

Derry City and Strabane District Council

Open Minutes of the Meeting of Health and Community Committee of Derry City and Strabane District Council held Remotely on Thursday 15 October 2020 at 4.00pm.

Present: - Alderman McKane (Chair); Aldermen Devenney and Warke; Councillors R Barr, Burke, Duffy, Edwards, Farrell, Ferguson, Harkin, Logue McHugh, Mooney and Reilly.

Non-members of Committee:- Councillors J Barr, J Boyle, Durkan and Kelly.

In Attendance: - Director of Health and Community (Mrs K McFarland), Head of Community Development and Leisure (Mr B O'Hagan), Head of Health and Community Wellbeing (Mr S Donaghy), PA to Health and Community Director (Mrs L Shields) and Committee Services Assistant (Mrs T Johnstone).

HC166/20 Notice and Summons for Meeting

The Director of Health and Community read the Notice and Summons for the Meeting.

HC167/20 Members Attendance and Apologies

The Director of Health and Community recorded Members attendance. No apologies were received.

HC168/20 Statement for Remote Meetings

The Chair read the statement for remote meetings.

HC169/20 Declarations of Members' Interests

There were no declaration of interests from Members.

Open for Decision

HC170/20 Deputation – to receive Mr Michael Lynch, Director of Services, Men's Action Network (MAN); Ms Samantha Roe, Crisis Intervention Officer and Mr Chris Kerr, Outreach Co-ordinator to

present on raising awareness of the work of the Men's Action Network.

The Chair welcomed the representatives from the Men's Action Network and invited them to make their presentation, previously circulated to Members.

The representatives relayed their presentation to the Committee and the Chair invited comments from Members.

The Chair thanked the representatives on their detailed presentation. He stated that he had visited the Men's Action Network (MAN) and was more than impressed with the tremendous amount of work carried out by the staff. He welcomed that it had been agreed for the organisation to give this presentation to the Committee on their work which was evident with 1176 men from the City receiving support from the network. He hoped that the Committee would express their support to the Men's Action Network.

Councillor Ferguson thanked the representatives for their presentation and stated that she was really impressed by the work of the organisation. She stated that there was a lack of understanding and information on the community and voluntary services available that dealt with mental health and domestic violence due to a lack of awareness. She noted that some people had been referred to a service which was not appropriate to their needs due to perhaps suffering from more than one issue, for example mental health and addiction and asked for more information on this.

Continuing, she stated that help for domestic violence was well represented among the female population and welcomed that MAN had always attempted to ensure that males suffering from domestic violence were also recognised. She felt that it was a topic that could be highlighted with the younger generation in schools. She stated that the Alliance Party would help in whatever way possible and hoped that Council could also offer support to the organisation.

Alderman Warke stated that as a youth worker, he was well aware of the remarkable work carried out by the Men's Action Network who have supported local men since 1994. He stated that the services offered by MAN have had a great impact not only in the City, but the entire North West region. He stated that the help given to men by the

organisation had also helped young children and families and that the DUP fully supported the work carried out by MAN.

Councillor Durkan stated that she was delighted that the Men's Action Network had been given the opportunity to present to the Committee. She stated that she had previously directed clients to MAN, particularly to the Anger Awareness Programme. She stated that those men had shown great reluctance to attend the programme, however had found that the group work and one-to-one sessions had been enjoyable, adding that the Men's Action Network opened up avenues for those men to avail of other support services that they were previously were not aware of.

She alluded to comments made by Alderman Warke and concurred that the work carried out by MAN did not just benefit the men but their families. She stated that in her opinion, in the majority of such cases, the work carried out by MAN was key in building relationships and contact with their children, which may have previously broken down.

In terms of referrals to the service, she queried how men could be referred for help and support, as she believed that previously, they had been under the direction of the court.

Councillor McHugh also thanked the representatives for the presentation and said that the organisation had the full support and appreciation of Sinn Féin. He stated that although there was still stigma attached to mental health issues in males, there was certainly now a greater awareness due to organisations such as MAN. He asked if the problem had been reduced since MAN had first opened in 1994, or was there still a reluctance of males with mental health issues to seek help. He also asked if the organisation accepted referrals from throughout the city and district, particularly in areas such as the Derg ward to enable men to avail of the services.

Councillor Harkin also extended thanks to the representatives on the presentation. He stated that People before Profit were aware of the great work carried out MAN in the City which had helped many people over the years. He stated that a lot of discussion had recently taken place in Council regarding the devastating loss of services to the City particularly during the coronavirus pandemic. He stated that this has had a significant impact on people's mental health and wellbeing. He felt that a further negative impact on the City, was the number of job losses and those left with no job security.

Continuing, he referred to a recent report published by the Department for Communities which stated that statistically, high deprivation was shaping the lives of so many people throughout Northern Ireland. He expressed concern that this would continue to worsen due to the outbreak of coronavirus. He stated that the services carried out by the Men's Action Network were vital and was aware that the organisation were attempting to expand their services. He expressed concern that the organisation, unfortunately had lost some of its funding and key workers. He asked if MAN had any proposals on how to overcome this and felt that Council should assist in every way possible to prevent the loss of any service geared towards helping people in distress and need.

Councillor Logue stated that she was extremely aware of the great work carried out by the Men's Action Network as she had previously signposted a number of constituents to the organisation, mainly regarding housing and abuse issues. She stated that male domestic abuse was still difficult for people to talk about and deal with, however thankfully this was changing. She enquired if the organisation had done any work regarding parental alienation as she felt that in her opinion, the majority of parental alienation would be an issue with fathers. She welcomed that the organisation worked alongside the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and asked if MAN had contacted them and the Public Health Agency PHA with regarding to funding. She wished them well with their work and hoped they had continued success.

In response, Mr Lynch described how the Men's Action Network had multi-skilled counsellors to deal with those who suffered with several issues, to bring them together as best they could. He stated that any person referred to MAN was part of a family or larger unit with an abundance of life experience. He stated that it was important to use a holistic approach as there may be multiple issues which may need practical help, housing advice and access to mental health and addiction services. He advised that the organisation no longer had a benefits advice officer, previously funded by the Big Lottery Fund. He stated that the officer had been invaluable as it offered support to fathers and families and it was hoped to have the service reinstated.

Continuing, he stated that in geographical terms, the Men's Action Network covered the entire Western Health and Social Care Trust area and also had an office in Enniskillen. He stated that since the coronavirus pandemic, all services were now offered online and that MAN did not refuse anyone who wished to avail of their help. He

stated that the outbreak of Covid-19 had created mental health issues in some people and had exacerbated existing problems in others and the organisation was currently attempting to address this. He stated that job losses during the emergency period had a further impact on people and that funding received from the Halifax Building Society was allocated towards a CV building service. He stated that this service may help those who will potentially become unemployed due to the pandemic.

He referred to the organisations partnership with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) and stated that due to no refuge being available for men suffering from abuse, the NIHE was helping towards providing housing to them. He stated that men who were put out of the family home had found themselves in unsuitable environments such as a hostel which did not give them access to their children in a safe manner. He also stated that this did not allow them to access the wraparound services to support, nor assisted them with any issues of either domestic or sexual abuse. He stated that MAN was working with the NIHE to help homeless men who have suffered from domestic or sexual abuse to provide accommodation, helping them with the first months' rent and other services. He further stated that there was a change in attitude towards male domestic violence, such as the recent television advert on domestic violence highlighted, which included a male victim. He added that the strength of messaging to encourage engagement was important and this is where MAN had the expertise to apply it in a holistic way.

Continuing, he stated that with regard to parental alienation, he expressed concern that the MAN had met with the Bar Council two years ago to discuss the matter. He stated that they had been informed that the court system did not recognise male parental alienation as a legitimate case for argument in court, which he described as totally wrong. He explained that once a person became alienated from their child it caused great heartache and pain, not only for the parent but also the child. He stated that, sadly due to the breakdown of a relationship, the child should never be the subject. He described how the Men's Action Network had come under criticism because of the support it offered towards male victims.

Mr Lynch referred to services offered by MAN, in particular the Anger Management Programme. He stated that a lot of men had been referred to this programme as there was nothing else available at that time. He advised that anyone could self-refer to the programme. He

stated that anger management was a method to prevent a conviction towards a partner or child. He concurred that often men attended the programme because it was compulsory, however the majority had found it useful as it had given them an insight on changing their behaviour and taking responsibility. He advised that the programme would be delivered in the coming months once checks had been carried out and MAN was working in partnership with the Department of Social Services and the PSNI.

He stated that they have recently received a 2-year extension from the National Lottery to implement an early intervention and behavioural model. He stated that this programme was important as the aim was to identify behaviour that may be coercive or abusive at a very early stage before it became ingrained or caused too much damage. He stated that the programme would be offered in prisons, schools and beyond in order to reach young people and create something to challenge their behaviour. He stated that MAN had a responsibility as a men's group, not only to support men but to work alongside partners to implement appropriate models and also to challenge men and young men on their behaviour.

Ms Roe referred to Councillor McHugh's comments regarding male stigma. She stated that there was more awareness, however, she felt that in her opinion, men were still reluctant to avail of help until they were almost at a point of crisis. She stated that more awareness on health promotion would be beneficial to men to encourage them to open up to people at an earlier stage. She stressed the importance of early intervention to attempt to nip issues in the bud before they became overwhelming.

Mr Lynch elaborated further and stated that the organisation carried out significant work on suicide intervention. He stated that suicide was an extremely complex issue which involved many factors. He advised that the Men's Action Network had recently undertaken a project on suicide prevention which is available on their website. He stated that the project had highlighted the importance of men being able to build a resilience within themselves to prevent them from taking their own life.

Continuing, Mr Lynch stated that whilst MAN was primarily a service directed at men, it was important to work alongside partners and family members to enable men to be fully supported. He stated that more promotion of the services offered by MAN had led to an increase in

demand. However, the organisation required the proper resources to cope with the demand. He stated that the organisation required approximately £12,000 to put the proper resources in place with fundraising initiatives being impossible to implement due to the coronavirus pandemic. He further stated that prior to coronavirus, the statutory services were almost in a state of collapse and Covid-19 had exacerbated the situation. This had led to some of the multi-disciplinary teams within GP practices referring patients to MAN. He stated that the organisation should not have to deal with those patients as a statutory responsibility.

In conclusion, Mr Lynch welcomed the support of Council and thanked Members for listening to their presentation. He stated the Men's Action Network would do everything possible to continue to offer vital services to men throughout the City and District.

The Chair thanked the representatives and stated that a degree of stigma remained in regard to male mental health. He described how after working for almost three decades in mental health, men were still reluctant at coming forward and asking for help. He referred to comments made by Mr Lynch regarding criticism of the organisation. He stated that they should not be deterred by criticism, adding it was better to be criticised for trying to help people than for doing nothing. He encouraged MAN to keep up the good work and commended the team of expertise and professionals on the tremendous service which they provided.

Chairperson's Business

HC171/20 Inappropriate use of Fireworks

Alderman Devenney thanked the Chair for permitting him to raise an issue, previously raised at the meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Committee regarding the use of fireworks. He stated that many Elected Members had been contacted by members of the public regarding the inappropriate use of fireworks in residential and rural areas. He stated that this had caused alarm and distress for the elderly, domestic pets and farm animals. He proposed that a message is broadcast on Council's social media platforms to emphasise the importance of the safe usage of fireworks and to purchase them from an authorised vendor. He felt that those using fireworks inappropriately should be mindful of the consequences.

Alderman Devenney Proposed, Seconded by Alderman Warke

That a message is broadcast on Council's social media platforms to emphasise the importance of the safe usage of fireworks and to purchase them from an authorised vendor. That anyone using fireworks inappropriately should be mindful of the consequences.

Councillor Edwards supported the proposal by Alderman Devenney and stated that as discussed at the Environment and Regeneration Committee meeting, irresponsible use of fireworks has been reported throughout the Derg ward area and the source of the fireworks had also been queried.

The Committee

Recommended That Members approve a message being broadcast on Council's social media platforms to emphasise the importance of the safe usage of fireworks and to purchase them from an authorised vendor. That anyone using fireworks inappropriately should be mindful of the consequences.

HC172/20 Legislation regarding Gaming Arcades

Councillor Ferguson thanked the Chair for allowing her the opportunity to ask for details regarding the new coronavirus regulations in respect of gaming arcades and bingo halls throughout the city and district. She stated that some owners of such facilities remained open as they had been classed as hospitality/retail and asked for clarity on the matter.

In response, the Head of Health and Community Wellbeing advised that the advice given stated that bingo halls had been advised to close. However, gaming arcades could currently remain open. He stated that this may change once the new legislation had been put in place and would advise Members accordingly.

HC173/20 Newbuildings Cricket Club

Councillor Ferguson advised that Newbuildings Cricket Club had recently been awarded £100,000 from the Department for Communities to progress the North West Disability Cricket Club. She was aware that a meeting with officers from the Health and Community Directorate and representatives from the club was scheduled to take place on Friday 16 October. She asked if the club could receive some technical

support from officers on how to progress and asked for an update after the meeting had taken place. She then extended best wishes to the club with their endeavours.

In response the Director of Health and Community confirmed that she and the Head of Community Development were scheduled to meet with representatives of Newbuildings Cricket Club to consider how Council could proactively assist. She noted that any particular assistance would be within the limitations of the funding timescales. She advised that an update would be provided at a future Committee meeting.

HC174/20 Pier at Newtownstewart

The Chair advised that he had previously raised an issue regarding the pier walkway at Newtownstewart, located opposite the Somme Memorial Hall. He stated that the timber on the pier was in a state of bad repair and whilst he noted that officers had assessed the situation, no repairs had taken place. He advised that the fishing season was almost at a close, and it would be timely if the matter could be addressed at this time. He stated that the pier was a popular location in the area and asked for an update on the matter.

In response, the Director of Health and Community stated that she was aware that after inspection of the pier, some cost proposals were put forward and were currently progressing in terms of ensuring budget allocation towards repairs. She advised that a reallocation of internal resources would have to be put in place in order for any work to be completed and that a report would be provided at a future relevant Committee meeting.

HC175/20 Matters Arising from the Open Minutes of the Health and Community Committee held on Thursday 10 September 2020.

The Open Minutes of the Meeting held on 10 September 2020 (HC133/20 –HC161/20) were confirmed and signed by the Chairperson.

Matters Arising from the Minutes

HC176/20 4G Masts in the Glengalliagh Road Area (HC140/20)

Councillor Farrell stated that officers had advised that Council was unable to carry out testing of the masts in the Glengalliagh Road area of the City. He asked if the company that owned the masts in that area

could be asked to carry out tests to reassure Members and the wider public of their safety.

In response, the Head of Health and Community Wellbeing stated that messaging had been broadcast in terms of the Public Health advice on 5G masts. He advised that in February of this year, the Committee had agreed to write to the Department of Economy to request that the Government conduct a review to establish independent facts regarding the possible threat to public health and the environment. In the response received in March, the Minister noted that the advice was provided by Public Health England who were responsible for issuing technical advice on the matter. Therefore, monitoring of the masts was not carried out on a regional level and Council currently did not have the necessary equipment to carry out monitoring exercises. He felt that contact could be made with Public Health England to confirm which company owned the masts and establish how they carried out monitoring.

Councillor Farrell stated that those responsible for posting online videos regarding those particular masts talked about a specific mast in the Glengalliagh Road area of the city. He asked if the owners of that mast could be contacted and be requested to carry out testing.

The Head of Health and Community Wellbeing advised that any planning applications submitted in respect of masts, would include details of the company's confirmation compliance of guidelines. He stated that the Planning Department could be contacted to establish what information had been submitted regarding that particular mast. He added that if Planning had been provided details of those masts that were causing concern, the matter would be investigated.

HC177/20 Waterside Shared Village (HC143/20)

In response to a request by Councillor Mooney on progress of the project, the Director of Health and Community advised that officers were in the final stages of awarding of the contract. She advised that there were some specific issues regarding the finer details of the contract and assuming that those issues were resolved, Council should be in a position to award the contract. She stated that after having taken advice from funders and CPD, it was hoped that the project could commence in November and she noted the prospective contractor had already requested access to the site for some preliminary inspections to be undertaken.

HC178/20 Deputation - Attendance by Mr Conor Reddy, Chair, Campaign for an All Ireland NHS and Mr Alan Philson, UNISON to present on the Campaign for an All Ireland National Health Service

Councillor Harkin stated that at the Committee meeting on 10 September, Members had agreed to support the proposal for an All-Ireland National Health Service and for an integrated approach to health care. He proposed that the Committee extend an invitation to Dr Gabriel Scally to present to Members as he has continually lobbied for an all-Ireland and integrated approach to health care. He noted that Dr Scally was Chairperson of the Zero Covid Island Group and President of the epidemiology and public health section of the Royal Society of Medicine. He noted that New Zealand had recently held mass events and a return to normality whilst lowering the infection rate of Covid-19 through their policies. He stated that Dr Scally was an advocate of such policies which could be learnt from as a way forward.

Councillor Harkin Proposed, Seconded by Councillor Edwards

That the Committee extend an invitation to Dr Gabriel Scally to present to on the work of the Zero Covid Island group.

Members unanimously agreed and:

The Committee

Recommended That Members extend an invitation to Dr Gabriel Scally to present to Members on the work of the Zero Covid Island group.

HC179/20 Ballymagroarty/Hazelbank Community Partnership Multi-purpose Centre – Approval of Funding to Complete Designs

The Head of Community Development and Leisure presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members on the status of the design phase of Ballymagroarty/Hazelbank Community Partnership (BHCP) multi-purpose centre and to seek Members' approval for funding to allow the design phase to be completed.

Councillor Logue welcomed the report as this was a much needed

facility for the Ballymagroarty and Hazelbank community and proposed to accept the recommendation within the report.

The Committee

Recommended that Members approve a further spend of £62,480.00 to progress the designs so that the project is in a 'shovel ready' position should funding become available.

HC180/20 Land at Springhill, Strabane

The Head of Community Development and Leisure presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek Members' approval to lease land from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive in order to develop Community facilities at Springhill Park in Strabane.

Councillor Burke joined the meeting at this point.

In response to a point of clarification on the costings by Alderman Devenney, the Head of Community Development and Leisure advised that there had been an error in section 3.1.1 of the report and £700 per annum for a 25 year lease period should read a total of £17,500.

Councillor Edwards stated that Springhill Community Association had carried out tremendous work in the area, particularly with the youth. He felt that in his opinion, the organisation needed some permanency and that purchasing the land was a more suitable option. He stated that whilst leasing the land over a 25-year period may be the cheaper option, the community organisation needed a permanent guarantee that the site could be used by them for the foreseeable future. He advised that he and Councillor J Barr had recently met with the Springhill Community Association's committee who were of the view that they would prefer to have the land purchased to enable them to progress with future planning. He stated that Springhill was a large and growing catchment area in Strabane, therefore a new community centre was essential to the area. He proposed that option 2 for Council to purchase the land from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) be endorsed by the Committee

The Head of Community Development and Leisure stated that in terms of the rationale for the officer recommendation to adopt option 1 i.e. a

lease agreement with the NIHE, was due to the directive from the Lead Finance Officer in terms of Council finances due to the coronavirus pandemic. He advised that the matter has been investigated and that leasing of the land would not be of any detriment to the community group at Springhill in terms of applying for funding, adding that most funding organisations required a 25-year lease of land.

Councillor Ferguson asked that if Members approved option 1 could the decision be reviewed at a later date when Council's financial position had improved.

In response, the Head of Community Development and Leisure stated that he would seek clarification on the matter with the legal team but noted that in the future the valuation may change as it would be based on the latest up-to-date LPS valuation.

The Director of Health and Community suggested that Members may wish to defer the matter to full Council to enable officers to take on board any advice from legal services. She stated that any option to purchase the land did not have an allocated budget within the Capital Working Group's plans and proposals which were recently reviewed by Council, and also the issue of financial viability must also be considered

Councillor Edwards stated that £17,500 over a 25 year lease period in comparison to purchasing the land at £20,000 would only be a difference of £2,500. Therefore, he felt that the logical step would be to purchase the land to give the community organisation stability and certainty going forward.

The Committee

Recommended that Members defer the matter to full Council to enable advice to be sought on the matter from legal services.

HC181/20 Update on Correspondence re: GP Services

The Director of Health and Community presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members on correspondence received from the British Medical Association (BMA) Northern Ireland and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) Northern Ireland. Members were also asked to consider a suggestion from RCGP to link

in with local GP representatives from the NI Western area to establish if they would be able to accommodate a discussion with Members.

Councillor McHugh recommended that officers proceed and to extend the invitation for appropriate representatives to attend. He stated although guidelines had been issued to GPs, he was still receiving information that people were still unable to access GP services. He further stated that it had been brought to his attention that a person had to ring their GP surgery in Derry on over 90 occasions before being able to speak to a member of staff.

Councillor Ferguson echoed the sentiments expressed by Councillor McHugh and also endorsed the recommendation within the report. She stated that whilst she understood that GP surgeries were under significant pressure and extended her heartfelt appreciation to them, patients were self-referring to the accident and emergency department at Altnagelvin Hospital rather than having virtual conversations with their GPs.

Alderman Devenney stated that the DUP supported the recommendation and said that it was vital to have GPs involved in the discussion with the Committee due to the difficulties of patients accessing appointments with GPs.

The Chair concurred that the matter needed urgent attention as patients self-referring to the accident and emergency department of their local hospital was causing pressure and long waiting times in that particular department.

Councillor Mooney stated that he had suggested at a previous meeting that his wife, a GP, could possibly form a delegation to attend the Committee meeting with colleagues from the Waterside and Strabane areas of the Council area.

Councillor McHugh stated that whilst he totally appreciated the suggestion from Councillor Mooney, there may be an onus to adhere to official protocol on the matter.

The Director of Health and Community advised that Officers would carry out the necessary discussions with the Royal College of Practitioners (RCP). She said that the Northern Ireland Western Area representatives may would most likely be local GPs. She stated that if there was potential for a more integrated approach involving local GPs,

it would also be taken then into consideration.

Recommended **that Members seek a delegation of NI Western Area representatives via the Royal College of General Practitioners NI to attend Committee.**

HC182/20 Creation of Dog Control Orders under the Clean Neighbourhood and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Head of Health and Community Wellbeing presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to seek Member's approval to create an additional 3 Dog Control Orders under The Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011.

Councillor Burke stated that whilst her party endorsed the recommendation, she wished to take the opportunity as it would be amiss not to, to consider some of the responses received. She stated that she and others have been lobbied by members of the public who had expressed concern over the recommendations within the report. She advised that concerns were particularly raised in relation to the restriction of dog movement. She asked that consideration be given to the potential for designated areas, or a dog park, whereby dogs could be let off-leash.

The Committee

Recommended **that Members approve the 3 Dog Control Orders: (i) The Dogs on Lead by Direction (Derry City and Strabane District Council) Order 2020 (in respect of land described in Schedule A); (ii) The Dogs on Leads (Derry City and Strabane District Council) Order 2020 (in respect of land described in Schedule B); (iii) The Dogs Exclusion (Derry City and Strabane District Council) Order 2020 (in respect of land described in Schedule C) and (iv) consideration be given to areas being designated for dogs to be off-leash.**

Open for Information

HC183/20 Playing Pitches Strategy and Condition Survey Update

The Head of Community Development and Leisure presented the above report, details of which had been previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members on the Playing Pitches Strategy and Condition Survey Update.

Councillor McHugh stated that whilst he welcomed the work carried out on the strategy to date, he expressed his disappointment that the implementation of the survey findings has been delayed. He stated that whilst he understood the situation in terms of the coronavirus and staff being under furlough, the survey will be in draft form for three years this January. He hoped that the survey would progress beyond draft form to enable any identified issues and deficits to be acted upon.

The Committee

Recommended that Members note the current position regarding the draft playing pitch report and playing pitch condition survey.

HC184/20 Correspondence

The Director of Health and Community presented the above report, details of which were previously circulated to Members. The purpose of the report was to update Members on correspondence received by Council.

The Committee

Recommended that Members note the contents of the report.

The meeting went into Confidential Business.