



Title of Report:	Correspondence Report
Committee Report Submitted To:	The Leisure and Development Committee
Date of Meeting:	18 th March 2020
For Decision or For Information	For Decision / Information

Linkage to Council Strategy (2019-23)	
Strategic Theme	Leader and Champion
Outcome	Establish Key relationships with Government agencies and potential strategic partners.
Lead Officer	Director of Leisure and Development

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	n/a
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	n/a
Code	n/a
Staffing Costs	n/a

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present correspondence for Members consideration.

2.0 Coleraine Twinning

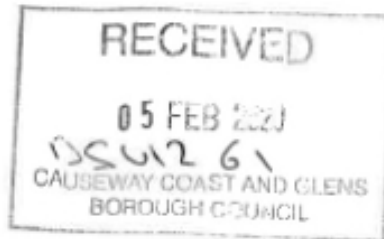
Correspondence has been received from Coleraine Twinning Association requesting that Council considers the funding process along with their future commitment to Twinning.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Leisure and Development Committee considers the content of the correspondence.

3.0 Student Accommodation

Members are asked to note the correspondence received from the University of Ulster regarding the potential change to rates charges on student accommodation.



Mr. David Jackson
Chief Executive
Causeway Coast & Glens Council
Cloonavin
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COLERAINE
BT52 1EY

Michael Wilson
Chairman
33 Circular Road
Castlerock
BT51 4XA

4th February 2020

Ref. The future of Coleraine Twinning Association

Dear Mr. Jackson

It is my sad duty to write to you regarding the above matter.

The current Council agreed in May 2018 to include Twinning in the Funding Unit application system which is primarily designed for and used by external organisations applying for funding from the Council.

Despite our repeated explanations to your staff and Director of Leisure and Development, we remain stuck in a system which makes it impossible to achieve the aims which were set out by the Council in the Charter which it signed in 1980 and again in 2010, under the auspices of said Council.

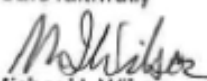
As a group of volunteers who freely host and entertain French visitors from our twin town at our own expense, the new procedures introduce such uncertainty and personal financial and legal risks that they are unacceptable.

It therefore remains for us to ask the current Council to understand and live up to their commitment to Twinning, not as an annual funding application, but rather as a civic long term commitment carried out by volunteers under the auspices of the Council.

The choice is clear: either back us with proper Council support or sack us by continuing to use this inappropriate funding management system. For the sake of clarity, we are **not** requesting more than our current funding, but we are requesting a system which allows the Council to meet its twinning obligations and us to carry them out with Council's full support. If this cannot be done, then the Council will need to inform our French twin town at the earliest possible time.

We trust that this matter will be raised and resolved at the next Council meeting as the fortieth anniversary of your Charter approaches fast. I await your urgent response

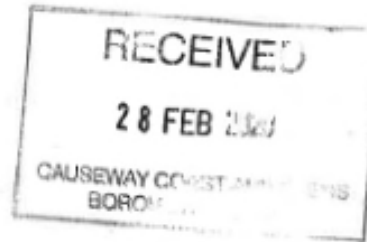
Yours faithfully


Michael I. Wilson
Chairman



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27 February 2020

ULSTER UNIVERISTY

Student Accommodation

1. Context

In 2016/7 before the collapse of the Stormont Assembly the then Finance Minister muted the possibility of introducing rates charges on university student accommodation. University accommodation was then and still is exempt from such charges. Following the reformation of the Assembly Ulster University has become aware that these discussions on changing the current rating policy and considering an introduction of rates charges have recommenced.

In England, tenants or homeowners, pay the council tax directly to the Local Authority and the landlord of the property isn't involved. However, students are exempt from council tax charges. Also, the funding gap between funding of universities in GB and NI has grown significantly.

2. Cost

Ulster University provides accommodation to its students through its owned and operated student accommodation on its campuses in Jordanstown, Coleraine and Derry. In addition, it provides accommodation via long-term agreements through private partnerships. The university estimates that introduction of student rates would result in a rate liability to the university of £220k alone as well as the additional cost to £236k to our private partners.

3. Increase Rental rate

There is no capacity within the accommodation business to absorb such an increase and the introduction of such a charge will result in rental increases of approximately £13 per week per student.



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Ulster University has a multi-campus and civic mission, committed to widening access to higher education for students from all aspects of Northern Ireland society particularly focused on lower socio-economic groups. Many of these students already find the affordability of student housing and accommodation a challenge. These students thrive in university accommodation due to the additional 24/7 pastoral care, peer support and access to broader services within the university. The University is concerned that any change to rates policy and therefore increase in rental rates will impact on the ability of students to attend University and stay in university student accommodation. This will result in more students opting for unregulated, poor quality private rented accommodation such as in South Belfast, with limited access to the full range of support services provided. With the rising incidents of student mental health challenges, isolation and risk taking off campus, as well as the need for greater levels of support for our young people, this would be a step backwards in government policy in Northern Ireland.

Student accommodation plays a vital role in the student experience; creating a sense of belonging and community for young people to thrive at university, and be enabled to take on the risks associated with academic, personal growth and positive mental health & wellbeing. Universities UK (UUK) recommend a 'whole institution approach' to student mental health, so providing safe, secure and regulated student specific accommodation is vital for student success and positive mental health outcomes.

Gareth Kennedy
Head of Residential Services