

3.0. AIMS & OBJECTIVES

This policy statement intends to:-

- make clear the Council's commitment to equality of opportunity to its rate-payers, employees and applicants for employment.
- describe methods which the Council will use in order to give effect to this policy.
- define responsibility within the Council for ensuring equality of opportunity policy.

The aim of this policy is to communicate the commitment of the Elected Members, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team to rigorously observe, positively promote and actively pursue the objectives set out in this statement, and will seek to ensure that this policy is fully implemented.

Mid Ulster District Council will aim to provide equality of opportunity in employment to all persons and will not discriminate unlawfully against job applicants or employees on any of the protected equality grounds, which are:-

- Marital or civil partnership status
- Sex
- Pregnancy or maternity
- Gender reassignment
- Religious or similar philosophical belief
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Political opinion
- Disability
- Racial group*
- Trade union membership or non-membership
- Criminal record**

*Throughout this policy the word race is to be understood, in line with the Race Relations (NI) Order, to include colour, race, nationality or ethnic or national origins.

** A person's criminal record will be seen in the context of his/her overall application, ability to do the job and the responsibility of an employer for the care of other employees and service users. Only offences relevant to the post in question will be considered.

This policy and Council's Dignity at Work Policy are underpinned by the following further commitments and aims:-

- A working environment free from all forms of unlawful discrimination including victimisation and harassment;
- A workplace capable of allowing everyone to achieve their greatest potential, and where individuals are willing to give their best;
- A organisation-wide understanding of the message promoted by this policy;
- A commitment to ensuring all staff understand their rights and responsibilities under this policy;
- A policy of ensuring employment opportunities are open to all qualified candidates, so that Council recruits from the largest pool of available talent and recruit the best-qualified staff;
- A commitment to recruiting based on ability to do the job, that also reflects the composition of the local community;
- A commitment to protecting staff, wherever possible, from being victimised or treated less fairly if they make or support a complaint in good faith under this policy.

4. LEGISLATION

The Council is committed to complying with its duties under the anti-discrimination legislation. The current legislation is as follows:-

- Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970;
- Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976;
- Sex Discrimination (Gender Re-assignment) Regulations (NI) 1999
- Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- Disability Discrimination (NI) Order 2006
- Race Relations (NI) Order 1997;
- Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003;
- Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (NI) 2006.
- Section 75 (Northern Ireland) Act 1998

5.0 SCOPE OF POLICY

This policy applies to all employees, apprentices, consultants, officers, contractors, work placement students, job applicants, agency and casual workers.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Council's other policies, namely Code of Conduct for Local Government Employees, Dignity at Work Policy, Grievance Procedure, LGSC Code of Procedure on Recruitment & Selection and Council's Re-organisation, Redeployment & Redundancy Policy.

All employees irrespective of the nature of their employment contract and job applicants (actual or potential) will be treated fairly and selection for employment, promotion, training or any other benefit will be on the basis of aptitude and ability.

The Council recognises that the provision of equal opportunities in the workplace is not only good management practice, it also makes sound business sense. The Council's Equal Opportunities policy will help all employees to develop their full potential and the talents and resources of the workforce will be fully utilised to maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the organisation.

6.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This policy is fully supported by the Elected Members, Chief Executive and Senior Management Team and has been agreed with recognised trade unions. Mid Ulster District Council is committed to:

- preventing any form of direct or indirect discrimination, associative discrimination, perceived discrimination, disability discrimination or victimisation or harassment.
- promoting equal opportunities for women and men.

Breaches of Council's equal opportunity policy and practices will be regarded as misconduct and will result in disciplinary action, which could include dismissal.

The Council is committed to:-

- promoting fair participation for Roman Catholics and Protestants and other religious beliefs or none
- promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities
- promoting equal opportunities for ethnic minorities
- promoting a good and harmonious working environment where all men and women are treated with respect and dignity and in which no form of intimidation or harassment will be tolerated
- fulfilling all legal obligations under the relevant legislation and associated Codes of Practice

- taking any necessary positive/affirmative action, including setting goals and timetables and making any reasonable adjustments in relation to a disabled person

Affirmative Action

Where appropriate, lawful positive action measures such as special encouragement in advertisements or special training will be developed. These measures are available in certain circumstances; for example where there is under-representation of a particular group in specific areas of work.

7.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Executive has specific responsibility for the effective implementation of this policy. Each Director, Assistant Director/Head of Service, Manager/Supervisor also have responsibilities and the Council expects all of its employees to abide by the policy and help create the equality environment, which is its objective.

Mid Ulster District Council recognises that each employee has a personal responsibility for implementing and promoting the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in his/her day-to-day dealings with everyone - including job applicants, work colleagues, members of the public, customers and partners. Inappropriate behaviour is not acceptable and will be dealt with under the Council's disciplinary procedures.

In order to implement this policy, the Council will ensure that that the policy is communicated to all employees for example through:-

- induction training, policy briefing sessions to Managers, team briefings, Council's intranet, display on noticeboard, manual policy folder located in each building and communicated to employees and potential job applicants via Council's recruitment pack documentation.
- appropriate and regular training including 'e' learning.
- an equal opportunities action plan will be developed and will include a range of initiatives and reasonable adjustments, indicating where appropriate affirmative action, with targets and timetables.
- appropriate training and guidance will be provided, including training on induction and management courses. In particular, all those involved in assessing candidates for recruitment or promotion will be trained in non-discriminatory recruitment and selection techniques and will be required to attend refresher training at least once every 3 years.
- consultation will take place with recognised trade unions on the implementation of this policy and any amendments to practice.

- an information system will be established to assist the effective implementation of this policy and guidelines will be drafted for assessing the provision of equality of opportunity.
- adequate resources are made available to fulfil the aims of this policy.

8.0 RECRUITING, PROMOTING & MAKING OTHER SELECTIONS

- The Council will carry out all recruitment, promotion and other types of selection procedures, such as redundancy selection processes, on the basis of merit, using non-discriminatory and, as far as possible, objective criteria.
- Advertisements for vacancies will not include wording that may discourage some groups of people applying, or stereotype in any way, and will be placed where they can reach as wide and diverse a pool of potential candidates as possible.
- Nobody applying for a job with the Council will be asked about their health, attendance record, or whether they have a disability, before a job offer is made – except in very limited situations. The applicant may however, be asked if he/she requires any reasonable adjustments put in place prior to an assessment or interview or to carry out the duties of the post as part of a pre-employment health questionnaire.

9.0 MONITORING & REVIEW

The Council is registered with the Equality Commission for the purposes of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998. As such, the Council is obliged to monitor the community background and sex of job applicants and workforce and undertake periodic reviews as required by Article 55 of the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998.

The Council is obliged to review the composition of its workforce and employment policies and practices every 3 years and, where appropriate, consider taking affirmative action to promote fair participation between members of the Protestant and Roman Catholic communities.

In addition, the Council will also monitor and review its job applicants and workforce in relation to the following characteristics:- (e.g. sex/racial group/disability/gender reassignment/sexual orientation/age/marital or civil partnership status/dependants or caring responsibilities).

Progress on the implementation of this policy and any equal opportunities and affirmative/positive action programmes will be reviewed annually in consultation with the recognised trade unions.

In accordance with the Local Government Staff Commission's Code of Procedures on Recruitment and Selection this Policy will be reviewed by the Council at least once every four years.

10.0 Complaints

Employees who believe that they have suffered any form of discrimination, harassment or victimisation are entitled to raise the matter through the agreed procedures. A copy of these procedures are available from the Human Resources department of the Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance directorate. All complaints of discrimination will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially.

Every effort will be made to ensure that employees making complaints will not be victimised. Any complaint of victimisation will be dealt with seriously, promptly and confidentially. Victimisation will result in disciplinary action and may warrant dismissal.

These internal procedures do not replace or detract from the right of the employees to pursue complaints under the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Race Relations (N.I) Order 1997 to an Industrial Tribunal or, under the Fair Employment and Treatment (Northern Ireland) Order 1998, to a Fair Employment Tribunal, the Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations (NI) 2003; Employment Equality (Age) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2006 and Equal Pay Act (Northern Ireland) 1970, as amended.

Employees wishing to make a complaint to a tribunal will normally be required to raise their complaint under Council's internal grievance procedures first. Information on definitions of discrimination and time limits for raising complaints are set out in the Appendix 1 of this policy.

11.0 Equality Screening & Impact

This policy has been subject to equality screening in accordance with the Council's screening process. The policy has been 'screened out'.

12.0 Rural Needs Assessment

This policy has been subject to rural needs assessment in accordance with the Council's screening process.

APPENDIX 1

The following give a general description of the types of acts that may both breach this policy and be unlawful. Sometimes actions can be intentional, and sometimes unintentional. Examples of both types are included.

Direct Discrimination

Direct discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favorably than another is on the grounds of their gender, marital status, family status, religious belief, political opinion, disability, age, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, trade union membership/non-membership or criminal record.

Indirect Discrimination

Indirect discrimination can occur when a requirement or condition which cannot be justified on grounds other than gender, marital status, family status, religious belief, political opinion, disability, age, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, trade union membership/non - membership or criminal record is applied equally but has the effect in practice of disadvantaging a considerably higher proportion of persons in one or other of the above groups.

In order to establish a complaint of indirect discrimination, an applicant must show the following:

- that a requirement or condition has been applied;
- that the said requirement or condition adversely impacts against the person because of his/her gender, marital status, family status, religious belief, political opinion, disability, age, race or ethnic origin, nationality, sexual orientation, trade union membership/non – membership or criminal record;
- that he/she has suffered detriment by reason of being unable to comply with the condition or requirement.

Associative Discrimination

This is where somebody is treated less favorably because of the personal characteristics of somebody else. Example: treating an employee less favorably because their parents are Jehovah's Witnesses.

Perceived Discrimination

This occurs where someone is treated less favorably because someone wrongly believes they have a particular protected characteristic. Example: treating an employee less favorably because someone thinks he is gay, when in fact he isn't gay.

Disability Discrimination

Disability discrimination occurs when, for a reason related to his/ her disability, disabled person is treated less favorably than other people is, and this treatment cannot be justified. It also occurs when an employer fails to comply with the duty to make a reasonable adjustment in relation to the disabled person, and the failure cannot be justified.

Victimisation

Victimisation occurs when a worker has complained about harassment or discrimination, or has supported a colleague in their complaint, and is treated less favorably as a result. Examples:- an employee who is 'sent to Coventry' because they spoke up on behalf of one of their colleagues in a harassment investigation, or an employee who is dismissed under a pretext because they have complained of discrimination.

Harassment

Harassment is when a hostile, humiliating, degrading, intimidating or similarly offensive environment is created in relation to a protected characteristic. It is also considered harassment for a worker to be subjected to unwanted conduct relating to a protected characteristic that – as an intended or unintended consequence – violates their dignity. Examples:- name calling, lewd comments, excluding colleagues, making insensitive jokes, and displaying pornographic material are all examples of harassment. This is dealt separately under Council's Dignity at Work Policy.

Protected Characteristics

Protected Characteristics are:- age, race (which includes colour and ethnic/national origin), disability, religion or similar philosophical belief, political opinion, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, sexual orientation, marital or civil partnership status.

Other actions which can be unlawful under the Equal Opportunities legislation include:-

- Discriminating against somebody believed to have a protected characteristic, whether or not they actually do, or because they associate with a third party who does.
- Knowingly assisting somebody else when they carry out a discriminatory act;
- Instructing another person (or applying pressure on them) to discriminate;

Complaints

The standard time limit for bringing a complaint of discrimination, harassment or victimisation to an Industrial or Fair Employment Tribunal (as applicable) is three months less one day from the date of the act complained about.

The Equal Pay Act (NI) 1970 as amended and the Sex Discrimination (NI) Order 1976 as amended have different time limits for lodging complaints.

Further information and advice on complaint time limits is available from the Equality Commission for N. Ireland, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast BT2 7DP.

Report on	Response to Consultation on DoH Autism Strategy 2023-2028
Date of Meeting	9 th March 2023
Reporting Officer	Joe McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services & Engagement
Contact Officer	Ann McAleer, Corporate Policy and Equality Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to seek approval from elected members of the draft consultation response developed on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in response to the DoH's Autism Strategy 2023-28 consultation.
2.0	Background
2.1	Members were informed of this consultation at the January 2023 Full Council meeting. Members requested that a workshop be held and that a consultation response be developed on behalf of Council.
2.2.	The online workshop was held on Monday 20 th February and was attended by elected members and the following Autism Support Groups from the District: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mencap • FACTS • The Base at Tobin
3.0	Main Report
3.1	This draft consultation response examines the 10 areas detailed in the consultation. This feedback is based on the feedback received from Autism Support Groups and elected members who attended the associated workshop.
3.2	The response has focused on encouraging the Department to address the issues within diagnosis waiting lists and the knock-on impacts that lengthy diagnosis waiting times are having on individuals awaiting an Autism diagnosis and their families and carers. It is evident that delayed diagnosis and support intervention impacts on all areas examined in the response.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: None

	Human: None
	Risk Management:
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: External response. Screening not required.
	Rural Needs Implications: External response. Impact Assessment not proportionate.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that Council approve the draft response.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	Appendix A: Draft Consultation Response- DoH Autism Strategy 2023-28.

24 February 2023

Autism Strategy Delivery Team

Department of Health

Castle Buildings,

Stormont

Belfast

BT4 3SQ

Email: Autism.Strategy@health-ni.gov.uk

Ref: Consultation Response on Autism Strategy 2023-2028

To whom it may concern:

Mid Ulster District Council would like to take this opportunity to put forward its views in relation to the Department of Health's Consultation on the development of the Autism Strategy 2023-2028.

Individual feedback will be provided on each of the following areas identified in the consultation:

1. Waiting Lists for Autism Assessment
2. Adult Autism Services
3. Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health
4. Short Breaks and Respite Services
5. Transitions

6. Educational Environment and Further and Higher Education
7. Careers and Employment
8. Housing
9. Our Community

1. Waiting Lists for Autism Assessment

The benefits of early diagnosis and early intervention to support individuals with Autism is well documented. Currently there are entirely unacceptable waiting-lists time for diagnosis (reported as up to 3years). Consequently a significant number of individuals and their families are suffering from a lack of support and intervention which is having impacts across all of the other 9 areas being examined as part of this consultation process.

There is also great disparity between Trust areas in both waiting-lists times and the type of support each Trust provides to a person diagnosed with Autism. This has created a situation of post code lottery healthcare, creating a disparity between people being enabled and supported to live a full life and find coping strategies for areas of their life that they may find challenging. Therefore it is clear that the current waiting times create a barrier to accessing support services and the ability of a person with Autism to achieve their full potential. Not only are they being denied early intervention but in some instances a diagnosis doesn't lead to appropriate access to long term appropriate support interventions.

Current methods of diagnosis assessments also vary throughout Trust areas. The use of remote assessment methods may be useful in some cases to increase accessibility. However, given the social and emotional aspects of Autism, the limitations of this method have to be recognised. The individual themselves or their parents/carers should be consulted with regarding whether or not this method is appropriate for them. Given the length of time someone may have waited to be assessed it is imperative that the correct assessment method for them is utilised.

The underrepresentation of female diagnosis is also something that should be addressed by the Department. It is widely recognised that women and girls' masking of autism symptoms can lead to a delay in their consideration for diagnosis. Over generations this had led to autism being more frequently diagnosed in boys and men. The diagnosis process should therefore address the disparity between behaviours displayed by all genders.

2. Adult Autism Services

As highlighted in other areas of this response, the waiting times for assessment and diagnosis vary greatly across the Trust areas. Again, the support and follow-up services provided post-diagnosis can also differ greatly. This can lead to adults slipping through the net and in some cases failing to ever receive a diagnosis and the associated support that they require. In some cases, adults who would benefit from an assessment are then treated for other associated health conditions such as anxiety and depression. These conditions can stem from an inability to manage their primary condition which has not been diagnosed. This lack of diagnosis can negatively impact on all aspects of adult life, such as training and employment, relationships and caring responsibilities.

3. Emotional Health and Wellbeing

In terms of providing emotional health and wellbeing support for people with Autism, it is clear that in the Mid Ulster District Council area, as well as many other areas, the Community and Voluntary sector provide a lot of the limited support available. These groups are overwhelmed and in some cases have families on waiting lists. These groups were often originally set up to serve just their local locality, but because of the dearth of funded support the groups now support families from across the District. This situation worsened during the pandemic and it was evident that a vacuum for emotional health and wellbeing had been created and that the Community and Voluntary sector were filling that void. However, these same groups struggle for

funding to maintain the services which individuals with Autism and their families have come to depend upon.

The provision of peer support and targeted activities, as well as a supportive listening ear has proven invaluable to families in the Mid Ulster District. As such, the Council would like to take this opportunity to commend all the volunteers who work tirelessly within the District to provide such effective support to families who require it. However, the Council would also urge the Department to appropriately fund this local provision of emotional health and wellbeing for people with Autism and their carers.

4. Short Breaks and Respite

The feedback received by Mid Ulster District Council on the provision of short breaks and respite care is that, within this large rural district, this provision is severely lacking. Unfortunately, it can be the case that the respite offered is such a long distance from the family home that the time and effort taken to travel to the respite location outweighs the overall aims and benefit of the respite provision. Mid Ulster District would recommend that respite is tailored to the need of the family who are in receipt of it and that it meets the aim of providing a rest for care givers instead of causing additional stress just to gain access to it.

Feedback has also been received by Mid Ulster District Council that the Direct Payments system can be cumbersome for families to manage and implement. This is further exasperated by the lack of appropriately trained care staff. The fact that trained staff are offered a meagre hourly rate of pay for the important and essential work that they carry out makes it even more difficult to access appropriate support. Mechanisms to ease this issue, such as a register to match up appropriately trained carers to families who require support, would be greatly welcomed.

5. Transitions

The characteristics of Autism mean that individuals do not like change and may not cope well with it. During times of transition, individuals with Autism can require additional support in order to ensure that they can employ appropriate coping strategies. Autism Support Groups from the District have reported that this practical support is in extremely short supply. This can lead all types of transitions going unsupported and unmanaged or managed and implemented by people without the appropriate knowledge and skills set. Therefore, during transition is one of the times when individuals will require practical support and where it seems to be currently most lacking is via a lack of access to social work support. As well as a lack of social work support, the current pressures within the Social Care sector also directly impacts on how successful transitions period for individuals with Autism can be. The Council would recommend that by addressing diagnosis waiting times and employing appropriately trained staff to manage transition periods for people with Autism the outcomes for individuals could be much improved.

6. Educational Environment

The challenges SEN students face in Northern Ireland to access the appropriate help and support is well documented. However, it is clear that one of the main issues is accessing support because of the lack of diagnosis. Therefore the length of time children and young people are having to wait for an Autism diagnosis is directly impacting on their educational attainment. Diagnosis and support often comes too late to be effective in a child's education because the opportunity for early intervention has passed. Mid Ulster District Council would recommend that there is more joined up working with Early Years services so that parents and carers are supported to seek diagnosis at the earliest possible juncture and that appropriate support can be identified and implemented prior to and during the process of diagnosis. However, this is only a useful strategy if the current diagnosis backlog is resolved.

Remaining in education (and employment) can also be difficult due to some of the characteristics of autism, such as difficulties in developing relationships, inflexibility in thinking, a need for routine, behaviour that can be seen as challenging and a tendency

to be focused on single subject. As such, post-primary schools should employ more targeted support for individuals with Autism in order to ensure that they are encouraged to remain in education. Therefore, appropriate and tailored support needs to be implemented within education settings in order for children and young people to remain in the system and enable them to fulfil their full potential.

7. Careers and Employment

Similarly, to post-primary education, careers and education can be difficult to maintain and progress within, for individuals with Autism. This can also be largely attributed to attitudes and a lack of awareness. This lack of awareness can lead to employers not considering the characteristics of Autism and the needs and preferences of individuals. As such, Mid Ulster District Council is of the opinion that career options for individuals with Autism could be vastly enhanced by increasing employers' awareness and ultimately acceptance of the condition. Current recruitment processes and practices can act as a significant barrier to paid employment for individuals with Autism.

8. Housing

While there is an overall lack of suitable housing stock in Northern Ireland and this shortage impacts particularly negatively on people with a disability because of a concentrated lack of supported and accessible housing. This lack of provision presents a significant barrier for vulnerable people who have Autism but who also have the ability to develop and maintain independence. In some cases, the alternative to assisted living is long-term hospital care, the negative ramifications of this was recently highlighted in Mencap's 'Homes not Hospitals' campaign. It contrasted the huge benefits on patient outcomes of independent living with the outcomes for individuals who are not afforded independent living, but instead have their lives confined and restricted within a hospital setting. Unfortunately, the reality for many individuals with Autism is that their full potential cannot be met because of the lack of assisted living provision in Northern Ireland.

9. Our Community

Mid Ulster District Council recognises and supports community efforts to provide awareness raising of Autism and support moving to acceptance of the adjustments to community provisions and service delivery to meet the needs of Autistic individuals. However, there is a lack of funding and training provision to allow the majority of community provisions to be truly inclusive via person centred approaches to reasonable adjustments and inclusivity. It is important that everyone feels part of their community via equal opportunities. As such, the Council would encourage the Department to work with and support local communities to enable them to engage with people with Autism and their families. This engagement could address local need/demand and tailor community activities and provision to meet requirements so that effective and tangible inclusive efforts are evident in all communities.

As well as feeling excluded from general events and activities in our communities, individuals with Autism can also face barriers to accessing general care requirements in our communities. This is most evident in relation to accessing GP services and Social Services contact. GP services can be difficult for individuals with Autism to access because they currently do not consider of the characteristics of Autism. There is also a lack of awareness of the importance of addressing the needs and preferences of individuals in order to meet their medical requirements. This is a barrier that can be addressed by tailoring services and making GP appointments more accessible.

In relation to accessing Social Services contact, individuals with Autism can go for long lengths of time without being able to get in contact with the appropriate social worker. This leads to delays in accessing referrals for required support.

Overall, Mid Ulster District Council has found from consulting with local Autism Support Groups that there is evidence of individuals with Autism being unable to fulfil their potential because of delays in diagnosis which leads to a lack of referral for support. This is further compounded by a lack of joined up working between Departments once a diagnosis has been obtained. Finally there is a general lack of tailored provision for

individuals with Autism and this can frequently stem from the professional not being provided with appropriate levels of knowledge and training.

It is the opinion of Mid Ulster District Council that health provision needs to change to meet the needs of the individuals with Autism. Often these changes aren't significant or costly but without appropriate provision, barriers are created for individuals with Autism and unfortunately the barrier can become insurmountable leading to negative outcomes and unfulfilled potential. The Department should place appropriate staffing and resources to ensure that individuals with Autism should be supported as much as possible to live healthy and fulfilled lives.

Yours sincerely

Córa Corry

Chair of Mid Ulster District Council

Report on	Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property
Date of Meeting	Thursday 9 March 2023
Reporting Officer	Joseph McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement
Contact Officer	Eileen Forde, Committee & Member Services Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	<p>To consider requests received to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Curie Memory Stones of Love • Compassionate Communities NI • International Nurses Day • Alzheimer Society • Tourette's Support NI • Mid Ulster Loneliness • Deafblind UK • Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI <p>Details on request received are set out below.</p>
2.0	Background
2.1	The Council has a policy and procedural arrangements in place to facilitate the illuminating/lighting-up of its designated properties from requests made by charitable organisations for charitable causes. The designated properties are the Burnavon, Bridewell and Ranfurly House.
2.2	The policy confirms that requests are considered by the Council's Policy and Resources Committee. Should the scheduling of the committee not permit requests being considered within the timeframes for determination, they can be presented to monthly Council.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Council has received correspondence from organisations requesting that consideration be given to lighting up our three designated council properties. Requests for consideration and recommendation by Committee:

3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Curie Memory Stones of Love - 3rd Annual Day of Reflection – 23 March 2023 Yellow • Compassionate Communities NI – Advance Care Planning – 3rd April 2023 Blue • Compassionate Communities NI – Dying Matters – 8 May 2023 Yellow • International Nurses Day – 12 May 2023 – Blue • Alzheimer Society – Dementia Action Week – 15 May 2023 Blue • Tourette’s Support NI – Tourette’s Awareness Month – 22 May 2023 – Teal • Mid Ulster Loneliness Network – Raise Loneliness Awareness – 13 June 2023 – Blue • Deafblind UK – Deafblind Awareness Week – 27 June 2023 – Purple & Green • Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI – Blood Cancer Awareness Month - Red <p>Scope of the Council Arrangements</p> <p>The policy scope extends to requests made by charitable organisations for the promotion of its charitable cause on a given date or set of dates.</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial: Not applicable</p> <p>Human: Not applicable</p> <p>Risk Management: Not applicable</p>
4.2	<p>Screening & Impact Assessments</p> <p>Equality & Good Relations Implications:</p> <p>Council policy and procedural arrangements have been referred to.</p> <p>Rural Needs Implications:</p> <p>Not applicable</p>
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	<p>That the Committee considers making recommendation to light up the designated properties on the dates specified to mark:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marie Curie Memory Stones of Love - 3rd Annual Day of Reflection – 23 March 2023 Yellow

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compassionate Communities NI – Advance Care Planning – 3 April 2023 Blue • Compassionate Communities NI – Dying Matters – 8 May 2023 Yellow • International Nurses Day – 12 May 2023 – Blue • Alzheimer Society – Dementia Action Week – 15 May 2023 Blue • Tourette’s Support NI – Tourette’s Awareness Month – 22 May 2023 – Teal • Mid Ulster Loneliness Network – Raise Loneliness Awareness – 13 June 2023 – Blue • Deafblind UK – Deafblind Awareness Week – 27 June 2023 – Purple & Green • Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI – Blood Cancer Awareness Month - Red
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	None

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 9 February 2023 in the Council Offices, Circular Road, Dungannon and by Virtual Means

Members Present

Councillor S McAleer, Chair

Councillors Ashton*, Buchanan, Cuddy, Doris*, Forde*, Gildernew*, Kearney, S McGuigan, McKinney, S McPeake*, Molloy, Quinn*

Officers in Attendance

Mr McCreesh, Chief Executive**

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 Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (AD: ODSP)

Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E)

Mr Tohill, Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F)

Mr O'Hagan, Head of ICT (HoICT)

Mrs Grogan, Committee & Member Services Officer

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

PR021/23 Notice of Recording

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

PR022/23 Apologies

Councillors Elattar and McLean.

PR023/23 Declarations of Interest

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

PR024/23 Chairs Business

The Chair, Councillor S McAleer advised members that she wished to raise an issue and asked for a project to be added to the Council's General Power of Competence scheme. She referred to an area of footpath along the A5 road at Glencull, just outside Ballygawley, the children board the yellow school bus at this location which has a very narrow footpath and at times the children have to step onto the main road which is extremely dangerous. She advised that when the bus is parked, the sightlines were blocked which was unfortunately an accident waiting to happen. She stated that currently she was in discussions with the Blue Green Active Travel Dfl team in regard to a footpath from Ballygawley to Glencull, but this is proving to be a very slow process. The part of the footpath in Glencull that she was enquiring about is really a priority for safety and the local landowners have stated that they have no issues as long as the footpath area is made safe according to the local Principal. The Chair asked if this could be added to the scheme.

Councillor S McGuigan advised that the same issue had also been raised with him by some people as this was an ongoing issue. He said that the school and the businesses along that route have indicated that they were ready to assist with the level that's needed to allow this to happen and although initial discussions from this side is positive, it is slow on the other side and felt there was a need to keep pushing this forward.

Councillor Cuddy referred to the General Power of Competence and advised that Council had spent no money on this scheme from the very beginning and felt that there was very little chance of this happening.

The Chair advised that she was aware of the footpath at Eglish from Daly's shop being completed under the General Power of Competence.

Councillor S McGuigan advised that the Eglish footpath was completed under the Active Travel scheme and the only one done under the General Power of Competence was in Edendork.

Councillor Cuddy advised that the Edendork scheme was carried out before the new policy was written and nothing has been done since and wasn't confident that there would be much hope of proceeding forward.

Councillor Ashton referred to comments relating to Dfl issue regarding the footpaths in Ballygawley. She said that this was coming up quite frequently about Dfl not carrying out their duties and how their responsibilities were falling back to Council to pick up i.e. grass cutting and now footpaths and enquired if Officers envisaged any light at the end of the tunnel or was this the way things were going to be regarding Dfl issues.

The Strategic Director of Environment (SD: Env) in response to issues relating to Active Travel and General Power of Competence advised that she was aware of members enquiring about General Power of Competence in previous meetings. She said that Officers were currently looking at a list that had been compiled before and advised members that quite a few of the projects on that list had already been completed, although not necessarily under the General Power of Competence or Active Travel but with other projects Council had been involved in. She said that she was undertaking a review of this at present in line with the review of Capital Programmes and Capital Projects and stated that an update would be brought back to committee in the very near future for members consideration and discussion.

The SD: Environment advised that she had attended a meeting today with Dfl in relation to greenways and Active Travel and they are proposing alternative ways on how they could work with Council more closely in terms of outdoor recreation and will be looking at preparing a more detailed plan of projects across the district, particularly around Active Travel. This would involve working with Dfl to secure potential funding to take this forward, but the difficulty would be whilst there are individual requests being made, there isn't a complete picture of what is needed. She felt there was a willingness on behalf of the Dfl, they have targets they have to meet in terms of Active Travel as well as Climate Change, so they have to allocate some funding into these types of projects and Council needs to have their lists ready to progress so that Officers can work in partnership with them to deliver. She was confident that there was light at the end of the tunnel, but there is still work needed to be done upfront to get ready to avail of anything that was coming forward.

Councillor Molloy said that we have witnessed the lack of investment over quite a number of years on footpath provision and now Dfl were getting out of providing footpaths across the board, a contractor constructing houses has to provide a footpath, Council was also now getting involved in providing footpaths and felt that they were really getting off the hook. He advised that this can be witnessed across the Bann as he can go into villages across East of the Bann and you can see footpath provision away out into the countryside, linking up towns and villages across the board. He has raised this issue with Dfl previously of how when you get to Portadown you can reach the Port of Larne or the airport in Belfast without leaving a footpath. When in Portadown and heading west it is impossible to link up towns and villages and felt that there was a school of work to be done on this provision.

The Chair concurred with Councillor Molloy's comments and referred to the footpath she had alluded to from Ballygawley to Glencull school which is also used by a lot of workers for employment and was very frightening to see them walking and stepping onto the main road as there was part of a footpath and then no footpath.

Matters for Decision

PR025/23 Draft Response to NH&SCT Consultation-Working with you to Transform Acute Maternity Services Consultation

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval from elected members of the draft consultation response developed on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in response

to the consultation on Working with you to Transform Acute Maternity Services Consultation.

Councillor McKinney advised that unfortunately he was unable to attend the meeting on the day and said that his Council area would be more involved with Coleraine hospital rather than those in Dungannon. He said that he had read the response with the lack of surgical teams and consultants and when his family used the hospital 13 years ago, it was the same position and they had to wait on a consultant coming in to deal with their situation. He said that this was a dangerous situation, we live in a claim conscious world and advised that Antrim could not take any extra women on top of what they already have and has seen what the report has been issued with from those within the Health Service and until such times there is facilities for extra capacity and at this present moment in time, the amount of children which was being born in Antrim is actually an over-capacity and understaffed. To do nothing and let this amalgamate under the Antrim part of the Northern Trust would have a detrimental effect on those from this area but even more so for those who travel from the North Coast area. In referring to the response that this is not acceptable on the way forward from the Health Board is the only way to proceed due to the danger of children's lives and risks involved if these issues are not sorted out. He was aware it was stated by the Health Board that they "hope to have provisions in place" and felt that he sometimes hoped to have something in place and never actually achieves it. He said that it was vitally important that these provisions were in place and although he was aware of extensions being carried out at Antrim at the moment, he was sure that it wasn't related to the Childrens unit. He also advised that Coleraine did not have a neonatal unit anymore which was previously there when it first opened resulting in only one neonatal unit being stretched to overcapacity in this moment in time.

The Chair advised that Councillor McKinney had raised valid points.

Councillor Kearney stated that he shared Councillor McKinney's views as he was also aware of this. He felt that this was a very fair and reasonable response which has been presented before members tonight.

Proposed by Councillor Forde
Seconded by Councillor McKinney and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the draft response "*that the Council does not provide support and is opposed to the Trust's proposals to centralise maternity services to Antrim Area Hospital*".

PR026/23 Request to Illuminate Council Properties

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which sought approval to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Fair Trade Fortnight
- Action Meso: Go Blue for Meso Campaign
- Linking Generations NI – Global Intergenerational Week

Proposed by Councillor Buchanan
Seconded by Councillor Cuddy and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties on:

- 27 February 2023 – Fairtrade Fortnight – Colours: Pear, Black and Cyan
- 24 April 2023 - Linking Generations NI– Global Intergenerational Week Colour: Pink
- 7 July 2023 - Go Blue for Meso campaign – Colour: Blue

PR027/23 Improvement Objectives: - 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 (proposed) and timeline for Public Consultation

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report to consider and agree the proposed improvement objectives for 2023/24 and 2024/25, as set in compliance with the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 (the Act) and subsequent guidance as issued by the Department for Communities (LG21/2016 onwards) and establish timelines for a public consultation exercise relating to the proposed improvement objectives.

Councillor Cuddy advised that he had recently listened to a programme on TV which talked about NHS productivity levels and improvements over the last few years which was at 1% but was still fairly positive even with all their pressures. He said that when talking about improvement objectives, enquired if there was anything in place that we can measure our productivity or improvement activity against within this organisation as he never envisaged any way productivity could be measured within the NHS.

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) advised that the report outlined the list of extensive project initiatives which have been rolled out throughout and these were the objectives which we were measuring ourselves on.

Councillor Cuddy said that he could talk about his shop all day long and how many people come in, but it was the people that don't come in he would be more interested in as it was all about numbers. He said that it would be the case of if you can't measure, you can't manage and there was a need for transformation and not do what was done in the past as the world is changing around us. He felt that it was a good project but there needed a smarter way of measuring productivity especially when there is rate increases of plus 7%.

The Chair said that she assumed that if there were environmental impacts that this was measurable, we were just starting off in this process and in due course measurements will mostly likely be implemented.

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) advised that data is collected and measured i.e. within Environment, measurements in recycling targets, within Finance, measurements taken in relation

to paying creditors, sickness absence, customers entering venues etc. There is a method of collecting data and tracking it which is carried out on a quarterly basis through the Performance Officer.

The Strategic Director of Corporate Service and Finance (SD: CS&F) said that he totally got what the member referred to and noted his reference to the 7% rate increase, but by definition against raging inflation rate well in excess of 7% to deliver the vast majority of our services at a proposed real cut, reflects performance improvement efficiency gains, all be it being a long way short where we need to be to make the rate more affordable. He felt that the high-level figure does show that the Council were performing reasonably well, all be it that more statistics could be compiled.

Councillor Cuddy felt that there was a need to get the process of improvement objectives more slim-lined. When reference was made to waste etc. it is costing this Council a fortune, more year on year and there needed to be a better way of delivering for the ratepayer. In referring to comment made by SD: CS&F about being currently at 10%, he guaranteed that by the end of this financial year, we will be well less than 7% as overall the balance of inflation will decrease each month.

Councillor Kearney noted that this was for public consultation and a further report at agenda item 10 (Performance Improvement Update – Quarters One to Quarters Three - 2002 to 2003) and enquired when it was anticipated to have a review of our Community Plan as it would be a great instrument to measure our success.

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) advised that this was a very relevant report as there was an update on agenda item 11 (Mid Ulster Community Plan: Progress Update) for information. She said that it was like any plan, there was a need to review and try to streamline it to be more action orientated, with working groups. This has been brought to the Strategic Board and governance looked at around it, which would be constantly on review and now was an opportune time for Officers to review where we are at the moment as our list may have been too long at a time, however, it was the community which put them on the list and we don't want to knock them off, but there was an onus on Officers to find a way of streamlining it. A lot of the work that Council were doing in partnership with other external agencies was all part of community plan and processes also and there was a need to start tracking that in a better fashion also. She concluded by saying that this was going through a review period at the moment and that was what the update report related to.

Proposed by Councillor Kearney
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the four draft improvement objectives for 2023-24 to 2024-25, and the initiation of consultation together with associated timeline.

PR028/23 Member Services.

None.

Matters for Information

PR029/23 Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11 January 2023

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 11 January 2023.

PR030/23 Performance Improvement Update - Quarters One to Quarters Three (2022 to 2023)

Members noted Performance Improvement Update – Q1 to Q3 (2022 to 2023) which provided monitoring information on the review of Council's performance against our seven statutory and three corporate performance improvement indicators and standards, along with an overview of the Corporate Health Indicators for the first nine months of 2022/23. The report also provides a performance progress summary against the Council's four corporate improvement objectives and their associated project plans (known as CIP plans). The indicators and standards, the 4 improvement projects and corporate health indicators are contained within our Two-Year Performance Improvement Plan (PIP plan) for 2021/22 to 2022/23.

PR031/23 Mid Ulster Community Planning: Progress Update

Members noted Mid Ulster Community Planning Progress Update which provided an update on activity surrounding Mid Ulster Community Planning following its movement across to Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance, stemming from the Council's restructure.

The Strategic Director of Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance (SD: ODSP) advised that updates and achievements would be brought to committee on a quarterly basis.

Live broadcast ended at 7.24 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor Molloy
Seconded by Councillor S McGuigan 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 PR032/23 to PR038/23.

Matters for Decision

- PR032/23 Staff Matters for Decision
- PR033/23 Land and Property Matters: Northland Row Disposal and Gortgonis Wayleave
- PR034/23 Capital funded Repairs and Maintenance: Meadowbank Sports Arena and Bus Shelters

Matters for Information

- PR035/23 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 11 January 2023
- PR036/23 Staff Matters for Information
- PR037/23 Contracts and DAC Registers – Update
- PR038/23 Financial report for 9 months ended 31 December 2023

PR039/23 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 7.40 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.

Report on	Autism Training- Virtual Experience Bus
Date of Meeting	9 th March 2023
Reporting Officer	Joe McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services & Engagement
Contact Officer	Ann McAleer, Corporate Policy & Equality Officer

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on plans for the Council to host the Autism Virtual Experience Bus on Wednesday 26 th April 2023 at Cookstown Leisure Centre. This visit forms part of the bus's week long tour of Council facilitates in the NH&SCT area.
2.0	Background
2.1	MUDC passed a motion in 2021 to ensure that Council explored the best ways to support people in District who have autism as well as their families and carers.
2.2	Since then, MUDC has provided staff with various types of training opportunities and implemented various initiatives which will be complimented by this opportunity to take part in a virtual experience activity.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	MUDC works in partnership with other organisations in order to deliver improved services for users who have neurodiverse conditions, this includes membership of the Northern Health and Social Care Trust's (NH&SCT) ASD Forum.
3.2	As such NH&SCT has provided MUDC with the opportunity to host the Autism bus on 26 th April 2023 at Cookstown Leisure Centre. The Autism bus aims to provide a Virtual Autism Reality Experience. While every individual who has Autism is impacted upon in different ways the aim of the bus is to provide awareness and acceptance of these challenges.
3.3	The overall aim of this training is to increase practical knowledge and skill level of staff in understanding the Autism Spectrum as well as other types of neurodivergent conditions.
3.4	The Council will be allocated a minimum of 12 places for training of appropriate members of staff.

4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: This training is being provided to the Council Free of Charge.
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: This action is line with the delivery of the Council's Equality and Disability Action Plans.
	Rural Needs Implications: RNIA deemed as disproportionate in this instance.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	It is recommended that members note the delivery of this action in relation to the implementation of its direction to support people in the District who have autism and their families and carers.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A

Report on	Local Government Staff Commission: 2023-24 Annual Subscription National Association of Councillors: 2023-24 Annual Subscription
Date of Meeting	9 March 2023
Reporting Officer	J McGuckin Head of Strategic Services Engagement
Contact Officer	J McGuckin Head of Strategic Services Engagement

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	x

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To update the committee on correspondence received from the Local Government Staff Commission and the National Association for Councillors (NAC) on annual contributions payable for 2023-24.
2.0	Background
2.1	<p>Local Government Staff Commission</p> <p>The Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) is an Executive Non-Departmental Public Body established under the Local Government (NI) Act 1972. The Department for Communities has informed the Local Government Staff Commission (the Commission) that the provisional date for dissolution has been extended to 31 March 2025. You will be aware that in accordance with Schedule 3, paragraph 7 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, the budget for the operation of the Commission is to be apportioned between all District Councils and the NIHE.</p> <p>In accordance with the 2023/24 Management and Dissolution Plan, the Commission has estimated its total financial requirement of which Mid Ulster apportionment payment of 5.2% is £19,641 as detailed on Appendix A.</p>
2.2	<p>National Association of Councillors</p> <p>The Council is a member of the National Association of Councillors (NAC) to which it has elected member representation. The current representation extends to 8 members.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr McFlynn, SDLP • Cllr Cuthbertson, DUP • Cllr Black, DUP • Cllr McKinney, UUP

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cllr Molloy, SF • Cllr O'Neill, SF • Cllr Doris, SF • Cllr Clarke, SF <p>The National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region was established 27 years ago, after local councillors decided they needed a strong local body as well as belonging to the UK National Association of Councillors. The NAC is the only organisation directly run by councillors and represents elected members across all Councils.</p> <p>The Council has received a request for payment for the incoming 2023-24 membership.</p>
3.0	Main Report
3.1	The Council has received notification for payment to the LGSC relating to period 2023-24. The Council is required by statute under the Local Government Act (NI) 1972 to make this payment. The amount due is a 17.43% decrease of £19,641 down from £23,787 for 2022-23 year.
3.2	The Council has received an invoice for payment to the National Association for Councillors (NAC) relating to the period 2023-24 to which it is currently a member council.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: LGSC £19,641 to be met from within council existing budgetary provision. NAC £3,200. To be met from within council existing budgetary provision.
	Human: Not applicable
	Risk Management: Not applicable
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Not applicable
	Rural Needs Implications: Not applicable
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	That the committee notes request for payments from the Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC) for the period 2023-2024 and the National Association of Councillors for the period 2023-24.

6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix A Local Government Staff Commission (LGSC)



CHAIRPERSON
Mr Bumper Graham

DS/VD

Mr Adrian McCreesh
Chief Executive
Mid Ulster District Council
Council Offices
Circular Road
Dungannon BT71 6DT

22 February 2023

Dear Adrian

LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND CONTINUING OPERATIONS 2023/24

The Department for Communities has informed the Local Government Staff Commission (the Commission) that the provisional date for dissolution has been extended to 31 March 2025.

Consequently, in order to implement our statutory functions, it is necessary for the Commission to determine a Financial Scheme up to 31 March 2024.

Please note that whilst the Financial Scheme for 2023/24 directly reflects the 'winding down' position of the Commission, we continue to deliver the same range of statutory functions, plus incur the normal running costs of an Arm's Length Body.

In accordance with the 2023/24 Management and Dissolution Plan, the Commission has estimated its total financial requirement to be £417,742 for the year ahead. Income from ongoing operations, which is offset against this figure is estimated at £40,000, leaving an amount of £377,742 to be raised from District Councils and the NIHE.

You will be aware that in accordance with Schedule 3, paragraph 7 of the Local Government Act (NI) 1972, the budget for the operation of the Commission is to be apportioned between all District Councils and the NIHE.

By virtue of the apportionment arrangements Mid Ulster District Council is required to pay 5.2% of £377,742 namely £19,641.

Due to budgetary efficiencies made by the Commission the total Council contribution amount required for 2023/24 has decreased by £98,296. This is a 20.6% decrease year on year and is net of any projected increases resulting from higher levels of inflation. Individual Council contributions decreases range from 17% to 24%.

THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT STAFF COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Commission House
18-22 Gordon Street
Belfast BT1 2LG

T: 028 9031 3200
E: info@lgsc.org.uk
W: www.lgsc.org.uk



CHAIRPERSON
Mr Bumper Graham

For your Council this has resulted in a 17.43% decrease i.e. £4,146; £19,641 - £23,787 (2022-23). We will of course, continue to take every step to mitigate any future increases in costs between now and the formal dissolution of the Commission.

I would request that you issue a Purchase Order to the Commission for this amount, following receipt of which, an invoice will be submitted.

The Commission will be moving to new office accommodation from 03 April 2023 and I would ask you to note the new correspondence address:

Local Government Staff Commission for Northern Ireland
3rd Floor
St Annes House
15 Church Street
BELFAST
BT1 1ER

If you have any queries in relation to the work of the Commission or the services provided or require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Diana Stewart". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Diana Stewart
Director of Corporate Services

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Report on	Implementation of Online Registration Services Booking System
Date of Meeting	9 th March 2023
Reporting Officer	Joe McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services & Engagement
Contact Officer	Sandra Matchett Gabr, Registration Services Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	The purpose of this report is to update Members on the introduction of a new online booking system for the Registration service in Council.
2.0	Background
2.1	One of the Council's corporate improvement objectives states that <i>"We will ensure a more connected Mid Ulster where new technologies and ways of working, empower citizens to get the best services that matter to them."</i>
2.2	As an outworking of that objective, the Council agreed in June 2021 to develop a digital transformation strategy.
2.3	The strategy is intended to establish the Council as a leading digital council, setting the organisation's digital direction, enabling it to leverage the opportunities provided by technologies to innovate and improve, and to adopt a 'whole organisation' approach which realises cultural, organisational, and operational change, adding value for the organisation, stakeholders, and customers.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	As an outworking of the Councils Digital Transformation Strategy the Organisational Development, Strategy and Performance Directorate seen an opportunity to enable a digital channel shift for their registration services by allowing citizens to book appointments using a simple online process.
3.2	The increasingly significant workload within Registrar's Office being undertaken within the existing staffing complement necessitated the need to look at how best the existing business processes could be streamlined, whilst adding value to the customer experience for those engaging with Registration Services whether it be on births, deaths or marriages.

3.3	The Council appointed Tail Wind Digital to assist with the project roll out along with an internal Cross departmental working group consisting of staff from Registration Services, ICT, Marketing & Communications, Customer Services and Organisational Development.
3.4	The project vision was to develop a “Customer Focussed, digital booking system, readily accessible, 24/7 which improves and simplifies our current registration processes”.
3.5	Mid Ulster District Council wanted to transform their services and make them more accessible to their customers, while looking at ways to make efficiencies by reducing time spent on the telephone or in doing administrative tasks.
3.6	<p>Registration Services was the ideal place to pilot a booking system as it is used by a high volume of customers and is in constant demand. The service contained many bookable services, each needing their own separate customer journey:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registration of births • Registration of deaths • Arranging a wedding (book a Registrar) • Giving notice of a marriage or civil partnership • Arranging a civil partnership
3.7	The Council has previously taken bookings for these services during office hours by telephone and relied heavily on answering machines to return calls to customers to provide them with a suitable time slot and the process was an administrative burden. This labour-intensive system was time consuming and often duplicative, leaving staff unable to answer calls and provide the customer experience we would expect during busy periods.
3.8	The Council is due to have a soft launch and pilot of the booking system for Registration of Births including the completion of the online Birth Registration form which forms part of the process commencing on 7 th March 2023.
3.9	We will be monitoring the pilot for the month of March making any required tweaks to the system as necessary. The remainder of the booking system will be finalised with a planned Go-Live in April 2023.
3.10	A short online demonstration was provided for Members on the online booking system prior to the meeting.
3.11	Regular updates on the progress of the online registration booking system will be taken back to committee on a quarterly basis.
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
	Financial: Project delivered within savings within the Organisational Development budgetary provision.

	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Preliminary screening has been completed. No major impacts have been identified. Minor issues identified in the preliminary screening will be further addressed based on the outcome of the pilot.
	Rural Needs Implications: A Rural Needs Impact Assessment has been undertaken in relation to the Digital Transformation Strategy under which this system is being introduced. All social and economic impacts identified in the assessment have been considered in relation to the development of the pilot and introduction on the new Online Registration System.
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members note the contents of the report on the Implementation of the Online Booking system for Registration Services.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
	N/A

