

**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD MONDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7.30PM**

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<b>No.</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Decision</b>
<b>1.</b>	Apologies	<b><i>Councillor McShane</i></b>
<b>2.</b>	Declaration of Members' Interests	
<b>3.</b>	In Accordance with Standing Order 3 (2) The Mayor has called a Special Meeting of Council to, ' <i>discuss the implications of the Labour Government pausing Northern Ireland's City Deals and Growth Deal for this region</i> '.	<b><i>That this Council is deeply disappointed and frustrated by this decision to pause the Growth Deal for Causeway Coast and Glens and the Town Plan funding for Coleraine. The decision to pause the Growth Deal risks those projects and resulting economic outputs expected to be tens of millions for this area. In pausing this Deal the Government deepens regional disparity between rural and urban Councils, is stunting economic growth in some of the most deprived areas in Councils with some of the lowest economic output. And notes that this Council has already invested £1M plus in preparatory work for this Growth Deal and further</i></b>

		<p><b><i>that this Council works with our Executive and The Assembly in a joined up approach to lobby the British Government to reinstate this deal, invites the Secretary of State to the area to reiterate the impacts as outlined in the presentation and explores the access to The Assembly funding pot with Stormont Ministers to ensure that some of these projects will still be able to move ahead at pace.</i></b></p>
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**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL COUNCIL  
HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON  
MONDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2024 AT 7.16PM**

**In the Chair** : The Mayor, Councillor McQuillan

**Present** : Alderman Boyle, Callan, Coyle, Fielding, Hunter,  
Knight-McQuillan, J McAuley, S McKillop, Stewart

Councillors Anderson, C Archibald, N Archibald, Callaghan,  
Chivers, Holmes, Huggins, Kane, Kennedy, Kyle, Mairs,  
McCully, McGlinchey, McGurk, MA McKillop, McMullan,  
Nicholl, Peacock, Stirling, Storey, Wallace Watson, Watton,  
Wilson

**Officers Present** : D Jackson, Chief Executive  
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer  
N McGurk, Head of Prosperity and Place (R)  
N Harkness, SIB Project Manager (R)  
J Beggs, SIB Project Officer (R)  
S Duggan, Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer  
J Keen, Committee and Member Services Officer (Items 1-2)

**In attendance** : A Lennox, Mobile Operations Officer (Items 1-2)  
M Kennedy, ICT Technical Support Officer (Items 1-2)

Press, 2 no. (R)

**Key** – (R) = Attended Remotely

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been recorded at the previous meeting for Alderman Scott,  
Councillors Bateson, McShane, Schenning and Wisener.

**2. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 3 (2) THE MAYOR HAS CALLED A  
SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL TO, 'DISCUSS THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE  
LABOUR GOVERNMENT PAUSING NORTHERN IRELAND'S CITY DEALS AND  
GROWTH DEAL FOR THIS REGION'.**

Requisition Signed: *Alderman Mark Fielding, Alderman Michelle Knight-McQuillan, Alderman Sharon McKillop, Alderman Aaron Callan, Alderman John McAuley, Alderman Edgar Scott, Councillor Mervyn Storey, Councillor Dawn Huggins, Councillor Philip Anderson, Councillor Tanya Stirling, Councillor Steven Callaghan, Councillor Bill Kennedy, Alderman Sandra Hunter, Councillor Darryl Wilson, Councillor Richard Holmes, Councillor John Wisener*

The Chief Executive advised SIB Project Manager was in attendance to provide a summary of the current position.

The Chief Executive stated Causeway Coast and Glens and the Mid South West Councils received news on Friday 13 September of the pause of their respective Growth Deals. The Chief Executive stated Council's Growth Deal was the biggest economic opportunity for the Borough, Drug Discovery Pharmaceutical innovation, combined with further regeneration projects would have resulted in a total investment of £100M. The Chief Executive advised that, in light of signing the Heads of Terms in April, he was aware of up to £30M private sector interest around drug discovery, spread across four global firms, and to take a risk on that, he stated, was shocking, that Council had been making great progress towards the full deal signature.

The Chief Executive stated there would be economic risk with the loss of private money if the programme was not un paused. Regionally, he stated the urban, rural divide would be exaggerated, risk becoming commuter Borough, with all business in the two Cities. The Chief Executive referred to a consequential impact, Council was heavily dependent on the domestic rates base and this was an opportunity to boost business rates, resulting in the domestic rates cost and Council cost to services would either come down or use the money to invest and improve services.

The Chief Executive advised a decision would be made around the Autumn Budget, 30 October and supported doing everything possible to bring influence. The Chief Executive advised at an earlier meeting at Stormont held that day, NIO (Northern Ireland Office) had been very supportive and understood the consequences. He considered the main effort would be towards the Treasury and anything to be done collectively and with the other three Councils, to bring influence to reach the right decision in the coming weeks.

The Chief Executive invited SIB Project Manager to present.

SIB Project Manager presented as follows on Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council for Growth Deal 'Pause' implications.

- **Key assets: natural heritage & events**
- The background

- Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council: 4 Councils into 1
- £74m inherited debt
- Now reduced to £47m
  
- **Key Challenges: economic**
  - Four of the poorer councils into one
  - Scale of historic debt post RPA
  - Age & lack of facilities
  - House prices & second homes
  - Deprivation associated with rural and dispersed population
  - Borough-wide reliance on tourism & hospitality
  - Seasonal & low wage economy
  - Need investment to boost regeneration
  
- **Economic Profile:**
  - Spring 2023 outlook - Long-term positive signs reflect anticipated Growth Deal investment
  - Challenges:
  - Annual earnings in the Borough average 5.3% lower than the Northern Ireland average
  - 90% of businesses in the region employ fewer than 10 individuals.
  - Unemployment stands at 3.1%, slightly higher than the Northern Ireland average of 2.9%.
  - The young working age population is declining 7 times faster than the NI average.
  - 14% of the population have educational attainment levels below the desired standard.
  
- **Growth Deal Objectives**
  - Budget: £72m (plus around £34m Council and partners), close to £110m
  - The objectives of the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal are to:
    1. Attract, support and grow more business, with a focus on export;
    2. Position Causeway Coast and Glens as the 'go-to' region for both business and pleasure;
    3. Regenerate some of our smaller settlements into thriving and sustainable rural economies;
    4. Improve key elements of the tourism transport network and tourism destinations;
    5. Work with education and employers to raise aspirations and improve employability and skills.
  
- **9 projects across 3 pillars**  
**Destination**

1. Bushmills Regeneration
2. Dungiven Regeneration
3. Cushendall Innovation Hub
4. Traffic & Parking Infrastructure
5. Coleraine Leisure & Wellbeing Centre

### **Connection**

6. Portrush to Bushmills Greenway

### **Innovation**

7. Centre for Drug Discovery & Pharmaceutical Innovation
8. Business Innovation & Incubation Hub
9. Food Innovation Hub, NWRC Limavady

- **Capital Budget**

- All project budgets include adequate provision for fees, risk, OB, inflation and net zero (on new builds)
- Promoter contributions, circa £34m, includes gov. grants, council, promoters and private contributions.
- Total spend circa £110m
- Phased delivery programme with Phase 1 (green) considered to be at a higher state of readiness for delivery

- **Catalytic impact of innovation investment:**

- **Centre for Food and Drug Discovery (CFDD) @ UU Coleraine**

- Project Cost: £22m
- Project Promoter: Ulster University
- Opportunity: Improving global health through nutritional and pharmaceutical innovation
- Status: OBC under development by UU

- Commercial interest in CFDD. Already 6 significant pharmaceutical businesses lined up to work in partnership with this project:

- [REDACTED] planning a R&D project @ circa £500k in Coleraine
- [REDACTED] in discussions with UU and QUB re a joint project for NI R&D subsidiary @ circa £500k
- [REDACTED] proposing a centre for breast cancer research in Coleraine campus @ £2m-£5m
- A local drug development company is already working in partnership with existing customers on up to 20 new formulations PA with annual revenues of £3m to £30m
- [REDACTED] has worked with UU to achieve FDA approval of 3 devices and wants to engage further with this project

Confidential by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

- [REDACTED] (cap value of \$177b and 27,000 staff) visited UU in Sept 24 and very excited about partnership opportunities with CFDD

The Growth Deal pause puts all this commercial interest at risk.

- **Adverse impact of CFDD not progressing**

- Our world class research has impact upon global health challenges – CVD, Diabetes, Obesity.
- Loss of competitive advantage for industry through technological innovation.
- FDI opportunities developed, pre-clinical services (~£3M p.a.). Diminishes with loss.
- Loss of £255M income & economic benefits and 200 jobs to low productivity region.
- Decreases skilled graduates for life sciences sector.

- **CC&G Deal Status:**

- Heads of Terms signed by UKG and NIE April 2024, a statement of intent to invest.
- Since April 2024:
  - Outline Business Cases (OBCs) under development
  - Council is committed to ongoing development costs (circa £1m sunk costs to date)
  - New staff and governance structures in place
  - Public and stakeholder engagement underway

- **Timelines and Targets**

- All 9 OBCs commenced, and first Steering Group completed for each: Sept 2024
- OBCs for at least 50% of each funding source (phase one projects) completed and formally submitted to relevant departments: March 2025
- Phase 1 OBCs approved by departments: October 2025
- Deal signing: December 2025
- Phase 2 OBCs approved by departments: October 2026
- Meaningful spend only begins 2027/28, marginal impact on CSR period

- **Pause Implications**

- Key negative implications of a paused/cancelled/reduced Growth Deal in CC&G:

- Council has already committed circa £1m development costs with no ROI
  - Already one of the poorest Councils in NI
- Construction inflation will erode budget as time passes
- Loss of stakeholder commitment and project momentum
  - Loss of private sector additional investment

- Lost opportunity for +ve impact on global health
- The Borough falls further behind the economic success of Belfast and L/Derry
  - The Growth Deal was CC&G chance to catch up
- NI Executive's aspirations for 'regional balance' and 'good jobs' is lost
- Loss of partnership contributions, circa £34m
- **Commitment of the Secretary State for NI:**
  - At the signing of the Derry and Strabane City Deal on 18<sup>th</sup> Sept 2024 Hilary Ben MP, the Secretary of State for NI, committed to supporting the economic development of all regions of NI.
  - Causeway Coast and Glens is one of the poorest and most rural of NI's 11 Councils
  - The Review of Public Administration 2015 left CC&G one of the most indebted councils @ £74m
    - This was not of the Council's own doing
    - Addressing this debt burden has limited the Council's ability to invest on growth related projects
  - The Growth Deal was to be the economic game changer for the future of the Borough
  - The Innovation project at UU has already demonstrated its relevance to multi-national investment, good jobs and a positive impact on global health
- Without the Growth Deal, the Secretary of State's ambition of economic prosperity for Causeway Coast and Glens will not be realised.
- Even with ambitions spend profiles, only £9.2m of UKG funding can be spent by 2028, zero impact on CSR national budgets.

The Chief Executive reiterated the final two points made, there was no impact at Westminster during the CSR period, he stated that as if the local economy was not important enough, this was about improving world health.

The Mayor invited DUP Party Group lead to address Council:

Alderman Fielding thanked The Mayor for allowing the debate and addressed Council:

*"I have been around politics long enough to know if bad media has to be sent out it's done on a Friday night which was the case 11 days ago. In July and with a new government the new Secretary of State Hilary Benn explicitly indicated that Labour would honour the City Deal agreements with previous government."*



*All members of this chamber can be justifiably angry and disappointed when the pause button was placed on the Growth Deal for our region. It is the citizens of our Borough which will benefit most from the much needed investment and will lose out if the Deal is not progressed. In welcoming Parties of NI executive, our MLA's and MP's lobbying to lift the pause on the growth deal, however it is imperative that our Council who has put considerable time and resources along with other partners -that we make our voice known to the Labour Government to lift the pause on our Growth Deal similar to what was actioned on City Deals in Belfast and Londonderry.*

*Causeway Coast and Glens is a rural region and needs improved infrastructure and the regeneration of our villages as we seek to improve our tourism, our food sector, our health and well being and secure our University and enhance our regional colleges.*

*We also have high levels of social deprivation and low wages and the 9 projects in the growth deal would help to level up our economy and open up the possibility of further private investment and help us develop the local economy.*

*The Labour Government needs to act honourably and stand by the Deals and re-think their decision and lift the pause on our Growth Deal so that the work can recommence to progress the much needed investment. We need to ensure that they know the impact of not doing so will have on our region.*

*Can the Chief Executive update members on the report on the costs in the preparation of the growth deal and draft response to the NI Secretary of State”.*

The Chief Executive clarified the SIB Manager had covered the cost to date of around £1M, a draft response was being co-ordinated with both the Chambers of Commerce locally and the other three Councils from Mid South West.

Alderman Fielding queried the status of the other six projects?

The Chief Executive advised there might be some risk if The Executive committed to £36M, there was a school of thought that commitment on the Stormont money might weaken the case on the Westminster money. The Chancellor was making the Autumn Statement on 30 October, originally the pause had been until April next year, however, a decision was now expected prior to Halloween.

Councillor Wilson echoed the sentiments of his colleagues, he hoped to see a turnaround, in the Autumn statement, the Labour Government was projected to spend £6bn-£8bn on foreign aid. Councillor Wilson stated this was catastrophic for Causeway Coast and Glens, coupled with Northern Health and Social Care Trust coming to deliver news regarding Causeway Hospital, lacking inward investment

from several areas within the Borough. Without inward investment, Council was required to fight its own corner, in making sure it does get investment. Councillor Wilson referred to the collegiate approach amongst MP's, MLA's, and Council's as it would impact on all and that it was good Londonderry and Belfast were going ahead. Councillor Wilson questioned what does this Council do to maximise its ability to lobby the decision makers, he expected to include all, as a combined approach to overturn the pause.

Councillor Peacock agreed with the comments of the previous two speakers, she considered everyone had a right to be angry. Councillor Peacock advised that at the Partnership Panel meeting held that week, the Chief Executive and in representing Causeway Coast and Glens, the matter was raised with Minsters, who provided positive support for Council in its campaign to have the Growth Deal reinstated.

Proposed by Councillor Peacock

Seconded by Councillor McCully

- That this Council is deeply disappointed and frustrated by this decision to pause the Growth Deal for Causeway Coast and Glens, this decision risks those projects and resulting economic outputs expected to be tens of millions for this area. In pausing this deal the Government deepens regional disparity between rural and urban Councils, is stunting economic growth in some of the most deprived areas in Councils with some of the lowest economic output. And notes that this Council has already invested £1M plus in preparatory work for this Growth Deal and further that this Council works with our Executive and The Assembly in a joined up approach to lobby the British Government to reinstate this deal, invites the Secretary of State to the area to reiterate the impacts as outlined by Nick in his presentation and explores the access to The Assembly funding pot with Stormont Ministers to ensure that some of these projects will still be able to move ahead at pace.

Councillor McCully stated thanks to the Chief Executive, Director of Leisure and Development and SIB Project Manager for their efforts liaising and coordinating the response. He advised the economic impact was clear, particularly thanks to the SIB Project Manager for his presentation. Councillor McCully stated that it was rare for all political parties in Northern Ireland to agree on an issue, particularly at all different levels of Government, and that signified how important this decision had been and the impact it would have on this area. Councillor McCully seconded Councillor Peacock's proposal.

Councillor Kyle stated shock at the loss of the Growth Deal, he stated this was one of the few matters everyone in The Chamber could agree on. Councillor Kyle referred to the many parts, it was disappointing that the projects promised would not proceed, and how the Labour Government tried to cover it up by making the announcing on a Friday night, that Labour would try to make a difference between urban and rural areas, and most disappointing, that His Majesty's Government would allow £1M rate

payers money pulling the rug from their feet. Councillor Kyle stated association with with, and endorsement of, the comments of the previous speakers.

Councillor Anderson asked that Councillor Peacock include the Coleraine deal that had been paused in her statement as well.

Councillor Peacock agreed to incorporate Councillor Anderson's request.

Councillor Storey stated appreciation to the Chief Executive and SIB Project Manager and all involved in bringing the Growth Deal proposals from Causeway Coast and Glens to where they were at now. Councillor Storey sought the position around Ulster University, he sought clarification from the Chief Executive regarding the Food and Drug Discovery and business innovation, was Ulster University making a financial contribution or had that been totally dependent on external partners, The Executive and money from the Government? Councillor Storey stated the preface of Ulster University, a three Campus model, it should be equitable. Councillor Storey stated concern that the element of £20M for Coleraine had now been paused; it was a financial deficit for the Borough and he stated it was shameful what had happened, that the Government need to be blamed for the way it had dealt with the issue.

SIB Project Manager advised that where some projects were being promoted by third parties, all of them put forward a minimum 10% partnership funding and Ulster University put forward £2M, the detail worked out through the OBC (Outline Business Case), and from his understanding the commitment was there from Ulster University.

Councillor Watton referred to a black hole between Londonderry and Belfast, the Causeway hospital was being deliberately run down, and the social housing budget was getting worse, he stated this area deserved and needed the Growth Deal but he was not convinced it would materialise.

Alderman Coyle stated support for the motion, he referred to a decade old East, West divide, and now a North, South divide, he was glad to see Derry getting something. Alderman Coyle stated there was fragmented development and growth, very disappointing. Alderman Coyle stated it was very important, Ulster University was more than one campus, and it should tie up between here and Derry; that all had a duty to lobby to try and get Growth Deal going again. Alderman Coyle advised that those attending Party Conferences should ensure MLA's and MP's were well informed.

Councillor N Archibald advised it would be a good idea to bring to life what the Deal would mean to this area and generate a campaign around it, to get the local people involved.

The Mayor put the motion to the Council.

**RESOLVED:** That this Council is deeply disappointed and frustrated by this decision to pause the Growth Deal for Causeway Coast and Glens and the Town Plan funding for Coleraine. The decision to pause the Growth Deal risks those projects and resulting economic outputs expected to be tens of millions for this area. In pausing this Deal the Government deepens regional disparity between rural and urban Councils, is stunting economic growth in some of the most deprived areas in Councils with some of the lowest economic output. And notes that this Council has already invested £1M plus in preparatory work for this Growth Deal and further that this Council works with our Executive and The Assembly in a joined up approach to lobby the British Government to reinstate this deal, invites the Secretary of State to the area to reiterate the impacts as outlined in the presentation and explores the access to The Assembly funding pot with Stormont Ministers to ensure that some of these projects will still be able to move ahead at pace.

This being all the business, The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8.00pm.

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Mayor