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[History](#)
[NewsoftheIrish](#)
[Book Reviews
& Book Forum](#)
[Search / Archive](#)
[Back to 10/96](#)
[Papers](#)
[Reference](#)
[About](#)
[Contact](#)

Unionists stand by 'obscene' decision

(Suzanne McGonagle, [Irish News](#))

Unionists last night (Tuesday) refused to back down from a decision to allow a memorial to a loyalist paramilitary to be erected close to his grave.

There was outrage after Craigavon Borough Council backed a memorial to former LVF leader Mark Fulton.

Councillors gave the go-ahead for an inscription on a memorial seat in Portadown's Kernan Cemetery.

Fulton, a close ally of Billy Wright, was buried there in 2002 after being found hanging in his cell in Maghaberry jail near Lisburn, Co Antrim.

On Monday night councillors backed a request made by the Fulton family earlier this summer.

However, SDLP councillor Dolores Kelly described the decision as "an obscenity" and vowed to raise it with the Equality Commission.

The request for a memorial bench was first brought to the attention of councillors in June when a committee backed it.

However, some councillors have claimed that it was not until last month – when the request was raised again – that they realised it was for a memorial to Fulton.

This week they were asked to vote on the inscription, which was proposed as: "Fulton 1960-2002. In loving memory of our dear father Mark. Always remembered and sadly missed by son Lee, daughter Alanna and son-in-law Andrew. Always in our hearts."

Sinn Féin's Michael Tallon and Maurice Magill proposed that the matter be referred back to committee but this request was defeated.

Councillors were then asked to vote on whether to refuse the inscription.

Eight voted against the inscription, 12 gave it the go-ahead and two abstained.

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Afterwards some councillors called for the Equality Commission to intervene.

Ms Kelly, who also represents Upper Bann in the assembly, said: "It is very hard for anyone from the nationalist community, which bore the brunt of LVF terror, to understand the utter blindness of unionists on this issue.

"It is an obscenity and those who forced it through have now lost all moral authority in relation to memorials in general and indeed the needs of victims."

But DUP mayor Robert Smith said the council had been forced to say yes as the family could have appealed to the commission if they had been refused permission.

He said the memorial had a simple inscription with no paramilitary reference.

Kenneth Tybble of the UUP said: "There was nothing harmful in the inscription and that was the only issue before us last night."

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