Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

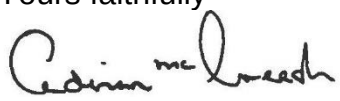
03 April 2025

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 at Council Offices, Ballyronan Road, Magherafelt, BT45 6EN on Thursday, 03 April 2025 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

5.	Draft Response on the NHSCT's Consultation Piloting the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department	3 - 6
6.	Committee and Council Meetings 2025- 2026	7 - 12
7.	Request to Illuminate Council Properties	13 - 16
8.	Customer Service Policy	17 - 32
9.	Member Services	

Matters for Information

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. Land and Property Matters
14. Staffing Matters for Decision
15. Employee Assistance and Cash Plan – Westfield Health – Increase in annual charges
16. Mid South West (MSW) Growth Deal: Desertcreat Project
17. Staff Matter for Consideration

Matters for Information

18. Confidential Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 6 March 2025
19. Staff Matters for Information
20. Treasury Management
21. Financial report for 11 months ended 28 February 2025
22. Contracts and DAC Registers - Update

Report on	Draft Response on the NHSCT's Consultation Piloting the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department
Date of Meeting	3 April 2025
Reporting Officer	Joe McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement
Contact Officer	Ann McAleer, Policy Engagement and 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	To inform elected members of the consultation response developed on behalf of Mid Ulster District Council in response to Piloting the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	Members were informed about the above named consultation at February's Full Council meeting where it was agreed to submit a response on behalf of the Council.
2.2	The deadline for submission of a response is 1 May 2025.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	This consultation response outlines support for the Northern Trust's decision to pilot the use of body worn cameras to protect staff and safeguard patients.
3.2	Further comments made when the response was requested have also been reflected in the attached draft response.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: N/A
	Human: N/A
	Risk Management: N/A
	Screening & Impact Assessments

4.2	Equality & Good Relations Implications: This consultation was accompanied by a relevant Equality Screening document for consideration as part of the consultation process.
	Rural Needs Implications: Not considered as proportionate
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	It is recommended that Council review and approve the draft response for submission.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References** Appendix A: NHSCT Body Worn Cameras: Draft Consultation Response

6 March 2025

Involvement Team at Route Complex,

8e Coleraine Road,

Ballymoney,

Co. Antrim,

BT53 6BP.

Ref: Piloting the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department

To whom it may concern:

Mid Ulster District Council would like to take this opportunity to put forward its views in relation to the Trust's proposals to pilot the use of Body-worn Camera Devices within the Emergency Department.

The Council is appalled at the levels of violence and aggression documented in the consultation document. These figures are especially startling during a time when healthcare workers are under immense pressure and are experiencing a high level of demand for their services. Having considered this proposal in the context of the documented incidents of violence and aggression Mid Ulster District Council is broadly supportive of the proposal – in principle – for a pilot to take place to introduce Body Worn Devices as one way of addressing the current levels of violence and aggression towards staff, patients and visitors. Also, given that the level of violent incidents contained in the consultation documentation, are not contained to

the NHSCT area, the Council would like to seek clarity on whether or not a pilot will also be held in the SHSCT.

However, Mid Ulster District Council would encourage extensive staff consultation and consultation with the relevant Trade Unions, in order to ensure that the majority of Trust staff are in favour of this proposed introduction and that they would be reassured by introducing and usage of Body Worn Devices.

It is the opinion of Mid Ulster District Council that the mental and physical health and wellbeing of all health care staff should be of paramount importance to their employers. Therefore, Mid Ulster District Council is supportive of this proposal – in principle should Trust staff members feel it is necessary to maintain their mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Yours sincerely

Eugene McConnell

Chair of Mid Ulster District Council

Report on	Committee and Council Meetings: 2025-2026
Date of Meeting	Thursday 3 April 2025
Reporting Officer	Joseph McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement
Contact Officer	E Forde, Committee & Member Services Manager

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 consider the 2025-2026 Committee and Council Meeting Schedule for approval. This schedule will commence from June 2025.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The business of council is undertaken through its committee and council meetings, a schedule for which is considered annually for approval by this Committee.
2.2.	A meeting Schedule for the period June 2025 to May 2026 has been developed and attached as appendix A to this report.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Council conducts its business through a Traditional Committee System of governance, whereby recommendations are brought from its 5 Committee to the next available meeting of Council for approval.
3.2	Appendix A to this report is the proposed schedule of meetings for the period June 2025 – May 2026. The Council's Annual meeting is scheduled to take place on Monday 2 June 2025.
3.3	In summary: • The 2025 Annual Meeting will take place on Monday 2nd June as per requirement under Standing Orders. • Committee meetings as a rule of thumb have been scheduled to take place across the first two weeks of each month, unless to accommodate public or bank holidays – in July and December committees will take place 3 in first week of month, 1 in second week of month.

	• Council meetings will take place on the 4th Thursday of each month, where scheduled, unless to facilitate upcoming public or bank holidays. • There is no Council meeting scheduled for August, this being the Council's recess month in line with the approach taken since 2021. The Committee may be minded to schedule an August meeting for 2025 should this be required. • Special Council meeting to consider the 2026-27 District Rate is scheduled to take place on Monday 9th February 2026 to meet the Departmental deadline for striking the rate for Mid Ulster. • Meetings will commence at 7pm, except for planning whereby a 6pm commencement time was determined by the committee. • As per legislation Council and Committee meetings may be held hybrid if Council is minded to do so. • Council and Audit will meet in Dungannon, Planning will meet in Magherafelt. Policy & Resources, Environment and Development will alternate between Cookstown and Magherafelt.
3.4	The Committee is requested to give consideration and approval to the attached Schedule to facilitate forward planning by Members and Council Officers.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: none
	Human: none
	Risk Management: none
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: none
	Rural Needs Implications: none
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	That the Committee considers and gives approval to the Council & Committee Meeting Schedule for the period June 2025 to May 2026
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix A: Council & Committee Meeting Schedule 2025 -2026

Mid Ulster District Council
Council & Committee Meeting Schedule
June 2025 - May 2026

MONTH	COMMITTEE	DATE	LOCATION
June 2025	Council AGM	2 June 2025	Dungannon
	Planning	3 June 2025	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	4 June 2025	
	Environment	10 June 2025	
	Development	12 June 2025	
	Audit	17 June 2025	Dungannon
	Council	26 June 2025	Dungannon
July 2025	Planning	1 July 2025	Magherafelt
	Development	2 July 2025	Cookstown
	Policy and Resources	3 July 2025	
	Environment	8 July 2025	
	Council	24 July 2025	Dungannon
August 2025	Planning	5 August 2025	Magherafelt
September 2025	Planning	2 Sept 2025	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	4 Sept 2025	
	Environment	9 Sept 2025	
	Development	11 Sept 2025	
	Audit	16 Sept 2025	Dungannon
	Council	25 Sept 2025	Dungannon
October 2025	Planning	7 Oct 2025	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	9 Oct 2025	Cookstown
	Environment	14 Oct 2025	
	Development	16 Oct 2025	
	Council	23 Oct 2025	Dungannon
November 2025	Planning	4 Nov 2025	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	6 Nov 2025	
	Environment	11 Nov 2025	
	Development	13 Nov 2025	
	Audit	18 Nov 2025	Dungannon
	Council	27 Nov 2025	Dungannon

MONTH	COMMITTEE	DATE	LOCATION
December 2025	Planning	2 Dec 2025	Magherafelt
	Development	3 Dec 2025	
	Policy and Resources	4 Dec 2025	Cookstown
	Environment	9 Dec 2025	
	Council	18 Dec 2025	Dungannon
January 2026	Planning	6 Jan 2026	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	8 Jan 2026	
	Environment	13 Jan 2026	
	Development	15 Jan 2026	
	Council	22 Jan 2026	Dungannon
February 2026	Planning	3 Feb 2026	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	5 Feb 2026	Cookstown
	Special Council – Rates	9 Feb 2026	Dungannon
	Environment	10 Feb 2026	Cookstown
	Development	12 Feb 2026	
	Council	26 Feb 2026	Dungannon
March 2026	Planning	3 March 2026	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	5 March 2026	
	Environment	10 March 2026	
	Development	12 March 2026	
	Audit	24 March 2026	Dungannon
	Council	26 March 2026	Dungannon
April 2026	Planning	1 April 2026	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	2 April 2026	Cookstown
	Environment	14 April 2026	
	Development	16 April 2026	
	Council	23 April 2026	Dungannon
May 2026	Planning	5 May 2026	Magherafelt
	Policy and Resources	7 May 2026	
	Environment	12 May 2026	
	Development	14 May 2026	
	Council	28 May 2026	Dungannon

NOTES

- Council meets on 4th Thurs of month. December Council will be second week in month.
- Planning committee will meet on the first Tuesday of the month
- Policy & Resources Committee will meet on Thurs following 1st Tuesday of each month.

- Environment Committee will meet on 2nd Tuesday of each month.
- Development Committee will meet on Thursday following 2nd Tuesday.
- Audit Committee will meet on Tuesdays.
- Meetings follow aforementioned sequence except to avoid holiday periods in the case of July and December (Committee meetings 3 first week of month, 1 second week of month).
- The meetings commence at 7.00pm except for Planning Committee meetings which commence at 6.00pm.

Report on	Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property
Date of Meeting	3 April 2025
Reporting Officer	Joseph McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement
Contact Officer	Eileen Forde, Committee and Member Services Manager

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 consider requests received to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following: • Spires Parkinson's UK Branch – World Parkinson's Day: Date: 11 April 2025 Colour: Blue • Nerve Tumours UK - ~Shine A Light on NF Awareness Campaign: Date 17 May 2025 Colour: Blue • Hope 4 ME & Fibro NI – International ME Awareness Day Date: 12 May 2025: Colour: Blue • Hope 4 ME & Fibro NI – Severe ME Awareness Day: Date: 8 August 2025 Colour: Blue • Facial Pain Awareness – Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) Awareness Day Date: 7 October 2025 Colour: Teal or cyan
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: • Spires Parkinson's UK Branch – World Parkinson's Day: Date: 11 April 2025 Colour: Blue • Nerve Tumours UK - ~Shine A Light on NF Awareness Campaign: Date 17 May 2025 Colour: Blue • Hope 4 ME & Fibro NI – International ME Awareness Day Date: 12 May 2025: Colour: Blue • Hope 4 ME & Fibro NI – Severe ME Awareness Day: Date: 8 August 2025 Colour: Blue • Facial Pain Awareness – Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) Awareness Day Date: 7 October 2025 Colour: Teal or cyan
3.2	**Scope of the Council Arrangements** 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.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: Not applicable
	Human: Not applicable
	Risk Management: Not applicable
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Council policy and procedural arrangements have been referred to.
	Rural Needs Implications: Not applicable
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	• Spires Parkinson's UK Branch – World Parkinson's Day: Date: 11 April 2025 Colour: Blue • Nerve Tumours UK - ~Shine A Light on NF Awareness Campaign: Date 17 May 2025 Colour: Blue

	• Hope 4 ME & Fibro NI – International ME Awareness Day Date: 12 May 2025: Colour: Blue • Hope 4 ME & Fibro NI – Severe ME Awareness Day: Date: 8 August 2025 Colour: Blue • Facial Pain Awareness – Trigeminal Neuralgia (TN) Awareness Day Date: 7 October 2025 Colour: Teal or cyan
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	None

Report on	Customer Service Policy (draft)
Date of Meeting	3rd April 2015
Reporting Officer	P Moffett, Assistant Director Org. Development, Strategy & Performance
Contact Officer	Arlene McIlwrath, Customer Experience Manager

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 give consideration to the draft Customer Service Policy following a period of review across business teams to reflect legislative and other changes required.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	Conideration has been given to reviewing the Council's Customer Service Policy to reflect changes introduced by the Northern Ireland Public Service Organisation (NIPSO) through the introduction of new complaints handling arrangements for local government.
2.2	The Customer Service Policy (appendix A) has been reviewed and is a coming together of our existing customer service arrangements, establishment of a set of principles to which all employees should work towards in the delivery of our services, customer service standards and standards we expect to receive from our customers when engaging with us.
2.3	The Policy has been in place since the establishment of Council in 2015 and subject to a number of reviews across this period. The policy was inclusive of our compliant handling arrangements. With the introduction of the new complaints regime by NIPSO (the Ombudsman) the complaints handling element has been decanted from the policy, now sitting separate as our Complaints Handling Procedures. It places a statutory duty on Councils to receive, record and monitor complaints in line with guidance, reporting and publication of the data. Further information on the complaints handling procedures in place since January 2024 is accessible from out website at: Mid Ulster DC - Complaints Mid Ulster Complaints Handling Procedures
2.4	As part of the statutory review process, NIPSO Complaint Standards Team has conducted a compliance check on the documentation and measures put in place by Council to meet their complaints handling requirements. NIPSO has reported that our arrangements comply with the requirements of the Public Services Ombudsman Act (NI) 2026.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The policy formalises and places a standard for consistency in how we engage and interact with our customers, irrespective of where and from what area/department they receive the service from. The policy sets in place and reaffirms the customer service principles we expect and will work to continually embed across the organisation within

	public reception areas when greeting the public by telephone; and through written communication, whether this be by electronic means or letter.
3.2	The success of this policy will be its adoption across council and how all staff engage in the principles and standards we set ourselves when serving the public from their area of work/department.
3.3	The Customer Experience Manager supported by the Customer Services & Complaints Officer will be leading on implementation to support departments to embed our principles and standards across Services, to be applied when going about their daily work in serving the people of our District.
3.4	Responsibility for customer service generally across our customer service points and front of house desks in the civic offices rests with Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance Directorate. We provide a supporting role to other directorate to encourage them to embed our customer service principles and standards within their practices and works.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Human: Officer time to manage and monitor ongoing complaints.
4.2	Financial: none specifically identified
4.3	Risk Management: To maintain and grow the reputation of the Council in how it serves the people of Mid Ulster district
5.0	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: An Equality Screening has been undertaken as part of the policy review and development, and considerations reflected upon within the final policy draft.
	Rural Needs Implications: Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) has been undertaken and reflected upon.
6.0	**Recommendation(s)**
6.1	That Members give consideration to approving the Customer Service Policy and provide any commentary, as necessary.
7.0	**Documents Attached & References**
7.1	Appendix: Customer Service Policy (draft)

Comhairle Ceantair
Lár Uladh
Mid Ulster
District Council

Mid Ulster District Council
Customer Service Policy

Document Control			
Policy / Procedure Owner (name, role & section)	Philip Moffett Assistant Director Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance		
Policy/ Procedure Author (name, role & section)	Arlene McIlwrath Customer Experience Manager Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance		
Version	v1.0		
Consultation	Senior Management Team Yes / No Trade Unions Yes / No		
Equality Screened by	Arlene McIlwrath	**Date**	20.02.25
Equality Impact Assessment	No	**Date**	N/A
Approved By	Policy & Resources Committee	**Date**	TBC
Adopted By	Council	**Date**	TBC
Review Date		**By Whom**	Policy Owner
Circulation	Council Staff Elected Members		
Document Linkages	Data Protection Policy Social Media Policy Internet Use Policy Customer Care Charter Complaints Handling Procedures Communications Policy		

Contents

1.0 Introduction

As an organisation which is primarily service-based and which has increasing responsibility for the planning, design and delivery of services which significantly impact all aspects of the lives of local people, Mid Ulster District Council is committed to adopting a customer-focused approach to its work.

This Policy will establish the principles to which the Council is committed, together with procedures and standards for staff, through which the Council expects to demonstrate excellence in customer service.

The policy has been created to reflect the broad elements and principles within the Customer Services World Host guidance.

The Council has also developed a Digital Strategy which is person centred. Three of the key themes of the Strategy consider collaboration and engagement; rethinking and simplifying processes and using technology and tools that enable better services. The full strategy including the Vision can be viewed at Digital Transformation Strategy | Mid Ulster District Council (midulstercouncil.org)

The Policy has been created to reflect the standards set down in the Council's Customer Care Charter, which has been appended to this Policy. The Charter Objectives detail the standards of service customers can expect.

2.0 Policy Aims & Objectives

The Customer Service Policy aims to create an organisational culture which:

- focuses on the needs of customers in the design and delivery of services, whether internal or external.
- seeks, listens and acts on the views of its customers.
- values customer views, compliments and complaints as important sources of information for putting things right and as opportunities to improve service delivery.

The Policy objectives are to:

- promote a positive customer service ethos across the organisation.
- ensure staff understand customer service values and demonstrate them in their behaviours and interaction with all customers.
- develop appropriate and measurable standards*1 across all customer access channels.
- ensure that meaningful engagement and consultation with customers takes place.
- ensure that the results of engagement, consultation and feedback are used to influence strategic and operational decisions.

3.0 Policy Scope

Everyone with whom the Council comes into contact, externally and internally, is a customer and therefore the Customer Service Policy affects residents, visitors, other organisations across the public, private, voluntary and community sectors, and all Council staff.

The Policy and its procedures apply in all circumstances except where:

- other procedures are prescribed by law
- legislative or other requirements take precedence

i.e. Freedom of Information Act, Data Subject Access Requests, Planning Regulations etc

The Policy does not apply to complaints handling (please refer to Complaints Handling Procedures Complaints | Mid Ulster District Council (midulstercouncil.org) for guidance.

4.0 Linkage to Corporate Plan

The Council's Corporate Plan (2024-2028) has three key themes:

- Our Service Delivery
- Leadership & Partnership for Local Growth
- Being the Best Council Possible

One of the values within 'Our Service Delivery' theme focuses on customer services which will put citizens and customers first and help improve the customer's engagement and interaction with the Council.

5.0 Roles & Responsibilities

The Customer Service Policy acknowledges that good customer service is dependant upon a commitment from the Council as a Corporate body and is the responsibility of all Council employees.

- Elected Members will endorse the Policy, its implementation and procedures.

- The Senior Management Team will demonstrate its commitment to the Policy by adopting the customer service values and principles, promoting them among the Assistant Directors, Heads of Service and Managers, and through them, the wider staff, monitoring performance and recommending change to improve customer service.

- Assistant Directors, Heads of Services and Managers will adopt and promote the customer service values and principles, ensure

procedures are applied consistently across their areas of service responsibility, review standards and performance, encourage staff training and, based on customer feedback and experience, recommend developments and improvements to the Senior Management Team.

- The Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance Directorate and the Customer Experience Manager through the Customer Services Officer/Team will support the dissemination of the customer service ethos throughout the organisation, particularly through planned customer service training and development programmes.

- All staff will demonstrate the customer service values and principles through their positive behaviour and professional approach to the delivery of their services and by participating in ongoing training and development opportunities.

6.0 Procedure & Implementation

This Policy is subject to a set of core Customer Service principles:

6.1 Customer Service Principles

- We will design and deliver our services around customers, rather than business processes.

- We will be professional, confidential, helpful and courteous at all times.

- We will be open, transparent and proactive in our information provision.

- We will act with fairness, integrity and impartiality, affording equal respect to all.

- We will use a mix of contact channels for our customers to help them reach us in a way which best suits their needs.

- We will maintain our standards across all customer contact channels and at all stages of the customer journey.

- We will undertake regular, appropriate and effective consultation with our customers to identify their needs, to inform our decisions and improve our services and performance.

- We will monitor our performance, evaluate and act on the outcomes.

- We will seek to be efficient in our customer service, using technology appropriately to improve the flexibility and accessibility of customer contact.

- We will develop a high standard of customer service by investing in our staff training and development and engaging with them on customer service issues.

- We will provide and maintain safe and clean facilities for our customers, minimising risk or injury to our customers and our staff.

6.2 Customer Service Standards & Procedures

These procedures apply in all circumstances except where other procedures are prescribed by law or other legislative requirements take precedence, i.e. Freedom of Information Act, Data Subject Access Requests, Planning Regulations etc

6.2.1 Council Facilities: Public Reception Areas

In principle, any Council building which is open to the public is a potential customer access point for Council services.

Public reception areas in these facilities are generally multi-functional, where staff meet and greet visitors, provide telephone answering services, signpost to other organisations, deliver services directly and support other services.

They are, therefore, prime customer facing points requiring well-trained and knowledgeable staff.

Customer facing staff working in public reception areas will:

- wear the agreed corporate uniform.

- wear the agreed corporate name badge.

- greet every customer.

- give priority to those customers present in the reception area over telephone answering, dealing with other issues or dealing with staff.

- not use personal mobile phones at their work station, except in cases of emergency.

- will adhere to the objectives of the Council's Customer Care Charter.

Council staff who do not work in public reception areas but who interact or transact business with customers in those spaces, will give priority to dealing

with those customers and will adhere to the principles, procedures and standards of the Customer Service policy.

Council staff who do not work in public reception areas will only spend time in those areas and with the reception-based staff when they are dealing with work-related issues.

Council will aim to provide a welcoming, clean and tidy office reception space, making the offices as accessible as possible for everyone, and provide an area to facilitate private discussions as necessary.

Council will display up-to-date information in a prominent position to include details of the Council's Customer Care Charter and how customers can provide feedback on service delivery/customer journey; the Complaints Handling Procedures etc. Information can be provided in a range of formats. Please use the attached link to the Council's Accessibility Statement for guidance Accessibility statement for Mid Ulster District Council | Mid Ulster District Council (midulstercouncil.org)

6.2.2 Telephone Answering

The telephone remains an important communication channel for customers contacting the Council and is currently the predominant method when making service enquiries. Maintaining a high standard of customer telephone contact across the organisation is, therefore, essential to the perception of the Council as a customer-focussed organisation.

- All staff will aim to answer phone calls within 20 seconds.

- All staff will answer the phone to an external caller by saying good morning, good afternoon, good evening, followed by the council/department/service name as appropriate, followed by their first name and a phrase, such as 'can I help you?' or 'how can I help you?'.

- All staff will endeavour to deal with customer queries and requests directly and will only transfer a call to another member of staff if the caller specifically requests to speak to a named officer or if they do not have the information required.

- All staff will endeavour to support customers with Council form filling and/or navigation of the Council's website (online applications).

- Where a caller wishes to speak to a member of staff who is unavailable, the staff member dealing with the call must always offer to help, take a message or, if applicable, provide a mobile telephone number.

- If a member of staff is on leave, the call should be transferred to another nominated member of staff who will be able to deal with the issue or query.

- If a call cannot be dealt with directly or transferred to an appropriate officer for response, a message should record the caller's contact details and sufficient information about the subject of the call. Staff should avoid requesting the customer to call back but rather arrangements be made for them to be contacted. Telephone messages must be communicated in a timely manner. Where a message has been communicated to the relevant Service, staff within that Service should follow up.

- Where an issue or query raised by telephone cannot be dealt with immediately, the responsible officer will provide a reply as soon as possible, adhering to the response times for written communication, but recognising that telephone contact is expected to be, and should be, considerably more rapid.

- Where a caller contacts the Council about a service, facility or responsibility of another organisation, all staff will provide a 'signposting' service, providing points of contact for the other organisation whenever possible.

- Voicemail should not be used as 'out of office' cover for extended periods of time. Calls should be diverted to an appropriate extension and/or mobile telephone number.

- The use of speakerphones should be avoided in public reception areas. Staff should be mindful of the importance of confidentiality, potential sensitivity of business being conducted and data protection issues when communicating with customers.

- Call ringing volumes should be set to an acceptable level for external incoming calls to ensure they are audible and can be picked up within prescribed timescales.

6.2.3 Written Communication

Any letter or email communication is accepted by the recipient as being from 'the Council' and therefore all care must be taken to ensure that content, language and grammar is correct and the tone of the correspondence is suitable.

While often considered more informal, particularly when used internally, email communication should adhere to the same standards as traditional letters.

As well as the standards below, written communication will also follow guidance contained in the Communications Policy, specifically those parts relating to the use of the Council's brand, font type and size, and the procedure for managing requests for information in alternative formats, including languages other than English.

- All letters issued by Council officers will be issued on the official Mid Ulster District Council letterhead.

- Where hard copy information, which does not require an accompanying letter, is being issued by post, an official Mid Ulster District Council compliment slip should be used.

- In formal written correspondence, the Council will be referred to as Mid Ulster District Council.

- In all written communication, the first name and surname of the officer signing the correspondence will be used, together with job title. Contact details, including direct dial telephone numbers and email address, where applicable, will be provided to ensure customers have an easily identifiable point of contact. Normally, formal correspondence will be signed by a senior member of staff (Chief Executive, Strategic Director, Assistant Director, Head of Service, Manager or other officer designated by a Strategic Director).

- Standard phrases to close letters will be used as appropriate, that is 'yours sincerely' or 'yours faithfully'. When appropriate, officers may use less formal closing phrases, such as 'kind regards' or 'best wishes'. Phrases such as 'yours in sport' are not to be used.

- All staff with an '@midulstercouncil.org' email address must use the standard email template, including the agreed signature template in line with the Council's Brand Guidelines (please refer to Marketing and Communications for further information).

- Out of office automatic email response must be enabled where a member of staff will be absent for more than 1 working day. The out of office message must provide an alternative point of contact for enquiries.

- All correspondence by letter received by the Council will be acknowledged within 3 working days (except where other legislative requirements take precedence), unless a full response is to be issued in the interim period. Acknowledgements should be issued by email whenever possible.

- All external correspondence received by email will be acknowledged within 3 working days (except where other legislative requirements take precedence), unless a full response is to be issued in the interim period.

- All correspondence will receive a response within 15 working days (except where other legislative requirements take precedence). Where a response cannot be issued within the 15 working day timeframe, the Council will contact the customer to provide an explanation and a new target response time.

- When appropriate, a response to written correspondence can be made by telephone or in person, in which case a file note should be made and retained to record details of the contact, including date, time and outcome.

Councillors routinely receive written correspondence, by letter, by email and via on-line channels and routinely respond in their capacity as individual elected members.

- Where an elected member receives correspondence relating to Council business in an official capacity (as Chair, Deputy Chair or Chair of a Committee), the appropriate senior Council officer will, on request, assist in providing information to facilitate a response which reflects the corporate position or, if requested, draft a response.

6.3 Standards for Our Customers

We are committed to providing a high-quality service that meets the needs of our customers. In return, we expect certain standards from our customers:

- We expect our customers to treat all of our staff with the respect that they themselves would wish to receive.

- We do not expect our customers to threaten, physically or verbally abuse any of our staff.

- In the event that we make a mistake, we will always try to make amends. Abuse of staff in these or any other circumstances does not help any situation. During a telephone call, should such abuse reach an unacceptable level, staff will politely end the conversation. In person-to-person circumstances staff will remove themselves from the situation and call for assistance if required. All incidents of abusive behaviour will be recorded and will be addressed under the relevant policy.

- We expect all our customers to co-operate with any reasonable instructions or requests from our staff.

- Our customers will not wilfully harm things owned by the Council, Councillors or staff.

6.3.1 Aggressive or Abusive Behaviour

Violence is not restricted to acts of aggression that may result in physical harm. It also includes behaviour or language (whether oral or written) that may cause staff to feel afraid, threatened or abused.

Examples of actions or behaviours which fall under this heading include threats, physical violence, personal verbal abuse, derogatory remarks, and rudeness. Inflammatory statements and unsubstantiated allegations may be regarded as abusive behaviour.

Staff can expect to be treated courteously and with respect. Violence or abuse towards staff is unacceptable. Staff understand that the anger felt by many complainants is directed towards the subject matter of their complaint. However, it is not acceptable when that anger escalates into aggression directed towards staff.

6.3.2 Unreasonable Demands

Customers may make unreasonable demands through the amount of information they seek, the nature and scale of service they expect, or the number of approaches they make. What amounts to unreasonable demands will always depend on the circumstances surrounding the behaviour, and the seriousness of the issues raised by the customer.

Examples of actions which fall under this heading include vexatious complaints, demanding responses within an unreasonable timescale, insisting on seeing or speaking to a particular member of staff who is unavailable, continual phone calls or letters, repeatedly changing the substance and focus of the issue, or raising unrelated concerns. Such demands may be considered unacceptable and unreasonable.

6.3.3 Unreasonable Persistence

Some customers will not, or cannot, accept that the Council is unable to assist them further or provide a level of service other than that provided already. Customers may persist in disagreeing with the action or decision taken in relation to their issue or contact the Council persistently about the same issue. The actions of persistent complainants are considered to be unacceptable when they take up a disproportionate amount of time and resources.

6.3.4 Managing Unacceptable Actions or Behaviour

To manage unacceptable actions or behaviour, the Council may decide to restrict contact in person, by telephone, letter or electronically, or by any combination of these.

7.0 Equality Screening & Impact Assessment

The policy has equality screened in accordance with the Council's screening and impact assessment process. No impact was identified.

7.1 Staff & Financial Resources

Initial training for all front-line staff is provided by the Council's World Host Training Programme and ongoing via Learning and Development Training Programmes.

Implementation of the policy requires the release of staff across the organisation to attend core customer service training, with regular refresher training for key customer-facing staff.

Each Directorate will determine their own appropriate Service training needs.

8.0 Support & Advice

For further information about the policy, please contact Arlene McIlwrath, Customer Experience Manager.

9.0 Communication

The policy will be communicated internally using a range of appropriate internal communication methods, with external communication via traditional print and digital channels.

The policy will also from part of the induction process for all new staff.

10.0 Monitoring & Review Arrangements

The effectiveness of the policy will be monitored using feedback from those staff involved in its implementation and data collated on performance against standards.

Formal review, with any appropriate recommendations for change, will take place annually.

1 Measurable Standards (Reference Page 4)

- *80% of calls picked up in <5 seconds*
- *Emails replied to within defined timescales*
- *Footfall enquires handled promptly*

Minutes of Meeting of Policy and Resources Committee of Mid Ulster District Council held on Thursday 6 March 2025 in the Council Offices, Burn Road, Cookstown and by Virtual Means

Members Present	Councillor Quinn, Chair Councillor Brown, F Burton*, J Burton*, Corry, Gildernew, McAleer*, McConnell, McLean, McLernon, S McPeake, Molloy* and Wilson
Officers in Attendance	Mrs Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance (SD: ODSP) Mr Black, Strategic Director of Communities and Place** Mrs Dyson, Head of Human Resources (HoHR)** Mr McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) Ms McNally, Assistant Director of Corporate Services & Finance (AD: CS&F) Mr Moffett, Assistant Director of Organisational Development, Strategy & Performance (AD: ODSP) Mr O'Hagan, Head of IT (HoIT) Mr Scullion, Assistant Director of Property Services (AD: PS)** Mrs Forde, Committee and Member Services Manager

* Denotes members present in remote attendance
** Denotes Officers present by remote means
*** Denotes others present by remote means

The meeting commenced at 7.00 pm.

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

PR039/25 Notice of Recording

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

PR040/25 Apologies

Councillors Cahoon, Johnston and Totten

PR041/25 Declarations of Interest

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

PR042/25 Chairs Business

The Chair, Councillor Quinn extended sympathy to the family of Callum Quinn who died following a road traffic accident on the Coalisland Road, Dungannon. He also extended sympathy to the family of schoolgirl Caitlin Rose McMullan who died following an accident coming from the school bus in Magherafelt. The Chair said all had been deeply saddened by the deaths and no one could imagine the heartbreaking pain of their families.

Councillor Wilson also extended sympathy to the family of Leanne Thomas who lost her life a few weeks ago and wished others recovering from the accident a speedy recovery.

Councillor Molloy welcomed the re-opening of the pedestrian pathways onto the Hill of The O'Neill from Circular Road. He highlighted that the paths are currently closing at sunset but asked if the opening/closing times could be reviewed for the Hill of The O'Neill on occasions when there are functions in the events space. In conclusion he said there was no parking on the Hill of The O'Neill and it would be useful to have the pedestrian accesses open.

The Chair, Councillor Quinn said officers would review.

Matters for Decision

PR043/25 Request(s) to Illuminate Council Property

Members considered previously circulated report which sought approval to illuminate and light up the Council's three designated properties to raise awareness for the following:

- Long Covid Foundation – International Long Covid Day – 14 March 2025 Colour: Gray & Teal
- Take A Pain Check Foundation – World Youth Rheumatic Disease (WORD) Day - 15 March 2025 - Colour: Blue
- Autoimmune Association Awareness Day: 31 March 2025 – Colour: Pink and Blue
- World Haemophilia Day –Access for All: Women and Girls Bleed too. 17 April 2025 - Colour: Red
- Child Brain Injury Trust: Acquired Brain Injury Awareness Week: 23 May 2025 – Colour: Purple and Blue
- Prader Willi Syndrome Association – Glow Orange Day - 30 May 2025 – Colour: Orange
- Air Ambulance: Emergency Services & Air Ambulance Week: 9 September 2025 – Colour: Red
- St Vincent de Paul Day – 27 September 2025 – Colour: Blue

The Chair, Councillor Quinn thanked officers for reconvening the light up for Kawaski Disease which had been impacted by power cuts following recent storms.

Proposed by Councillor McLernon
Seconded by Councillor McLean and

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

- Long Covid Foundation – International Long Covid Day – 14 March 2025 Colour: Gray & Teal
- Take A Pain Check Foundation – World Youth Rheumatic Disease (WORD) Day - 15 March 2025 - Colour: Blue
- Autoimmune Association Awareness Day: 31 March 2025 – Colour: Pink and Blue
- World Haemophilia Day –Access for All: Women and Girls Bleed too. 17 April 2025 - Colour: Red
- Child Brain Injury Trust: Acquired Brain Injury Awareness Week: 23 May 2025 – Colour: Purple and Blue
- Prader Willi Syndrome Association – Glow Orange Day - 30 May 2025 – Colour: Orange
- Air Ambulance: Emergency Services & Air Ambulance Week: 9 September 2025 – Colour: Red
- St Vincent de Paul Day – 27 September 2025 – Colour: Blue

PR044/25 Elected Member Development Working Group Report

The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement (HoSS&E) presented previously circulated report which considered the report of a meeting of the Elected Member Development Working Group held on 19 February 2025.

Councillor F Burton proposed the report and encouraged all Members to participate in training events.

Councillor Corry, chair of the Elected Member Development Working Group said the group was driving forward learning and development for members and encouraged all to participate in events and E Learning.

Proposed by Councillor F Burton
Seconded by Councillor Corry and

Resolved That it be recommended to Council to approve the report and recommendations of the Elected Member Development Steering Group meeting, and actions contained, held on 19 February 2025 namely -

(i) That Members of Working Group and Officers liaise with Party Leaders to identify party champions to encourage participation in E Learning Courses available.
(ii) That the training as detailed in the report be progressed.
(iii) That the Elected Member Development Working Group Council recommend the adoption Roles and Responsibilities of Councillor, Committee Chair and Chair of Council with a view to issuing same

to Members taking up roles of responsibility post Annual General Meeting 2 June 2025.

PR045/25 Member Services

No issues.

Matters for Information

PR046/25 Minutes of Policy and Resources Committee held on 6 February 2025

Members noted Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 6 February 2025.

Councillor Corry said, “I would just like to raise a query in relation to the council media policy regarding an elected member commenting on a council post with misinformation.

The post I refer to is regarding council setting the new district rates on the 10th of February. On the post the member commented ‘for me at the fact that 2% of that 5.1% as to offset employers’ councils increased National Insurance contributions of 1.2% £800,000 for their employees. And the UK £515,000,000 was given to councils to cover that cost and our executive as part of the Barnett consequential will receive their share of the funds, but they haven't passed that on to the councils.’

Now I'm not sure how well the member keeps up to date with local political affairs or with her own party communication but since the announcement was first made about changes to employer National Insurance contributions many assembly colleagues have raised questions seeking clarity from the British government and ministers on costings and how much money the assembly would be getting including her own party leader Matthew O’Toole who asked about this on at least 2 occasions which were before the setting of our council rate.

The fact is that the executive does not know how much money they will receive, when they will receive any money and as we should always know from successive broken British Government promises, if we will even receive it. Scotland and Wales are in the same position. All these Finance Ministers including our own Minister John O’Dowd are pressing the British Treasury for clarity around these issues and how unfair this is on all employers, including small businesses who will face huge difficulties in the time ahead.

So, I would like to ask the member how can the executive pass on money they don’t have? Is it not prudent that we should have set aside money to ensure our hard-working employees are looked after as they should be?

Officers and the party group leaders including my own have spent months working through the various financial pressures and have sought clarity from the executive on any financial support coming from the British Treasury. No clarity has been forthcoming from the Treasury yet, which is deeply concerning. The Council finances are also included in this very committee, every month, and the member to my knowledge, has never raised any questions, suggestions or anything else. When the

money is not there how can we exclude that pressure without certainty? Are we not better to be prepared for the worst and hope it doesn't come to that.

However, as the Minister replied to her colleague 'Your level of wisdom or lack of it does not fall within my remit.' I fear the Member does know the facts of the matter but not unsimilar to the Trump handbook on misinformation preferred to continue with her spin for a few cheap likes, when we should all be working together to press the British Treasury to clarify the amount of money to be received, that they should fully cover the costs, have a timeline and contingency going forward - if they must increase contributions.
However I digress, what is the policy for a Member posting misinformation on council pages and even on members own platforms and are there any consequences? As I feel this could set a dangerous precedent and is well below the bar of how an elected member should conduct themselves."

In response the SD: Organisation Development, Strategy and Performance said the matter would be brought to the attention of the Marketing and Communications Manager.

PR047/05 Nine Month Progress Update on the Council's Performance Improvement Plan: including four Corporate Improvement Projects, the Statutory and Benchmark Performance Improvement Indicators/standards (Q1 to Q3 – 2024/25)

Members considered previously circulated report which provided monitoring information on the review of Council's performance against its seven statutory performance indicators/standards and two Council benchmark performance measures. The report also provided a performance progress summary against Council's four corporate improvement objectives and their associated project plans. The indicators/standards, benchmark measures, and the four improvement projects are contained within Council's Performance Improvement Plan for 2024/25.

Live broadcast ended at 7.15 pm.

Local Government (NI) Act 2014 - Confidential Business

Proposed by Councillor McLernon
Seconded by Councillor Brown 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 PR048/25 to PR057/25.

Matters for Decision

PR048/25 SHHP Bellaghy Bawn Writers Residency Project
PR049/25 Land and Property Matters
PR050/25 Staffing Matters for Decision
PR051/25 Pomeroy Forest Centre & Trails Resourcing

PR052/25 Update – Insurance Premiums 2025/26

Matters for Information

PR053/25 Confidential Minutes of Policy & Resources Committee held on 6 February 2025
PR054/25 Staff Matters for Information
PR055/25 Treasury Management – Update January 2025
PR056/25 Financial report for 10 months ended 31 January 2025
PR057/25 Contracts & DAC Register

P058/25 Duration of Meeting

The meeting was called for 7.00 pm and ended at 7.45 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.

Report on	Report of Corporate Good Relations Working Group Meeting: March 2025
Date of Meeting	3 April 2025
Reporting Officer	Joseph McGuckin, Head of Strategic Services & Engagement
Contact Officer	Ann McAleer, Policy Engagement & 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 report provides details of the outworkings of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group that was held on Monday 3rd March 2025.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	Mid Ulster District Council's Equality Scheme (2021-26) requires that meetings of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group are held with the purpose of promoting corporate good relations in the areas of Race Relations, Religion and Political Opinion.
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	This meeting was the first meeting of the 24/25 period. Members in attendance were provided with information in relation to current Council's Good Relations matters and how they were being managed in relation to the Council's statutory duties.
3.2	Actions agreed at the meeting included: • To arrange Equality and Diversity training of all members (this training has since been arranged for 6.30pm-8pm on 15th April 2025 via MS Teams) • That members were content that the Council's Section 75 considerations had been taken into account throughout the process, upon which they had been updated
4.0	**Other Considerations**
4.1	**Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications**
	Financial: N/A
	Human: Officer time

	Risk Management: N/A
4.2	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: Meeting held in accordance with Equality Scheme requirements.
	Rural Needs Implications: RNIA is considered to be disproportionate in relation to the business of this Working Group.
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
5.1	It is recommended that members review and note the report of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group meeting held on Monday 3rd March 2025.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	Appendix A: Report of Corporate Good Relations Working Group meeting (March 2025)

Report of the Corporate Good Relations Working Group of Mid Ulster District Council - 3 March 2025

Report of Corporate Good Relations Working Group of Mid Ulster Council held on 3 March 2025 at 6pm in the Committee Room, Dungannon Council Offices.

Attendees **Members:** Cllr. Frances Burton, Cllr. Córa Corry, Cllr. Gail Gildernew, Cllr. Jolene Groogan, Cllr. Denise Johnston, Cllr. Brian McGuigan, Cllr. Paul McLean, and Cllr. John McNamee
Officers: Adrian McCreesh, Melvin Bowman, Kathryn Donnelly, J McGuckin and A. McAleer
External Facilitator: John Kremer (KCSL)

Agenda Item 1: Welcome: A welcome to the meeting was provided by the Chief Executive, Adrian McCreesh.

Agenda Item 2: Apologies: Cllr. Wilbert Buchanan and Cllr. Ian Milne

Agenda Item 3: Equality Complaint Follow Up: The Head of Strategic Services and Engagement provided an overview of a complaint relating to the provision of goods, facilities and services by the Council and recently upheld by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI). The Policy Engagement and Equality Officer provided Members with details of commitments attaching to the review of policy and training that are ongoing as a result of the lessons learned from the case, including the settlement requirements as requested by the ECNI.

Members sought clarification regarding various issues related to the information provided and it was agreed that members would be offered further Equality and Diversity training in light of this complaint.

Agenda Item 4: Planning Decision EQIA: The Council solicitor provided an update on the Section 75 considerations that have been afforded due consideration in relation to the ongoing handling of an anonymised planning application.

The Council's Chief Executive and Lead Planning Officer provided relevant additional information and outlined an overview of the steps that have been taken to date in order to ensure compliance with planning policy and statutory obligations including Section 75.

The Working Group subsequently agreed that they were content that the Council's Section 75 considerations had been taken into account throughout the process to date. Members were then updated as to how the Council's Section 75 commitments

would continue to be demonstrable through to the conclusion of the decision-making process.

The meeting ended at 6.50pm

Report on	Revised Policy:- • Revised Amounts & Pension Contribution Banding Rates re: Employer Discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (NI) 2014 Regulations & other related Regulations.
Date of Meeting	3rd April 2025
Reporting Officer	Geraldine Dyson, Head of Human Resources
Contact Officer	Marissa Canavan, Strategic Director of Organisational Development

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 inform Members of the annual revisions to employees' pension contribution banding rates and the revised limits for additional pension contributions within Mid Ulster District Council's Policy Statement in respect of Employer's Discretions under (LGPS) (NI) with effect from 1 April 2025.
2.0	**Background**
2.1	The following policy has been reviewed and find attached for information**:-** • Mid Ulster District Council Policy Statement re: Employer Discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (NI) 2014 Regulations & other related Regulations including Banding Policy
3.0	**Main Report**
3.1	The Employees' Pension Contribution Banding Policy within Mid Ulster District Council Policy Statement re: Employer Discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) (NI) 2014 Regulations & other related Regulations has been revised with new rates as at 1 April 2025 and attached as appendix.
4.0	**Other Considerations**
	Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications
4.1	**Human Resources:** - N/A
4.2	**Financial: -** Increases to amounts within the Pensions Discretions:- discretion 1 (power to grant extra annual pension), discretion 2 (contribute to cost of purchasing extra pension), discretion 8 (employees' contributions banding rates), discretion 15 (statutory week's pay limit for purpose of redundancy payment – to

4.3	be updated following notification of applicable statutory increase with effect from 6 April 2025)
	Risk Management: N/A
4.4	**Screening & Impact Assessments**
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	**Recommendation(s)**
	Members are informed of: • The annual revisions to the Pension Discretions numbers 1, 2, 8 & 15 pension contribution bands from 1st April 2025, as contained within the Mid Ulster District Council's Policy Statement Employer Discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme (N Ireland) 2014 Regulations & other related Regulations, as previously notified by NILGOSC.
6.0	**Documents Attached & References**
	• Mid Ulster District Council Policy Statement – Employer Discretions under the LGPS (NI) 2014 Regulations and other related Regulations.

Mid Ulster District Council Policy Statement
Employer Discretions under the Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2014 Regulations and other related Regulations

Document Control			
Policy / Procedure Owner (name, role & section)	Marissa Canavan, Director of Organisational Development, Mid Ulster DC		
Policy/ Procedure Author (name, role & section)	Marissa Canavan, Mid Ulster DC		
Version	v1.6		
Consultation	Senior Management Team **Yes** Trade Unions **Yes** NILGOSC **Yes**		
Equality Screened by	Sinead McAleer	**Date**	27/3/23
Rural Needs Assessment	Yes	**Date**	27/3/23
Approved By	Policy & Resources Committee	**Date**	
Adopted By	Council	**Date**	
Review Date	July 2025 & annually for Banding	**By Whom**	
Circulation	Mid Ulster DC staff		
Document Linkages	Flexible Working Arrangements Policy Re-organisation, Re-deployment & Redundancy Policy Equal Opportunities Policy		

CONTENTS PAGE

1. Background

Mid Ulster District Council (the Council) is required to (or where there is no requirement, is recommended to) formulate, publish and keep under review a Statement of Policy on certain other discretions it may exercise in accordance with:

- The Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (NI) 2014
- The Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment & Transactional Provisions) Regulations (NI) 2014
- Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (NI) 2002 – in respect of leavers between 1 February 2003 and 31 March 2009
- Earlier LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) in respect of members of the LGPS who left prior to 1 April 2015, and
- The Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 and earlier compensation regulations.

In formulating and reviewing its policies under the LGPS Regulations referred to above the Council has considered:

- whether and to what extent the exercise of its discretionary powers could lead to a serious loss of confidence in the public service, and
- that the policy is workable, affordable and reasonable having regard to the foreseeable costs.

Decisions under this policy will be taken by the Council and will be supported by a business case outlining how it is in the financial and/or managerial interests of the Council to exercise its discretions.

Any amendments to this policy will be published and sent to the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee within one month of the date the revisions to the policy were made.

This policy statement applies to the exercise of discretions under the above regulations in relation to:

- Active scheme members and members who cease active membership after 31 March 2015, and
- Scheme members who ceased active membership prior to 31 March 2015 (deferred members).

2. Consultation

The Council is not required to consult with the recognised trade unions when it intends to adopt new, or change existing, discretionary policies. However, it was considered appropriate to give advance notification to the recognised trade unions that this policy would be considered by the Council following discussion at the H.R. Policy Working group meeting and a draft was shared with the Mid Ulster Local Joint Forum.

3. Scope

This policy applies to all employees who are active members of the Local Government Pension Scheme or who will be so eligible. It excludes former Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) staff who transferred to Mid Ulster District Council following Review of Public Administration on 1st April 2015.

4. Effective date of policies

The policies on discretions to be exercised under the LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 take immediate effect from the date the Council agrees the relevant policies, or from 1 April 2015. Any change to the policies on existing discretions to be exercised under the LGPS Regulations in respect of pre 1 April 2015 leavers take immediate effect from the date Mid Ulster District Council agrees the policies.

Any change to the discretions exercised under the Discretionary Compensation Regulations 2003 and 2007 cannot take effect until one month after the date the Council publishes a statement of its amended policy.

5. Non-fettering of discretions

In applying its policy discretions the Council will:-

- Act reasonably and will not fetter the employer's discretion;
- Exercise discretion where it is deemed essential to assist in attracting and retaining employees or to compensate employees who leave through no fault of their own.
- Ensure that its discretionary powers will be used with regard to all relevant factors
- Will be duly recorded when used.

The policies will confer no contractual rights and whilst the Council will endeavour to discuss changes with the recognised trade unions the Council retains the right to change the policies at any time without prior notice or consultation.

Only the policy which is current at the time a relevant event occurs to an employee / scheme member will be the one applied to that employee / member.

If any staff member has a query in relation to this policy, he/she may contact:-

Name:- Marissa Canavan E mail:- Marissa.canavan@midulstercouncil.org

Tel No:- 03000 132 132 Ext 23316

It should be noted that the view given by the Pensions Ombudsman is that:-

- Where regulations allow an employer to exercise discretion a policy should be put in place to set out how to exercise that discretion
- A policy is there to guide the decision maker on how to exercise discretion
- An employer cannot generally bind itself as to how it will exercise discretion – fettering discretion is unlawful
- Every case could be considered on its merits; a decision is to be made on whether to follow the policy or make an exception
- Policies do not override the law; they should not apply a stricter test

6. Employer Discretions

Discretions to be exercised on and after 1 April 2015 under the LGPS Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 in relation to active scheme members and members who cease active membership after 31 March 2015.

Discretion and explanation	Mid Ulster District Council policy
1. **Discretion** – Power to grant extra annual pension (LGPS 2014, Regulation 32) **Explanation**. Whether, at full cost to the Council, to grant extra annual pension of up to £8,823; (figure at 1 April 2025 & subject to revision on an annual basis) to an active scheme member or within 6 months of leaving to a member who is dismissed by reason of redundancy or business efficiency or whose employment is terminated by mutual consent on the grounds of business efficiency.	The Council will not make use of the discretion to grant extra annual pension of up to £8,823 (figure at 1 April 2025) to an active scheme member or within 6 months of leaving to a member who is dismissed by reason of redundancy or business efficiency or whose employment is terminated by mutual consent on the grounds of business efficiency except in exceptional circumstances where the Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case will be considered on the merits of the financial and / or operational business case thus leaving Council the option to grant extra annual pension in exceptional circumstances e.g. where it is felt necessary in order to attract an employee who has the specialist skills and experience or where it is felt necessary in order to induce an employee with specialist skills and experience not to leave.
	The Council will only voluntarily contribute towards the cost of purchasing

2. **Discretion** – to contribute towards the costs of purchasing extra pension (LGPS 2014, Regulation 18) **Explanation**. Whether, where an active scheme member wishes to purchase extra annual pension of up to £8,823; (figure at 1 April 2025) by making Additional Pension Contributions (APCs), the Council will voluntarily contribute towards the cost of purchasing that extra pension via a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC). The employee must make an election to pay an APC within 30 calendar days of returning to work or any such longer period that the employer may permit if there has been an administrative error.	extra pension via a Shared Cost Additional Pension Contribution (SCAPC) where: - An active scheme member returns from a period of authorised leave of absence, and - the member does not, within 30 days of returning from the leave of absence, make an election to buy-back the amount of pension 'lost' during that period of leave of absence, and - the member subsequently makes an election to do so and it can be demonstrated that the reason for the member missing the original 30 day deadline was because the member had not been made aware of that deadline, and - the election is made no more than 6 months after the member returns from the period of leave of absence or such longer period as the Council may deem reasonable in any individual case. - A decision on whether the member meets the above criteria (and on whether the 6 month period referred to should be extended in any individual case) will be taken by the council and, where it is agreed that the conditions are met, the Council will contribute 2/3rds of the cost of buying back the 'lost' pension via a SCAPC.
3. **Discretion** – Flexible Retirement (LGPS 2014, Regulation 31 & LGPS 2014 Transitional Regs, Regulation 10) **Explanation**. Whether to permit flexible retirement for staff aged 55 or over who, with the agreement of the Council, reduce their working hours or grade and, if so, as part of the agreement: - whether, in addition to the benefits the member has accrued prior to 1	The Council will not agree to flexible retirement except in circumstances where the Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case - will be considered on the merits of the financial and / or operational business case put forward, - will set out whether, in addition to any pre 1 April 2009 benefits, the member

April 2009 (which the member must draw if flexible retirement is agreed), to permit the member to choose to draw • all, part or none of the pension benefits they accrued after 31 March 2009 and before 1 April 2015, and / or • all, part or none of the pension benefits they accrued after 31 March 2015, and - whether to waive, in whole or in part, any actuarial reduction which would otherwise be applied to the benefits taken on flexible retirement before Normal Pension Age (NPA)	will be permitted, as part of the flexible retirement agreement, to take a) all, some or none of their 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2015 benefits, and /or b) all, some or none of their post 31 March 2015 benefits, and - will require the approval of Council The Council will only consider requests for flexible retirement as a means to ease employees into full retirement for a period of no more than 2 years subject to business case review in consultation with employee and TU representative as applicable. There must be a reduction of at least one grade or a reduction at least 20% of the contractual hours of work. Any reduction will be a permanent change and employees will not be permitted to subsequently apply for a position that would result in an increase in hours or salary. Where flexible retirement is agreed, the benefits payable will be subject to any actuarial reduction applicable under the Local Government Pension Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014 and the Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment and Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014. The Council will only waive any such reduction, in whole or in part, where it considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case will be considered on the merits of the financial and / or operational business case put forward and will require the approval of the Council. Any strain on fund costs or any cost to waive the reduction in benefits will have to be met by, and paid to the Pension fund by Council.

4. **Discretion** – 85 year rule for members voluntarily drawing benefits (LGPS 2014 Transitional Regulations, Schedule 3) **Explanation**. Whether to switch the 85 year rule back on in full for active scheme members who would otherwise be subject to it and who choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60.	The Council will not agree to switch the 85 year rule on in full where members choose to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60 except in circumstances where the Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case - will be considered on the merits of the financial and / or operational business case put forward, and - will require the approval of Council
5. **Discretion** – Waiving reduction on benefits which a member voluntarily draws before Normal Pension Age (LGPS 2014, Regulation 31 and LGPS 2014 Transitional Regulations, Schedule 3) **Explanation.** Under Regulation 31 (5) of the LGPS Regulations (NI) 2014, employees voluntarily retiring on or after age 55 and before Normal Pension Age (NPA) may elect to immediately draw benefits and deferred members to draw benefits (other than on ill health grounds) on or after age 55 and before NPA, in each case reduced by the amount shown in actuarial guidance issued by the Department. The amount of the reduction will vary in accordance with the age of the member, membership in the Scheme and the extent to which the transitional provisions with regard to the 85 Year Rule Schedule 3 to the Transitional Regulations) apply to the individual member (if at all).	The Council will not agree under Regulation 31 (8) to waive in whole or part any reduction in benefits as described except in circumstances where Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so or there are compelling compassionate reasons for doing so. Each case:- will be considered on the merits of the financial and/or operational business case put forward, or will be considered on the merits of the compassionate case put forward, and will require the approval of the Council including, where the reduction is only to be waived in part, approval for the amount of reduction to be waived. As the employer, Council will have to meet the cost of the strain on the fund resulting from any waiver in actuarial reduction.

• Under Regulation 31(8), may agree to waive any relevant reduction under Regulation 31 (5) in whole or in part in respect of membership from 1 April 2015. No ground is stipulated by the Regulations. • Under Paragraph 2 (1) of Schedule 3 to the Transitional Regulations, may determine on compassionate grounds to waive in full any relevant reduction calculated in accordance with Schedule 3.	

6. **Discretion** – Shared Cost AVC (LGPS 2014, Regulation 19) **Explanation.** Whether, how much, and in what circumstances to contribute to a shared-cost Additional Voluntary Contribution (SCAVC) arrangement entered into on or after 1 April 2015 and whether, how much, and in what circumstances to continue to contribute to any shared cost Additional Voluntary Contribution (SCAVC) arrangement entered into before 1 April 2015.	The Council allows its employees to make Additional Voluntary Contributions (AVC) in accordance with relevant legislation. Where an employee satisfies the conditions for admission into an HMRC approved Salary Sacrifice Shared Cost AVC Scheme (SCAVC), has elected to pay AVC by salary sacrifice, and relevant legislation permits, the Council will, having due regard to NILGOSC administrative requirements, pay Shared Cost AVC contributions. The Council will only pay Shared Cost AVC contributions in circumstances where legislative provisions allow it to maintain the current nil cost to it in terms of both direct contribution of funds (i.e., it will only pay employer superannuation contributions on the amount of salary sacrificed under the SCAVC) and net cost for the management of the proposed SCAVC (i.e., management fees and costs do not exceed employer national insurance cost savings accruing to the Council as a result of the employee(s) participating in the SCAVC). The Council's exercise of the discretion is subject to the contract(s) of employment of employee(s) wishing to participate in the approved SCAVC being amended to reflect the fact that the employer contribution to the SCAVC is a pensionable emolument[1], and the relevant employee(s) formally confirming their acceptance of the contractual amendment. As with all discretions, the Council reserves the right to amend or withdraw the discretion in the future.

7 Discretion – Aggregating Benefits (Concurrent Employments & Deferred Members) (LGPS 2014, Regulation 24) **7 (a) Aggregating Benefits – Concurrent Employments** **Explanation**. Whether to extend the 12 month time limit which an employee with concurrent employments ceases an employment with an entitlement to a deferred pension may elect **not** to have the deferred benefits aggregated with those in their ongoing employment's active member pension account.	The Council will only extend the 12 month time limit within which; A scheme member with concurrent employments ceases an employment with entitlement to a deferred pension may elect **not** to have their deferred benefits aggregated with those in their ongoing employment's active member pension account. a) where the Council agrees that the available evidence indicates the member had not been informed of the 12 month time limit due to maladministration; b) where the Council agrees that the available evidence indicates the member had made an election within 12 months of ceasing the concurrent employment but the election was not received by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (e.g. the election form was lost in the post); or c) where the member has pre 1 April 2015 membership and the Council agrees the available evidence indicates that, due to maladministration, the member had not been informed of the implications of having separate benefits
7 (b) Aggregating Deferred Benefits – **Explanation** Whether to extend the 12 month time limit within which; A deferred member becomes an active member again may elect to aggregate the benefits in the deferred pensions account with those in the	The Council will only extend the 12 month time limit within which; A deferred member who becomes an active member again may elect to aggregate the benefits in the deferred pensions account with those in the new active member's pension account a) where the Council agrees that the available evidence indicates the member had not been informed of the

new active member's pension account.	12 month time limit due to maladministration; b) where the Council agrees that the available evidence indicates the member had made an election within 12 months of joining the LGPS but the election was not received by the Northern Ireland Local Government Officers' Superannuation Committee (e.g. the election form was lost in the post); or c) where the member has pre 1 April 2015 membership and the Council agrees the available evidence indicates that, due to maladministration, the member had not been informed of the implications of having benefits aggregated and would in consequence, suffer a detriment to their pension benefits (e.g. where member's whole time equivalent pensionable pay on commencing with Council is, in real terms after allowing for inflation, significantly more than the whole-time equivalent pensionable pay upon which the deferred benefits were calculated).
8 Determining Contribution Rates for Employees (LGPS 2014, Regulation 11) **Explanation** How the pension contribution band/rate to which an employee is to be allocated on joining the scheme, and at each subsequent April, will be determined and the circumstances in which (following a material change which affects pensionable pay in the course of a Scheme year (1 April to 31 March) the pension contribution band/rate to which an employee has been allocated will be reviewed. **9a Discretion** – Assumed Pensionable Pay and determination of whether a lump	The Council will determine the contribution band applicable for employees in accordance with its Contribution Banding Policy (See Appendix 1) & Council's intranet:- Human Resources Tab/Retirement Related/Pensions Discretionary & Contribution Banding Policy Council does not currently make any 'regular lump sum payments' to its employees. Therefore, if any lump sum payment were made to an employee, generally there would be no expectation that such a payment would be regular. However, Council will consider each case on its merits and any final decision will be subject to the approval of Council.

sum that was received by the member was a regular lump sum (LGPS 2014, Regulation 23 (5)) **Explanation**. Council must provide NILGOSC with a member's Assumed Pensionable Pay (APP) when a member:- • is absent due to illness or injury and on reduced contractual pay or no pay • is absent on child-related leave (as defined) and the actual pay received is not greater than APP would be for that period • is absent on reserve forces leave • where an ill health retirement or death has occurred APP is calculated in accordance with Regulation 23. The annual rate of APP must include any regular lump sum payment received by the member in the 12 months prior to the relevant event, as set out above (Reg 23(4)(a)(iv) and 23(5)(a)(iv)). Regulation 23(5) defines a regular lump sum payment as *"a payment for which the member's employer determines there is an expectation that such a payment would be paid on a regular basis."* The employer must therefore determine in relation to any lump sum the member received in that 12-month period whether or not there was an expectation that that payment would be paid on a regular basis. Where it determines that there is such an expectation, the lump sum must be included in the calculation of the annual APP figure. **9b – Whether to substitute a revised pensionable pay in calculating APP** Where the pensionable pay received by a member in the relevant reference period for the calculation of APP under Regulation 23 is	In calculating APP, Council will usually substitute a revised pensionable pay for the actual pensionable pay received in the reference period where it is materially different to the pay normally received by the employee. The revised pensionable pay used will reflect the employee's normal pensionable pay. In determining the employee's normal pensionable pay, Council will take into account the pensionable pay received by the employee in the previous 12 months. Each case will be determined on its merits and exceptional circumstances will be taken into account.

materially different from the level of pensionable pay that member normally received ("normal pensionable pay"), the employer may substitute in the calculation of APP a revised level of pensionable pay that reflects the member's normal pensionable pay. The employer must have regard to the level of pensionable pay received by the member in the previous 12 months.	

NEW **10. Discretion:- Time limit for elections to cover lost pension due to a permitted absence.** **(LGPS 2014, Regulation 18)** Whether to allow a member longer than 30 days following return to work after a period of absence with permission (not due to illness, child-related leave or reserve forces service leave) to decide to apply to cover the lost pension through an Additional Pension Contract Note: if a longer period is allowed, then Council will be responsible for meeting two-thirds of the cost of the arrangement up to a maximum period of 36 months.	Council will only extend the 30-day deadline following a member's return to work after a period of authorised absence where he/she can decide to apply to cover the lost pension through an APC where: • an active scheme member returns from a period of authorised leave of absence (other than illness, child related leave or reserve forces service leave), and • the member does not, within 30 days of returning decide to apply to cover 'lost' pension through an APC, and • the member subsequently makes an application and it can be demonstrated the reason for missing the original 30 day deadline was because they had not been made aware of that deadline.

Discretions to be exercised on and after 1 April 2015 under the LGPS Regulations in relation to scheme members who ceased active membership between 1 April 2009 and 31 March 2015

	The Council will consider an application to waive, on

11. **Discretion** – Waiving reduction to deferred benefits (LGPS 2009, Regulation 30) **Explanation**. Whether, on compassionate grounds, to waive any actuarial reduction that would normally be applied to deferred benefits which are paid before age 65.	compassionate grounds, any actuarial reduction that would normally be applied to deferred benefits which are paid before age 65. Each case will be considered on its merits and will be subject to the approval of the Council. Council will have to meet the cost of the strain on the fund resulting from a decision to waive any actuarial reduction.

NEW 12. **Discretion** – Application of 85 year rule for deferred members (LGPS 2014, Transitional Regs, Schedule 3) **Explanation**. Whether, as the 85 year rule* does not (other than on flexible retirement) automatically apply to former employees who would otherwise be subject to it, and who choose to voluntarily draw their deferred benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60, to switch the 85 year rule back on in full for such members. **The 85 year rule is satisfied if the person was an LGPS member on 30 September 2006 and if the member's age at the date they draw their benefits and their scheme membership (each in whole years) add up to 85 or more. If they are part-time, their membership counts towards the 85 year rule at its full calendar length.*	Council will not agree to switch the 85 year rule on in full where a deferred member chooses to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60 except in circumstances where Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case will be considered on the merits of the financial and/or operational business case put forward; and will require the approval of the Council. Council will have to meet the cost of the strain on the fund resulting from a decision to pay benefits before age 60 i.e. where the member has met the 85 year rule or would meet it before age 60.

Discretions to be exercised on and after 1 April 2015 under the LGPS Regulations in relation to scheme members who ceased active membership between 1 February 2003 and 31 March 2009

Discretion and Explanation	Mid Ulster District Council Policy
13. **Discretion** – Waiving reduction to deferred benefits (LGPS Regulations (NI) 2002, Regulation 5) **Explanation**. Whether, on compassionate grounds, to waive any actuarial reduction that would normally be applied to deferred benefits which are paid before age 65.	The Council will consider an application to waive, on compassionate grounds, any actuarial reduction that would normally be applied to deferred benefits which are paid before age 65. Each case will be considered on its merits and will be subject to the approval of the Council. Council will have to meet the cost of the strain on the fund resulting from a decision to agree to waive any actuarial reduction.

Discretion and Explanation	Mid Ulster District Council Policy
NEW **14**. **Discretion** – Application of 85 year rule for deferred members (LGPS Regs 2014, Transitional Regs, Schedule 3) **Explanation** Whether as the 85 rule does not (other than on flexible retirement) automatically apply to former employees who would otherwise be subject to it, and who choose to voluntarily draw their deferred benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60, to switch the 85 year rule back on in full for such members.	The Council will not agree to switch the 85 year rule on in full where a deferred member chooses to voluntarily draw their benefits on or after age 55 and before age 60 except in circumstances where Council considers it is in its financial or operational interests to do so. Each case will be considered on its merits and will require the approval of Council. Council will have to meet the cost of the strain on the fund resulting from a decision to pay benefits before age 60 i.e. where the member has met the 85 year rule or would meet it before age 60.

Discretions to be exercised under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007

Discretion and Explanation	Mid Ulster District Council policy
15. **Discretion** – Redundancy Payment (LGPS 2007 Regulation 4) **Explanation**. Whether to base a redundancy payment on an employee's actual weeks' pay where this exceeds the	Staff whose employment is terminated on the grounds of redundancy or business efficiency will receive a termination payment (to incorporate any redundancy pay) calculated using the statutory redundancy payment formula

statutory week's pay limit of, currently £729 per week (as at 6 April 2024) subject to annual review.	but based on actual week's pay (where this exceeds the statutory maximum) enhanced by a multiplier of 3.46 **To be further updated re: Voluntary & Compulsory Redundancy
16. **Discretion** – Enhanced compensation (LGPS 2007 Regulation 5) **Explanation**. Whether to make a termination payment (inclusive of any redundancy payment) of up to a maximum of 104 weeks' pay to employees whose employment is terminated on the grounds of redundancy or efficiency of the service.	An employee whose employment is terminated early due to redundancy or business efficiency will receive a termination payment (inclusive of any redundancy pay) calculated using the statutory redundancy payment formula:- Age x Length of Service x Actual Week's Pay, enhanced by a multiplier of 3.46

Discretions to be exercised under the Local Government (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2003

Discretion and Explanation	Mid Ulster District Council policy
17. **Discretion** – Abatement of annual compensatory added years pension (LG (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (NI) 2003, regulations 16 and 18) **Explanation**. How a person's annual compensatory added years pension is to be abated during, and following the cessation of, any period of re-employment by an employer who offers membership of the LGPS to its employees, regardless of whether or not the employee chooses to join the LGPS	Mid Ulster District Council will, during any period of re-employment in local government (see note below), abate a person's annual compensatory added years' payment by the 'excess' if the aggregate of: - the annual compensation, and - the annual pension from the LGPS, and - the annual rate of pay from the new employment exceeds the pay the person would have received from the employment in respect of which the compensatory added years were granted, based on the annual rate of pay at the date of ceasing the former employment as increased by the relevant cost of living increases (i.e. as increased by the rate at which an 'official pension' is increased under the Pensions (Increase) Act 1971). Index. Where compensatory added years were awarded on or after 24 March 2003, Mid Ulster District Council will reduce a person's annual compensatory added

	years' payment following the cessation of a period of re-employment in local government (see note below) to the extent necessary to secure that if: - the period of compensatory added years granted in respect of the former employment, **plus** - the period of membership the person has accrued in the LGPS (or would have accrued had he / she joined the scheme when first eligible to do so) during the period of re-employment in local government, counted at its part-time length, if the person was part-time, exceeds - the period of membership the person would have accrued during the period from the cessation of the former employment until age 65 on the assumption that he / she had continued in that former employment to age 65 (again counted at its part-time length if the person was part-time at the date of cessation of the former employment), **then** - the annual pension and lump sum from the first job combined with the annual pension and lump sum from the second job (based on the assumption that the employee joined the LGPS when first eligible to do so), plus the annual compensation and lump sum compensation, shall not in aggregate exceed the pension and lump sum the person would have achieved if he / she had remained in the first job through to age 65. Where there is an excess, the annual compensation will be reduced by the excess pension and, if the annual compensation is not reduced to nil, the amount of the remaining (reduced) basic annual compensation will then be

	suspended until the excess lump sum (if any) is recovered. In calculating whether or not, in aggregate, the annual pension and lump sum from the first job, plus the annual pension and lump sum (if any) from the second job (based on the assumption that the employee joined the LGPS at the first opportunity), plus the annual compensation and lump sum compensation, exceeds the pension and lump sum the person would have achieved if he/she had remained in the first job through to age 65 it will be necessary to compare: a) the actual LGPS pre 1 April 2009 1/80th pension and 3/80ths lump sum, plus the actual LGPS post 31 March 2009 1/60th pension (ignoring any commutation for a lump sum), plus the actual 1/80th annual compensation and 3/80ths lump sum compensation, with b) the 1/80th LGPS pension and 3/80ths lump sum the member would have achieved in their first job to 31 March 2009, plus the 1/60th LGPS pension the member would have achieved in their first job (ignoring any potential commutation for a lump sum), if the member had stayed in the first job through to age 65. In determining the benefits the employee could have achieved had he / she remained in the first employment through to age 65 it will be necessary to determine the pensionable pay to be used in the calculation. For this purpose, the pensionable pay figure used in the calculation of the pension benefits in the first job will be used as brought up to date by increasing it in line with the Pensions Increase (Review) Orders. If a person has been awarded more than one previous period of compensatory added years, e.g. as a result of being made redundant more than once, the

	abatement / claw back provisions are modified. In such a case, the rules under the former Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001 will be applied where a person ceases a period of re-employment in local government and has previously been granted more than one period of compensatory added years, but using the pay in the first job as increased in line with inflation (i.e. ignoring regulations 17(5)(a)(ii), 17(6) and 17(7) of the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001. Where compensatory added years were awarded before 24 March 2003, Mid Ulster District Council will reduce a person's annual compensatory added years' payment following the cessation of a period of re-employment in local government (see note below) in accordance with the Local Government (Discretionary Payments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2001.
18. **Discretion** – Survivor compensatory added years apportionment (LG (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (NI) 2003, Regulation 20(4)) **Explanation**. How any surviving spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added year pension is to be apportioned where the deceased person is survived by more than one spouse or civil partner.	The Council will apportion any surviving spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years pension where the deceased person is survived by more than one spouse or civil partner in such proportions as, at its sole discretion, it sees fit (based on the merits of the individual cases).
19. **Discretion** – Annual compensation suspension rules (LG	If the spouse or civil partner of a person who ceased employment before 1

(Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (NI) 2003, Regulation 20(5)) **Explanation**. Whether, if the spouse or civil partner of a person who ceased employment before 1 February 2003 remarries, enters into a civil partnership or cohabits after 1 February 2003, the normal annual compensation suspension rules will be disapplied i.e. the spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years pension will continue to be paid.	February 2003 remarries, enters into a new civil partnership or cohabits after 1 February 2003, the normal annual compensation suspension rules will be disapplied i.e. the spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years pension will continue to be paid.
20. **Discretion** – Annual compensation suspension rules (reinstatement) (LG (Early Termination of Employment) (Discretionary Compensation) Regulations (NI) 2003, Regulation 20(7)) **Explanation**. Whether, where a spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years pension is suspended as a result of remarriage, entering into a new civil partnership or cohabitation, the spouse's or civil partner's annual compensatory added years pension should be reinstated after the end of the period of remarriage, new civil partnership or cohabitation.	This discretion is not applicable.

Appendix 1 - Policy on Contribution Banding – this policy is reviewed annually.

Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to set out how Mid Ulster District Council intends to allocate LGPS (NI) members to a contribution band.

1.2 The policy also sets out how Mid Ulster District Council intends to reassess and reallocate contribution bandings as well as provide details on how a member can appeal a decision regarding their banding.

2 Contribution Bands

2.1 The Regulations governing the Local Government Pension Scheme Introduced contribution bands from 1 April 2009 for each active Scheme member. The contribution bands for members from 1 April 2025 are detailed in the table below.

Band	Pensionable pay range for an employment at April 2025	Contribution Rate		50/50
1	£0 - £18,300	5.5%		2.75%
2	£18,301 - £28,100	5.8%		2.90%
3	£28,101 - £47,000	6.5%		3.25%
4	£47,001 - £57,200	6.8%		3.40%
5	£57,201 - £113,500	8.5%		4.25%
6	More than £113,500	10.5%		5.25%

The pensionable pay ranges will be reviewed on 1 April each year in line with Pensions Increase Orders from 1 April.

3 Allocation to Contribution Band

3.1 Staff will pay contributions at the appropriate band rate on all pensionable pay received for each job (or half that rate if in the 50/50 section of the Scheme).

3.2 Staff, including part-time staff, will have their banding determined on their actual pensionable pay as at 1 April each year, or on their date of joining (if later), or at the date of any material change (see below) Any reduction in pay due to sickness, child related leave, reserve forces leave or other absence from work will be disregarded when assessing or reviewing contribution bands and rates.

4 Reallocation to Contribution Bands

4.1 Ad hoc payments - pensionable pay includes non-contractual overtime and additional hours. As overtime and additional hours are not regular features in Mid Ulster District Council, an employee's contribution band will be based on their contractual pay. Should it be determined at the end of the year that an employee has worked a significant amount of non-contractual overtime, that would have placed their contribution rate in a different band, then Mid Ulster District Council will apply the revised rate in the following year if it is considered likely that a similar level of overtime will be worked in the next year. This

arrangement will be reviewed if and when overtime/additional hours become a regular feature of a job.

4.2 **Change in contractual hours** – an employee's contribution rate will be based on their actual pensionable pay. Contribution rates will therefore be revised at the point when the new contractual hours (whether a permanent or temporary change) take effect.

4.3 **Cost of living increases** – these are normally payable in April but are often not agreed until mid-way through the year. Contribution bands will be reassessed at 31 March each year and are subject to the pay remit approval process. Contribution bands will be reassessed at 1 April each year, therefore if, for example, a cost of living increase is paid in October 2025 and backdated to April 2025 it is intended that the member will remain on the contribution rate determined at April 2025 for that year.

4.4 **Spine point increases** - Staff due to receive a spine point increase on 1 April (or six months after joining, whichever the later) will have their contribution banding determined on their actual pensionable pay at 31 March each year or at their date of joining (if later).

4.5 **Acting up allowance** – This is normally payable when a member of staff fills a more senior position on a temporary basis, if in post for 4 weeks or more. Contribution rates will be revised, at the point when an acting up allowance becomes payable, and adjusted to reflect the new actual pensionable pay.

4.6 **Maternity leave, paternity leave, adoption leave, sick leave** – The member will pay contributions on the actual pensionable pay received during the period of absence and will accrue benefits at 1/49th of their assumed pensionable pay. As the employer, Mid Ulster District Council will pay contributions on the assumed pensionable pay.

4.7 **Backdated pay increase due to Job Evaluation** – this is a permanent material change which affects pensionable pay however, while the pay increase may be backdated, the revised contribution rate will not be backdated but will be changed at the next payroll date. In instances where a pay increase is backdated over previous years the contributions due on arrears will be deducted at the rate already set for the year (i.e. the rate the member was paying in that year).

4.8 **Change in pay due to new appointment** – this is a permanent material change which affects pensionable pay therefore the contribution banding will be revised at the next payroll date when the change is effective. This will also apply to those accepting a temporary appointment (for example to cover a period of maternity leave) and in such circumstances the contribution percentage will revert to reflect the original banding on the next payroll date, after the member returns to their substantive post.

4.9 Members will be notified of changes to their contribution band as soon as is reasonably practicable when the change has been determined.

5 Appeal Procedure

5.1 Staff who believe their contribution rate has been determined incorrectly can raise an enquiry by following the procedure set out below:-

- **Informally** – by contacting the Head of Human Resources who will seek to resolve or explain any misunderstanding as quickly as possible.
- **Formally** – by invoking the Grievance Procedure, a copy of which can be found on the staff intranet:- http://intranet.midulstercouncil.org/HR Tab/Disciplinary & Grievance/MUDC Grievance Procedure.

5.2 This procedure does not detract from a member's right to appeal to the county court, please refer to www.courtsni.gov.uk for further information.