

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Council held on Tuesday 26 November, 2024 at 7:02 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor K Dickson

Deputy Mayor
Councillor R Carlin

Aldermen J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith, M Gregg,
A Grehan, A McIntyre, S P Porter, S Skillen and J Tinsley

Councillors D Bassett, R T Beckett, S Burns, P Catney,
D J Craig, N Eaton, A P Ewing, J Gallen, A Givan, A Gowan,
J Harpur, B Higginson, G Hynds, C Kemp, D Lynch,
G McCleave, C McCready, M McKeever, R McLernon,
U Mackin, A Martin, T Mitchell, N Parker, G Thompson and
N Trimble

PRESENT REMOTELY:

Alderman S Skillen

Councillor N Parker

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Chief Executive
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Regeneration and Growth
Acting Director of Environmental Services
Head of Corporate Communications and Administration
Member Services Officers
Technician
IT Officer

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, welcomed those present to the meeting of Council which was being live streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings. The Mayor pointed out that, should the meeting go into committee to consider confidential business, any members of the press and the public in attendance would be required to leave the Council Chamber for the duration of those matters.

The Chief Executive outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. The Right Worshipful the Mayor requested that all mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting and pointed out that, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, whilst the meeting was being live-streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted.

Prayers

The Right Worshipful the Mayor advised that his Chaplain, Rev S Reain-Adair, was unable to be present this evening. He invited Councillor A Martin to address the meeting and say a prayer.

At this stage, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, congratulated the Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, on having gotten married at the start of the month. He also welcomed Councillor D Lynch to his first meeting of full Council and extended to best wishes to former Member Paul Burke.

1. Business of The Right Worshipful the Mayor

1.1 Mayor's Engagements

The Council noted a number of engagements attended by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, and the Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, since the last meeting of Council.

2. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Alderman H Legge, Councillors P Kennedy, J Lavery BEM and S Lowry and the Director of Finance and Corporate Services.

3. Declarations of Interest

The following declarations of interest were made:

- Alderman J Baird, in respect of item 12.2 – Notice of Motion on the subject of Failure to Prioritise Farming Families and Rural Economy as part of the Autumn Budget – as he was the owner of a farm and an active farmer;
- Councillor M McKeever, in respect of item 12.1 – Notice of Motion on the subject of Opposing the Proposed Removal of Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors Service – as he worked for the Trust;
- Councillor A Gowan, in respect of item 12.2 – Notice of Motion on the subject of Failure to Prioritise Farming Families and Rural Economy as part of the Autumn Budget – as he owned farmland;
- Councillor S Burns, in respect of item 12.3 – Notice of Motion on the subject of Review of Non-Domestic Business Rates – as she was a non-domestic business ratepayer; and
- Councillor A Martin, in respect of item 12.2 – Notice of Motion on the subject of Failure to Prioritise Farming Families and Rural Economy as part of the Autumn Budget – as he lived on a farm.

4. Council Minutes

4.1 Council Meeting – 22 October, 2024

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Alderman M Gregg and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 22 October, 2024 be confirmed and signed.

4.2 Special Council Meeting – 11 November, 2024

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Councillor B Higginson and agreed that the minutes of the special meeting of Council held on 11 November, 2024 be confirmed and signed.

4.3 Special Council Meeting – 18 November, 2024

It was proposed by Councillor C McCready, seconded by Alderman M Gregg and agreed that the minutes of the special meeting of Council held on 18 November, 2024 be confirmed and signed.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Deputations

There were no deputations.

7. Business Required by Statute

(i) Signing of Legal Documents

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Alderman J Tinsley and agreed that the following legal documents be signed at the meeting:

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Fraser Homes Limited, 72-74 Omagh Road, Dromore, Omagh BT78 3AJ – Licence for Alterations relating to The Baronsgrange Development, Comber Road, Carryduff BT8 8AN;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Ballymacash Sports Academy Limited, Rushmore Drive, Lisburn BT28 2HP – Deed of Variation relating to land at Rushmore Drive, Lisburn;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City and Stepping Stones NI, 39 Seymour Street, Lisburn BT27 4Sy – Award Letter to Stepping Stones NI as the supplier to deliver the Community Numeracy Bootcamp (Additional Needs) – T24/25-007;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Studyseed CIC, 27 Lurgan Road, Moira, BT67 0LX – Award Letter to Studyseed CIC as the supplier to deliver the Gamifield Essential Skills Learning Programme – T24/25-012;

(i) Signing of Legal Documents (Contd)

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and South Eastern Regional College, 25 Castle Street, Lisburn BT27 4SU – Service Level Agreement with South Eastern Regional College as the supplier to deliver the Hospitality Academy and Employee Led Upskilling Programme;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Maurice Flynn & Sons, Saunders House, 2 Springbank Road, Belfast BT17 0QL – Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme – NEC3 Short Contract – Traffic Calming Measures in Glenavy Village;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Artifax Software Ltd, 5th Floor, 167-169 Great Portland Street, London W1W 5PF – G-Cloud 13 Call-Off Contract;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Coral Environmental, Unit B1 Westbank Drive, Belfast BT3 9LA – Contract for Tender for Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM 10) Inspections for Legionella Prevention;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Phillips Contracts (Dpk) Ltd, 76 Killyleagh Road, Downpatrick BT30 9BN – Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme – NEC3 Short Contract – Access path at Navigation House – T23/24-028;
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Phillips Contracts (Dpk) Ltd, 76 Killyleagh Road, Downpatrick BT30 9BN – Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme – NEC3 Short Contract – Greenway Enhancement Scheme Drum Bridge Car Park Drumbeg – T24/25-004; and
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and John McQuillan (Contracts) Ltd, 11 Ballinderry Road, Lisburn BT28 2SA – Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme – NEC3 Short Contract – Environmental Improvement Scheme in Anahilt Village – T23/24-029.

8. Adoption of Minutes of Committees**Communities and Wellbeing Committee****5 November, 2024**

Proposed by Councillor D Bassett

Seconded by Councillor B Higginson

Environment and Sustainability Committee**6 November, 2024**

Proposed by Councillor P Catney

Seconded by Councillor G Hynds

The Chair of the Environment and Sustainability Committee, Councillor P Catney, advised that he was unavailable to chair the December meeting of the Committee. As the Vice-Chair, Councillor G Hynds, would be joining the meeting remotely, it would be necessary for the Committee to nominate a chair at the commencement of that meeting.

Regeneration and Growth Committee**7 November, 2024**

Proposed by Alderman A Grehan

Seconded by Alderman A G Ewart

Corporate Services Committee

13 November, 2024

Proposed by Councillor N Trimble

Seconded by Councillor N Eaton

The Chair of the Corporate Services Committee, Councillor N Trimble, pointed out that the above minutes remained subject to the call-in procedure until 10.00 am on Thursday, 28 November, 2024.

Planning Committee

14 and 17 October 2024

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings of 14 and 17 October, 2024 had been circulated for noting only as these minutes had been agreed at the subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee on 4 November, 2024. It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Councillor S Burns and agreed that their contents be noted.

Planning Application LA05/2022/0033/F – Erection of 17 dwellings in a mix of 15 detached and 2 semi-detached dwellings with associated parking, landscaping, site works and access arrangements from Quarterlands Road on lands between 58 and 66 Quarterlands Road, northeast of 54b-c & 56 Quarterlands Road north of 7-12 Zenda Cottages and southeast of 4-7 Zenda Park, Drumbeg

Councillor D J Craig referred to the above application and stated that two contradictory opinions had been provided by Northern Ireland Water in respect of sewerage system capacity. He asked if Planning Officers were certain that the evidence presented to the Planning Committee in October, that there was capacity in the local sewerage system to accommodate this development, was correct. The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, pointed out that the Planning Committee minutes were only for noting this evening, having been ratified at the November meeting, and that this matter would be considered offline.

9. Report from Chief Executive

There were no reports from the Chief Executive.

10. Reports from Members on Boards

There were no reports from Members on Boards.

11. Reports on Decisions Subject to the Reconsideration Procedure

There were no reports on decisions subject to the reconsideration procedure.

12. Notice of Motion

12.1 Opposing the Proposed Removal of Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors Service

Having declared an interest in this item of business, Councillor M McKeever, left the meeting whilst this was being considered.

A copy of the following Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor B Higginson, had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“This Council expresses deep concern over the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust plan to remove the Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors service which covers South/East Belfast within our Council area. This essential service ensures residents receive urgent medical care when GP practices are closed.

We note that discontinuing this service would disproportionately impact LCCC residents in South & East Belfast, particularly those without the means to travel to alternative facilities. This has the potential to lead to increased pressure on emergency services and waiting times at the Ulster Hospital, transferring risk and financial responsibility to the South Eastern Health Trust.

That this Council writes to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to express our concern at the removal of this service and commits to actively engaging in the public consultation to voice these concerns and advocate for a solution that maintains this crucial healthcare service for our community”.

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor B Higginson and seconded by Councillor S Burns.

Councillor B Higginson stated that this was a highly important and emotive issue. As a representative of Castlereagh South, he registered his concern regarding the proposed restructuring of GP out of hours provision in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) area. He was fully aware of the challenges that the Trust was facing as it planned for future health needs, but believed it was imperative that any restructuring plans should be clinically led, evidence-based and have service-users at the centre of any proposed changes. Councillor Higginson was concerned that the planned removal of this service would not deliver better health outcomes for his constituents in the wider Knockbreda/South Belfast/East Belfast area. The plans to move the out of hours service to the Crumlin Road site had raised many apprehensions. The out of service was used by the elderly, vulnerable and families and he had been contacted by many of his constituents who were opposed to the proposed changes. The current primary care service was not fit for purpose. This had a knock-on effect on hospital services, especially in Emergency Departments. In previous plans regarding health restructuring, it had been the case sometimes that lower cost services had led to the public using services that were more expensive, which had led to poorer services for clients, more pressures on hospitals and more expense in the Health Care Trust. The people who used Knockbreda site were mainly from

12.1 Opposing the Proposed Removal of Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors Service (Contd)

South and East Belfast. Moving to North Belfast would have an impact on those constituents who would struggle to access this new site location. The BHSCT rationale for removal of the Knockbreda site would appear to be driven by budgetary restraints and not the best clinical led service for patients. Budgetary issues faced by the Trust should not be the main reason for this change to the out of hours provision. North Belfast already had the Emergency Department at the Mater Hospital, less than 50 yards from the current out of hours service on Crumlin Road, and the Emergency Department at the Royal Victoria Hospital was less than 1 mile away. That meant that people in North and West Belfast were adequately provided with out of hours cover. Councillor Higginson did not believe the explanation for the loss of this vital service had been established by the BHSCT and he was concerned that it would lead to further pressures on the already-stretched Emergency Department at the Ulster Hospital. The proposal was totally unacceptable and he urged that the BHSCT look at its restructuring plans and strive to deliver the best service for his constituents and urged Members to support the Notice of Motion.

In seconding the Notice of Motion, Councillor S Burns, stated her deep concern at the removal of the out of hours service, especially for the vulnerable, children, older people and constituents who were under specialised treatment for cancer. She reiterated comments by Councillor Higginson regarding the potential for the removal of this service to increase pressure on the already overstretched Emergency Department at the Ulster Hospital and the accessibility of the out of hours service at Crumlin Road. She was keen to encourage constituents to respond to the public consultation and attend the meetings being held this week and next in Castlereagh South.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Notice of Motion, namely Councillor J Gallen, Councillor D Bassett (on behalf of Sinn Féin) and Alderman S Skillen.

Alderman M Gregg referred to all political parties having spoken of the need to reform the health service and take the politics out of health, yet when something happened in their area, they relented. He stated that the public needed Elected Members to show leadership in terms of reform to the health service. The Alliance Party had committed to do that. It was vital for all parties to support the HSC transformation agenda. Alderman Gregg recognised that every transition was difficult but reform would be impossible if every decision made by Trusts was challenged by Councillors. Reform would never be completed if was not allowed to start. Reform was the only way to create the higher quality, more efficient health service that constituents deserved. The Alliance Party was not in support of the Notice of Motion and continued to call for safe staffing levels and fair pay for health service staff, for the good of constituents.

In response, Councillor B Higginson stated that this proposal was out for consultation and Members had a right to respond on behalf of their constituents, which was what was happening. He had been contacted by countless people across the District Electoral Area, from all political persuasions, highlighting the struggles there would be if this out of hours service was removed.

12.1 Opposing the Proposed Removal of Knockbreda Out of Hours Doctors Service (Contd)

The proposal by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Councillor S Burns, was put to the meeting and, on a vote being taken, declared 'carried'.

12.2 Failure to Prioritise Farming Families and Rural Economy as part of the Autumn Budget

Councillor D Lynch left, and returned to, the meeting during consideration of this item of business (7.35 pm and 7.41 pm respectively).

A copy of the following Notice of Motion in the name of Alderman A G Ewart, had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“That this Council condemns the failure by the Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms creating barriers for new entrants to agriculture and discourage investment in many farm businesses; further notes that these policies undermine the aim of increasing food security and promoting more sustainable and efficient farming practices; is equally alarmed that the Chancellor has opted not to ringfence farm support budgets or uplift levels of funding in line with inflation; calls on the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and concrete commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year; and further asks Council to send a letter to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland asking them to reverse the decisions which have such an adverse effect on the farming community.”

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart and seconded by Councillor N Trimble.

Alderman A G Ewart stated that the Notice of Motion not only related to the Council area, but was a matter of concern right across Northern Ireland. His fear for the many hardworking farmers and their families had prompted him to propose this Motion. He stated that it was clear the Chancellor of the Exchequer did not understand family farming. The fact that their land may be a valuable asset did not mean that farmers were cash rich. Alderman Ewart outlined figures published by DAERA in respect of the decreased income of Northern Ireland farmers for 2023 and further expected decreases. After a decade in which the farming community had been stretched to breaking point, with a time of tightened margins, cost increases and unfavourable weather, the ill-considered budget may just be the final straw for Northern Ireland's family farms. Agriculture was a vitally important sector in the Northern Ireland economy and a great many of those farmers today were custodians of lands passed down through generations to their families and protected and invested in for generations to come. Alderman

12.2 Failure to Prioritise Farming Families and Rural Economy as part of the Autumn Budget (Contd)

Ewart stated that it was important to acknowledge that farming was currently providing employment for over 50,000 people in Northern Ireland and the value of farming to the economy was around £1b across the United Kingdom. When the Labour Party had announced its budget, the first in 14 years, there had been immediate concern expressed by farmers and the bodies representing that industry. The Chancellor's proposal around inheritance tax and agricultural property relief (APR) was attacking the very foundations of farming life in Northern Ireland. Alderman Ewart drew attention to those he believed would be most affected by the budget policy – young farmers who had been negatively impacted by the Chancellor's decision. He hoped he would receive support for this Notice of Motion.

In seconding the Notice of Motion, Councillor N Trimble stated that it was an important issue locally, regionally and nationally and he was very much opposed to the proposed changes in APR and inheritance tax. He outlined a number of facts and figures there were pertinent to the discussion, more of which he had sourced from DEFRA than DAERA. He reiterated that, whilst farms may be asset rich, they could be cash poor. Faced with a situation where a farm owner had passed away and the estate was up for inheritance tax, it may be necessary to sell off part of the farm to pay the bill. Councillor Trimble stated that the proposal was ill thought out and not conducive to good farming. He encouraged the Council Chamber to be unified and send a message to the Government to say the proposal was wrong.

Alderman A McIntyre, on behalf of the Alliance Party, voiced support for the core substance of the Notice of Motion. He stated that the UK Government failed to understand the impact for farming families in Northern Ireland and the changes proposed threatened the future of farm succession and placed an additional burden on those wishing to continue farming. Cross-party support was required to put pressure on the UK Government to reconsider proposals. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the Minister of Finance had worked collaboratively to deliver a letter to the Chancellor of the Exchequer urging reconsideration of the harmful changes. This letter had also been co-signed the First and Deputy First Ministers which sent a powerful message to the UK Government on behalf of the people and farming community of Northern Ireland. A united front needed to continue to protect the future of farming. Alderman McIntyre proposed an amendment to the Notice of Motion that everything after the word inflation be deleted and replaced with:

“welcomes the launch of the Farming for the Generations pilot scheme to support farm succession planning; calls on the UK Government to reconsider the proposed changes to Agricultural Property Relief given the disproportionate impact on family farms in Northern Ireland; further calls on the Executive to support a ringfenced budget for agriculture, agri-environment, fisheries and rural development within the 2025-26 budget and beyond; and further asks Council to send a letter to the Prime Minister, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Secretary of State for Northern Ireland asking them to reverse the decisions which have such an adverse effect on the farming community.”

12.2 Failure to Prioritise Farming Families and Rural Economy as part of the Autumn Budget (Contd)

This amendment was seconded by Alderman A Grehan.

The proposer of the original Notice of Motion, Alderman A G Ewart, did not accept the proposed amendment.

A number of Members spoke in favour of the Notice of Motion, namely Councillors G McCleave and G Hynds and Alderman S P Porter.

Following discussion, Alderman I McIntyre withdrew his amendment.

The Notice of Motion proposed by Alderman A G Ewart and seconded by Councillor N Trimble, was unanimously agreed.

12.3 Review of Non-Domestic Business Rates

Councillor S Burns left the meeting during consideration of this item of business (7.59 pm). Councillor N Trimble left, and returned to, the meeting during consideration of this item of business (7.59 pm and 8.02 pm respectively).

A copy of the following Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor C Kemp, had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council recognises that non-domestic rates in Northern Ireland are among the highest in the UK and Ireland.

This Council believes:

- That local businesses are a catalyst for reconnection and regeneration in our towns and villages, particularly our commercial town centres;
- That the protection of and support for local business is an economical and social priority;
- That the rating system needs to be fair and fit for purpose in the current economic climate.

Council understands that the Minister of Finance is currently considering short, medium and long-term proposals for rating policy in Northern Ireland.

The Council therefore commits to writing to the Minister of Finance and the Northern Ireland Executive requesting that they consider an independent and holistic review of regional and non-domestic rates as part of these proposals, including the potential expansion of the Small Business Rate Relief and consideration for the hospitality sector and businesses in our town centres.”

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor C Kemp and seconded by Alderman A G Ewart.

12.3 Review of Non-Domestic Business Rates (Contd)

Councillor C Kemp stated that Members were all aware of business closures within their District Electoral Areas due to rising costs. There were a number of small, independently-owned businesses really concerned for their futures. Many were facing unprecedented crisis, having weathered disruption caused by the pandemic, were now contending with labour shortages and cost of living crisis, with customers having less disposable income, and increases in National Insurance. This was having a devastating impact on local businesses, high streets, cities, towns and villages. Small businesses could not afford undue delay and a review was the best way to ensure the rating system responded to businesses' demands. Councillor Kemp acknowledged a review of rates and the relief system was not a whole solution but rather a foundation step to initiating a fairer rating system that encouraged business creation and allow established businesses to thrive, with consideration for those who needed targeted relief. She encouraged Members to support the Notice of Motion.

In seconding the Notice of Motion, Alderman A G Ewart stated that it was well known that the Northern Ireland economy was a small business economy. Statistics from Invest NI confirmed the importance of small companies in the Northern Ireland economy. Within the Invest NI portfolio for the LCCC area, 31% of firms were small, employing up to 9 employees, and 47% employed 10-49 people. Most of those companies were locally-owned small businesses and residents of the LCCC area, paying rates both as businesses and as households. The Notice of Motion was not limited to LCCC, but sought a review of rates across Northern Ireland. It acknowledged the hospitality sector and small businesses in town centres which were so vitally important to the social wellbeing of the population and the economy. Alderman Ewart paid tribute to the many local businesses that had made the case for a review of non-domestic rates. The current rating system took no account of the ability of a business to pay. The Federation of Small Businesses was seeking a fair-minded system based on the revaluation of properties on a more frequent basis.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Notice of Motion, namely Councillor G Hynds, Councillor D Lynch on behalf of Sinn Féin, and Councillor P Catney on behalf of SDLP.

The Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor C Kemp and seconded by Alderman A G Ewart was unanimously agreed.

13. Confidential Business

There was no confidential business.

14. Any Other Business14.1 Recent Flooding
Councillor A Gowan

Councillor S Burns returned to the meeting during consideration of this item of business (8.12 pm). Alderman J Tinsley left, and returned to, the meeting during consideration of this item of business (8.12 pm and 8.13 pm respectively).

Councillor A Gowan expressed his gratitude to Council staff for the way in which they had responded to flooding in Magheraconluce the previous weekend. They had assisted to mitigate against some of the damage that could have been done to properties. He also paid tribute to other agencies, such as the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS), local farmers, members of the community and the local shop which had donated hot food to those helping out.

Throughout Any Other Business, a number of Members referred to the previous weekend's flooding, where 51 houses across the Council area were affected, including Alderman M Gregg, Councillor S Burns, Alderman J Tinsley, Councillor D J Craig, Councillor U Mackin, Alderman J Baird and Councillor G Thompson.

- At the request of Councillor Burns, the Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, agreed to write a letter of thanks to Crosspoint Community Church in Dundonald for having opened its facilities for use by residents;
- At the request of Councillor Craig, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, agreed to write a letter of thanks to the Fire Chief;
- At the request of Councillor U Mackin, the Chief Executive agreed to arrange for a meeting with various agencies that had undertaken to do work in Dromara, Drumbo Road, Hillhall Road and Ballylesson Road; and
- Councillor G Thompson enquired if there was a guideline around getting sandbags or a number for Members to phone. The Chief Executive confirmed that the Council did provide numbers of agencies that had responsibility for these matters. However, the Council would not see people stuck and had distributed 7 tonnes of sand in sandbags on Saturday and those stocks had been replenished, should there be further flooding in the area. Officers had reflected on what elements of communication could be improved upon further and committed to ensuring all DEA Members were notified of flood response actions in future. Alderman M Gregg requested that this last point be reinforced to Officers working in such circumstances.

14.2 Festival of Remembrance
Councillor B Higginson

Councillor B Higginson paid tribute to those Council staff involved in the recent Festival of Remembrance event held at Lagan Vally Island. He had received supportive feedback from many families, especially veteran families, and hoped this event could be supported again in future years.

At a later point in Any Other Business, Alderman J Tinsley, concurred with the comments made by Councillor B Higginson in respect of the Festival of Remembrance Event.

14.3 Ballymacash Sports Academy
Alderman A Grehan

Alderman A Grehan thanked the Council and the Communities and Wellbeing Committee for having sponsored Ballymacash Sports Academy to host the Friendship Cup between the UK Armed Forces and Defence Forces Ireland. The Chair and Vice-Chair of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee, as well as the Deputy Lord Lieutenant, the High Sherrif, the Chief Executive and many more sponsors of the Club had attended what had been an exceptional event. The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, stated that it was a credit to Ballymacash for having been the first place in Northern Ireland to host this event.

At a later point in Any Other Business, Alderman J Tinsley, concurred with the comments made by Alderman A Grehan in respect of the Friendship Cup event.

14.4 December Governance and Audit Committee Meeting
Alderman S P Porter

At the request of the Chair of the Governance and Audit Committee, Alderman S P Porter, it was agreed that the meeting of that Committee scheduled for 12 December, 2024 would commence at the earlier time of 5.30 pm to facilitate Members' attendance at a Christmas Switch-On event later that evening.

14.5 Parking Meters
Alderman J Tinsley

Alderman J Tinsley stated that there were both off-street and on-street parking facilities in Smithfield and referred to a driver who had recently parked in Smithfield but had paid for a ticket from the wrong machine. With the Council having responsibility for off-street parking, he asked if Officers could investigate the possibility of making the parking meters in those facilities more distinguishable, especially when they were located next to on-street parking spaces. This request was acceded to.

At a later point in Any Other Business, Councillor D J Craig echoed comments about how close some of the off-street and on-street parking meters were. He also referred to an issue around using the parking app, whereby if allowed to automatically select where a person was parked, it did not necessarily get the correct location, whilst some off-street parking charges differed. Councillor Craig asked that the appropriate Committee investigate this matter. The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, advised that an updated Car Parking Strategy baseline was being presented to the December meeting of the Regeneration and Growth Committee.

14.6 Fort Hill Schools - Staff
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds paid tribute to Karen Brown who had worked in the canteen at Fort Hill Integrated Primary School for 34 years and who had recently retired, and Kate Hunter, lollipop lady at Fort Hill Integrated College; she had been a lollipop lady for 31 years and had recently been awarded Lollipop Lady of the Year for Northern Ireland.

14.6 Fort Hill Schools – Staff (Contd)
Councillor G Hynds

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, as a past pupil of Fort Hill Integrated College, also paid tribute to Karen Brown and wished her a happy retirement.

14.7 Derriaghy Football Club
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds paid tribute to the outstanding achievement of Derriaghy Football Club, having recently made it through to the Steel & Sons Cup Final, to take place on Christmas morning. Councillor D J Craig echoed these sentiments.

14.8 Chairs' Lack of Independence
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds put on record his concern in recent times regarding the lack of independence shown by some Chairs in the Chamber and on Working Groups, by voting and commenting on political lines and political matters and he asked them to reflect on that.

14.9 3G Pitch at Lough Moss
Councillor J Gallen

Councillor J Gallen welcomed the news that the 3G pitch at Lough Moss was finished and open. He thanked the Director, Officers and contractor involved for all their work.

14.10 Arctic Fox Christmas Display
Councillor J Gallen

Councillor J Gallen welcomed the return of the Arctic Fox Christmas display in Carryduff and stated that this had been well-received by residents.

14.11 Village Scheme in Drumbo
Councillor U Mackin

Councillor U Mackin referred to a recent consultation in Drumbo regarding a The community looked forward to delivery of that project in the coming months. Alderman J Baird echoed these comments.

14.12 Notices of Motion
Alderman J Baird

There having been three Notices of Motion considered at the meeting this evening, Alderman J Baird reminded the Mayor of the precedent of having no Notices of Motion at the December Council meeting.

14.13 Unadopted Development – Haddington Hill
Councillor P Catney

Councillor D Lynch left the meeting at 8.34 pm.

Councillor P Catney referred to an unadopted development, Haddington Hill, off Barnfield Road, and asked if anything could be done to help have this adopted. The developer had taken all necessary steps to get the road fit for adoption but the adoption had not yet happened. The gritter would not go into the development and it was very dangerous for residents. Councillor Catney stated that pressure should be put on developers and the Department to have all unadopted developments adopted. The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor K Dickson, stated that the Director would take this matter up with Councillor Catney offline.

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting was terminated at 8.40 pm.

Mayor