

**Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 5 February 2026 in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown and by Virtual Means**

**Members Present**

Councillor Cahoon, Chair

Councillor F Burton, J Burton, Brown, Corry, Gildernew\*, McAleer\*, McConnell\*, McLean, McLernon, S McPeake\*, Martin\*, Molloy, Quinn\*, Totten\*, Wilson

**Officers in Attendance**

Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities & Place (SD: C&P)  
Mrs Campbell, Strategic Director of Environment (SD: ENV)\*\*  
Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance (SD: ODSP)  
Ms Dyson, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)  
Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE)  
Mrs McNally, Assistant Director of Corporate Services and Finance (AD: CS&F)  
Mr O'Hagan, Head of IT (HoIT)  
Mr Hill, ICT  
Mrs Grogan, Committee and 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 Cahoon welcomed everyone to the meeting and those watching the meeting through the Live Broadcast. Councillor Cahoon 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.*

**PR021/26 Notice of Recording**

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

**PR022/26 Apologies**

None.

**PR023/26 Declarations of Interest**

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

**PR024/26 Chairs Business**

None.

**Matters for Decision**

**PR025/26 Request to Illuminate Council Properties**

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

- Chest Heart & Stroke Foundation – Chest Heart & Stroke Awareness Day: Friday 6 March 2026 – Colour: Red
- Take a Pain Check Foundation – World Young Rheumatic Disease (WORD) Day: Saturday 14 March 2026 – Colour: Blue
- Make a Wish Foundation – World Wish Day: Wednesday 9 April 2026 – Colour: Blue
- World ME Day and International ME – CFS Awareness Day: Tuesday 12 May 2026 – Colour: Blue
- Nerve Tumours UK – World NF Awareness Day 'Shine A Light on NF' – Sunday 17 May 2026 – Colour: Blue
- The Bronchiectasis & NTM Association – World Bronchiectasis Day – Wednesday 1 July 2026 – Colour: Blue

The HoSSE advised that a late request had been received and sought approval for it to be added to the above list:

- Autoimmune Association - Autoimmune Awareness Month (March) – Monday 2 March 2026 – Colour: Blue

Proposed by Councillor Brown  
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

**Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to illuminate the three designated Council properties as follows –

- Chest Heart & Stroke Foundation – Chest Heart & Stroke Awareness Day: Friday 6 March 2026 – Colour: Red
- Take a Pain Check Foundation – World Young Rheumatic Disease (WORD) Day: Saturday 14 March 2026 – Colour: Blue
- Make a Wish Foundation – World Wish Day: Wednesday 9 April 2026 – Colour: Blue
- World ME Day and International ME – CFS Awareness Day: Tuesday 12 May 2026 – Colour: Blue

- Nerve Tumours UK – World NF Awareness Day ‘Shine A Light on NF’ – Sunday 17 May 2026 – Colour: Blue
- The Bronchiectasis & NTM Association – World Bronchiectasis Day: Wednesday 1 July 2026 – Colour: Blue
- Autoimmune Association - Autoimmune Awareness Month (March) – Monday 2 March 2026 – Colour: Blue

Councillor Quinn wished to commend Council on illuminating their buildings to represent Kawasaki Disease Awareness Day last month. The member said that it was great to see the Council supporting this worthy cause over the last number of years and really encouraging to see that a few more Councils across the North starting to raise awareness for the disease along with the UK. The member stated that the foundation was very appreciative of our post on social media and hoped that this could be something that would continue for many years ahead and wished to thank officers for allowing this to happen.

### **PR026/26 Proposed Performance Improvement Objectives for 2026-2027 and Timeline for Public Consultation**

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report which sought approval for the proposed improvement objectives for 2026/27 as set in compliance with the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 (the Act) and timetables for the associated public consultation exercise.

Councillor Wilson said that he appreciated the work which has gone into the report but wished to raise the matter of Council setting themselves a 20% reduction in carbon emissions whilst there was no percentage for others. The member enquired if this was normal or was Council going to set targets in which we aim to hit.

The HoSSE advised that when progressing through the numerous projects that run under each of the corporate improvement objectives that targets and measures were set to continuously improve the service. The HoSSE advised that a further report being presented later in the meeting would highlight the Council being subject to a recent audit which demonstrates that.

Councillor Brown said that he would be happy to approve the recommendation. The member drew attention to a typo error in item 3.3 where it states that the consultation to run from Friday 27<sup>th</sup> February to Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2025 and said that this should read 2026.

Councillor Molloy concurred with Councillor Wilson’s comments in relation to 20% on improvement objective 3 and said that it was important that we were not hamstringing ourselves for any further future development within the Council. It was also important to consider whether these were achievable and not something that we cannot actually deliver on.

Councillor Wilson following on from Councillor Molloy’s comments said that it would be important to include a caveat to not tie us to the 20% target rate in relation to achieving a reduction in Council’s carbon emissions.

Proposed by Councillor Brown  
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

- Resolved** That it be recommended to Council to:
- Approve the three improvement objectives for 2026-2027 and the initiation of consultation together with associated timelines.
  - Include a caveat within improvement objectives for 2026-2027 to not tie Council to 20% target rate in relation to reduction in Council's carbon emissions.

**PR027/26 Member Services**

No issues.

**Matters for Information**

**PR028/26 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 January 2026**

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 8 January 2026.

**PR029/26 Performance Improvement: Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2025-26**

Members noted previously circulated report which provided an update on the key findings of the Local Government Auditor's Audit and Assessment (Section 95) Report 2025-26.

Councillor Wilson referred to 3.3 'Demonstrating a track record of improvement' where it states that Council has not met statutory planning indicators for a second year in a row and for the period 2024-25, all three indicators have demonstrated a downward trend.

The HoSSE advised that the next report would deal with this issue as this was a request which has been brought back in relation to more detail around the context to each of these measures and what is and is not controllable by us within Council as we are dependent on external agencies in relation to a number of measures. In relation to audit, there has been an unqualified audit opinion which indicates that Mid Ulster District Council has discharged its performance improvement and reporting duties in relation to performance for 2024-25 and 2025-26 improvement plan and Council were likely to discharge its duties in respect of part 12. Two proposals have been made for improvement, and these would represent "good practice" in relation to performance improvement, and both measures were being looked at with a response included. One of the responses is in relation to internal audit and validating some of that data in relation to our performance improvement and the other response would be in relation to our planning measures with both responses being looked at and dealt with accordingly.

Councillor McLean said that it was his understanding that the planning one had already started to be addressed and this was more to do with the response times from outside agencies. The member was aware of the recent Council decision and hoped that this has started to improve matters within planning but felt that it was important to keep this momentum going and not to take our foot off the accelerator as there was still work to be done but welcomed the decision to see something positive happening.

### **PR030/26 Performance Overview Exception Report Q1 – Q3 – 2025-2026**

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSSE) presented previously circulated report which provided members with an update in relation to queries/comments regarding exception reporting of same 'set by us' i.e. self-imposed (Absence) performance indicators in Q1 – Q2 – 2025/26.

*Councillor Wilson declared an interest in the above item as Chair of Cookstown Enterprise Centre.*

Councillor Wilson said that following on from Councillor McLean's point regarding outside agencies, he referred to Economic Development and said that this was being held up totally by Belfast City Council. The member said that the figures brought last month showed this Council as being very poor and bottom of the table coming from 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> from the last time which give him concern as one of the bodies responsible for delivering this. The member stated that it was Belfast City Council which was holding this up and the question would be that whilst we can do this as Councillor McLean alluded to earlier regarding planning and Dfl etc, enquired if there was any way of recording within the information provided of how many things were sitting not approved or how many planning applications were being held up waiting on Dfl or the shared services. The member advised that shared services were absolutely crucifying planning at the moment in relation to farming and felt that it would be useful for us as a tool to see what we as Council were doing and responsible for and who was holding us back. The member said that by reading the report he would be concerned if he was sitting on Belfast City Council getting this audit report and it would be interesting to see what they say.

Councillor McLean raised the issue of planning and whilst he was welcoming the improvement process, he was a bit concerned. The member stated that the Chair of the Planning committee Councillor S McPeake was also a member of this committee and sought clarification from him on whether the committee actively reviewed the applications that were coming forward for refusal. This would involve writing out after a period of time due to the agent not responding to request for relevant information sought. This could result in the applicant being disenfranchised due to us trying to meet a statistic. The member sought clarity on whether officers or the committee make the final decision to determine an application and whether there was an opportunity for appeal in the event of an application missing deadlines including reminder times and enquired what course of appeal or process was in place for this situation.

Councillor S McPeake advised that the new protocol for planning was only a short time in existence. The member said that the committee have only been consulted recently on what is required to validate an application to speed up the process at the front with

work ongoing. With regards to Councillor McLean's comments regarding deadlines and reminder times he advised that this would only come into play if there was no communication between the architect, agent and planner, i.e. if report is required for a bat survey or environmental matters which may take some time or season dependent, then leeway is provided on that. The member stated that some instances in the past where simple items have been sought, it could have taken up to 2 years or more and still requests for information had not been received and sitting on the shelf and not going anywhere. In relation to 4 week/2 weeks' timeframe, these have been investigated with other Councils, with some Councils only allowing 3 weeks for submission of relevant information and no additional time afterwards. MUDC allows for 4 weeks and then an additional 2 weeks for communication to take place and if this is done then this is deemed right spirited and acceptable and not be refused. Councillor S McPeake confirmed that there was no danger of a refusal being issued as long as the application was being worked upon and communication taking place between the agent and planners.

Councillor McLean said that this may not be the forum to further discuss the matter as what was being alluded to tonight does not give him the address he required and would seek to address the matter at another forum after this meeting.

The Chair thanked members for their comments and Councillor Wilson for raising a good point regarding applications being held up and what external agency could be responsible when it comes to shared agencies, as any farmer will know only too well the problems that are there and also a lot of questions about accountability with that organisation, especially where funding comes from. The Chair said that this could be a conversation for another meeting which could be followed up on.

*Live broadcast ended at 7.23 pm.*

## **Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business**

Proposed by Councillor Corry  
Seconded by Councillor Molloy and

**Resolved** In accordance with Section 42, Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 that Members of the public be asked to withdraw from the meeting whilst Members consider items PR031/26 to PR041/26.

### **Matters for Decision**

PR031/26 Insurance Renewal 2026/27 - Update  
PR032/26 Redemption of Council Loans  
PR033/26 Staffing Matters for Decision  
PR034/26 Realignment of Staff – Development Department  
PR035/26 Information Technology Infrastructure Update

### **Matters for Information**

PR036/26 Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 8 January 2026  
PR037/26 Financial report for 9 months ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 2025  
PR038/26 Treasury Management Update

- PR039/26 Contracts and DAC Registers - Update
- PR040/26 Staffing Matters for Information
- PR041/26 Managing Employee Attendance

Councillor Wilson advised members that this was the Strategic Director of Communities & Place last meeting of Policy & Resources committee. All members present wished Mr Black all the best for the future as he takes up a new role with another Council.

**PR042/26 Duration of Meeting**

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 8.15 pm.

Chair \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Annex A – Introductory Remarks from the Chairperson

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