



April 2nd, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 7th April 2025 at 6:00 pm** in **Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre.**

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 3 March 2025

 [Action Sheet 2025 03 03.pdf](#)

Page 1

Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

4.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 March 2025

 [Council Minutes 2025 03 03.pdf](#)

Page 5

Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

5.0 Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 20 February 2025

 [Audit Committee Minutes 2025-02-20.pdf](#)

Page 18

6.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 March 2025

 [Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2025-03-10.pdf](#)

Page 27

7.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 March 2025

 [Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2025-03-13.pdf](#)

Page 32

8.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 March 2025

 [Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2025 03 18.pdf](#)

Page 40

9.0 Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 March 2025

 [Sustainabilty_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2025_03_19.pdf](#)

Page 44

10.0 Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee

11.0 Planning Section

FOR DECISION P/006/2025:

NOTICE OF MOTION – SECTION 76 ORDER, DOWNPATRICK EASTERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Notice of Motion – Section 76 Order, Downpatrick Eastern Distributor Road. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Enright queried why the item was to be held in closed session, to which Mr McGilly advised that it was a matter of policy that was to be debated with potential references to lands that were currently subject to development. AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor D Murphy it was agreed to note the recommendations as contained in the Officer's Report and that more information be brought back on the issue.

Correspondence

12.0 Correspondence Report

📄 *Correspondence Report Council 2025 04 07.pdf*

Page 55

12.1 National Association of Councillors – Council's 2025 Local Enterprise Champions

📄 *INVITATION FINAL NAC Enterprise Champions to Chief Executives 03032025.pdf*

Page 58

12.2 Correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council

📄 *Letter from Derry City Strabane District Council Trump's White House.pdf*

Page 62

12.3 Response from Minister for Health: Consultation on Hospitals, Creating a Network for Better Outcomes






📄 *Reply from Minister for Health C0282025 NOM Depart of Health Consultation on Hospital Reconfiguration Framework Daisy Hill Hospital.pdf*

Page 64



12.4 Response from Ards and North Down Borough Council: Gender Based Violence Against Women

📄 *Response from Ards and North Down Borough Council C1882024 NOM Gender Based Violence Against Women.pdf*

Page 68

12.5	Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes - 13 February 2025	
	 <i>Housing Council Minutes - 13th February 2025.pdf</i>	Page 69
12.6	Response from HM Treasury: Notice of Motion C/181/2024 - Inheritance Tax	
	 <i>Response from HM Treasury re NOM C1812025 Inheritance Tax.pdf</i>	Page 76
12.7	Correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Motion: Motion on Diversity and Inclusion	
	 <i>Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Motion re Diversity and Inclusion Motion March Council.pdf</i>	Page 81
12.8	Response from DAERA re Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support	
	 <i>Response from DAERA re Fishing Industry Visa.pdf</i>	Page 82
12.9	Response from Health Minister re Learning Disability Service Model	
	 <i>Reply from Minister for Health C0442025 Notice of Motion.pdf</i>	Page 84

Conferences/Events

13.0	Request from Councillors to attend Conferences	
	 <i>Conference attendance.pdf</i>	Page 88
	 <i>Conference Feedback Form.pdf</i>	Page 90

Notices of Motion

14.0 Notice of Motion - Enhancement of Services at the Downe

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Galbraith:

"Noting the contents and lack of detail within the Department of Health's Hospitals - Creating A Network For Better Outcomes document, and expressing its concern that after many years of public campaigning, this Council disputes that no recognition is given to the current Level 2 status of the Downe Hospital, and disagrees with the categorisation of the Downe as similar to other hospitals with minimal service delivery, this Council calls on the Department of Health to consider enhancing the classification of the Downe within its future hospital reconfiguration policy, and for the South Eastern Trust to continually review the potential for the safe enhancement of services at the Downe."

15.0 Notice of Motion - Removal of Red Telephone Boxes

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Lewis:

"Council Notes with Concern the Removal of Red Telephone Boxes

This Council notes with concern the impact of BT's decision to remove a number of red telephone boxes across the district. These iconic telephone boxes hold historical and cultural significance within our communities, and their removal would represent a loss to the character of our towns and villages.

The Council further notes the imminent removal of these telephone boxes and expresses support for their retention in prominent locations where feasible.

In light of this, the Council seeks to explore options for the adoption of these telephone boxes for community use through BT's 'Adopt a Kiosk' scheme at a limited charge.

The Council calls for an investigation into the potential repurposing of these telephone boxes to serve community needs, including their use as defibrillator stations, book exchanges, or local information hubs, and urges engagement with BT and relevant stakeholders to facilitate this process".

16.0 Notice of Motion - Paramilitary Groups Transitions from Violence and Crime

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Howie:

"That this Council categorically opposes proposals from the UK and Irish Governments to appoint an independent expert to scope out a new process of engagement for to bring about paramilitary group transitions to disbandment; agrees that, more than 25 years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, there is no place for paramilitarism in our society, and that such groups should either immediately disband or face a robust law enforcement approach like other organised crime gangs; welcomes the work of the Executive Programme on Paramilitarism and Organised Crime; and agrees to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Taoiseach to call for them to abandon plans for this paramilitary transition scoping and engagement exercise and reinvest the associated funding in law enforcement approaches to paramilitary activity".

17.0 Notice of Motion - Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty & Air Quality Management Areas

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Truesdale:

"Recognising Northern Ireland's commitment to achieve net zero by 2050, and Newry Mourne and Down's previous motion recognising a climate emergency, Council will endorse the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty, an initiative to secure an international and legally binding treaty to phase out fossil fuels and will write to the Northern Ireland Executive urging them to support this initiative. In line with this commitment, it will also review the effectiveness of the council's Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), and whether the number of air quality monitor stations can be expanded throughout the district".

18.0 Notice of Motion - Cost of Living Crisis

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Hanlon:

"This Council recognises the cost-of-living crisis continues to have a deep impact on workers and families and our most vulnerable;

Acknowledges that planned cuts announced by the British Government to the welfare benefits system are attack on the most vulnerable in our community and we must stand together against them;

Notes the concern that since coming into office that this British Government has targeted the most vulnerable by cutting winter fuel payments and entitlement to Personal Income Protection;

In voicing our opposition to these cuts;

This Council will publicly outline our opposition as a voice of our citizens; We will write to the British Government outlining our opposition and calling for them to reverse this decision; and we will actively engage with groups and organisations working in this field to give public expression of our opposition to these cuts".

19.0 Notice of Motion - Outdoor Adventure Revamp of Delamont Country Park

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Bowsie:

"This Council recognises the magnificent 200-acre landscape of Delamont Country Park on the shores of Strangford Lough and its untapped tourism potential close to the greater Belfast area.

Acknowledges that following the success of the miniature railway over 25 years ago, it is important that the Council invests in innovative new experiences, particularly for the secondary school age.

Calls for market research to be conducted into the potential of Delamont being home to a major new outdoor adventure that utilises its scenic drumlins and shoreline, and thus would make Delamont a landmark tourist attraction for the north of the district".

20.0 Notice of Motion - Newry Canal

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Feehan:

"This Council reaffirms its commitment to the regeneration of Newry Canal to realise its full potential as a key recreation, tourism, biodiversity, and economic development asset.

Council will write to the following local authorities and statutory bodies, in pursuit of best practice learnings, and to request information sharing on waterways strategies and management plans;

- *Fermanagh & Omagh District Council, Leitrim County Council and Cavan County Council (Shannon-Erne Waterway)*
- *Derry City & Strabane District Council (Foyle Maritime Festival)*
- *Birmingham City Council (Birmingham Canal Navigations)*
- *Waterways Ireland*

Council will write to the following bodies to request a breakdown of their funding priorities and to identify synergies between funding opportunities and the regeneration of Newry Canal:

- *The Shared Island Unit*
- *The Special EU Programmes Body (SEUPB)*
- *The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).*"

21.0 Notice of Motion - Endometriosis

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Devlin:

"Welcoming news that relugolix combination therapy has been approved by NICE for NHS England which will help approximately 1,000 women per year suffering from endometriosis; noting that this therapy will be of use to women who have explored multiple other interventions to treat endometriosis, this Council stands with the many women across our society suffering from endometriosis who have been ignored, or made to feel that their symptoms were exaggerated, affirms that menstrual taboos are unhelpful and detrimental to our society, will write to the Department of Health to seek an update on the efficacy of relugolix combination therapy, and seek views on the possibility of its introduction here, and commits to ending menstrual taboos in this District to allow women the space to be heard and believed when discussing menstrual health."

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Mr Gerard Byrne

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Ms Louise Dillon

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Cllr Valerie Harte

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Ms Catherine Hughes

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Josephine Kelly

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Cllr Leeanne McEvoy

Maureen/Joanne Morgan/Johnston

Sinead Murphy

Cllr Kate Murphy

Cllr Selina Murphy

Cllr Declan Murphy

Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
.....
Mr Andy Patterson
.....
Cllr Áine Quinn
.....
Cllr Henry Reilly
.....
Cllr Michael Rice
.....
Ms Alison Robb
.....
Cllr Michael Ruane
.....
Cllr Gareth Sharvin
.....
Donna Starkey
.....
Sarah Taggart
.....
Cllr David Taylor
.....
Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
.....
Cllr Jill Truesdale
.....
Mrs Marie Ward
.....
Cllr Helena Young
.....

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 3 MARCH 2025

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
<i>C/128/2024</i>	<i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 01.07.2024</i>	It was agreed item C/058/2024: Twinning Newry with City of Ramallah should remain on the action sheet.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Ongoing	<i>N</i>
<i>C/033/2025</i>	<i>Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 03.02.2025</i>	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Noted	<i>Y</i>
<i>C/034/2025</i>	<i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 03.02.2025</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Noted	<i>Y</i>
<i>C/035/2025</i>	<i>Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10.02.2025</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Noted	<i>Y</i>
<i>C/036/2025</i>	<i>Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13.02.2025</i>	<p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.</p> <p>Councillor Reilly to contact Mrs Murphy directly regarding the matter of litter picking in rural areas.</p> <p>Councillor Hanna raised an issue regarding large branches from a tree in the lower car park in Kilkeel having fallen into the river and asked if officers could investigate.</p>	<p><i>Democratic Services</i></p> <p><i>S Murphy</i></p> <p><i>S Murphy</i></p>	Noted	<i>Y</i>

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/037/2025	<i>Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17.02.2025</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	Noted	Y
C/038/2025	<i>Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19.02.2025</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. Mrs Murphy confirmed she would revert to Councillor Devlin directly on the matter of a bus shelter on the Gravel Road, Hilltown.	Democratic Services S Murphy	Noted	Y
C/040/2025	<i>Correspondence Report</i>	It was agreed to note the Correspondence report. <i>Response from Minister for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road</i> It was agreed to write back to the Minister for Infrastructure and ask if she was going to reconsider her position on the fixed bridge.	Democratic Services Democratic Services	Noted Correspondence issued	Y
C/041/2025	<i>Notice of Motion: Newcastle Lifeboat Station</i>	<i>"The Newcastle Lifeboat Station, established in 1825, has been a cornerstone of maritime safety in South Down for two centuries. The station has played a pivotal role in saving countless lives and supporting the wellbeing of sea farers in our community. This year is the 200th anniversary of its formation, it is fitting that we, as a council, formally recognise and celebrate this significant milestone".</i> The Motion was referred to the Equality and Good Relations in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.	Democratic Services C Moffett	Noted Considered at Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group meeting on 26 March 2025.	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/042/2025	Notice of Motion – Arts Funding Distribution	<i>It was agreed that NMDDC expresses its deep concern at the lack of equitable distribution of funding for the arts across Northern Ireland; with particular concern that while Belfast City Council received 71% of all Arts Council funding in the year 2023/24, Newry Mourne and Down Council received a mere 3.18%, further expresses its support for local creative artists, and agrees to write to the Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA and the Arts Council calling on them to review the current allocation of resources to deliver a more equitable distribution of resources, and to better help support and sustain the arts across the Northern Ireland regardless of geographical area.</i>	Democratic Services	Noted Correspondence issued	
C/043/2025	Notice of Motion – Learning Disability Service Model	<i>It was agreed that expressing our deep concern at the lack of delivery from the Department of Health of the learning Disability Service Model which would greatly help to deliver a more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with a learning disability at the earliest possible age, Newry, Mourne & Down District Council expresses our solidarity and support with those who have a learning disability ,their families and health practitioners who contributed to establishing this model and have been waiting for the new service model.</i> <i>Council will write to the Minister of Heath Mike Nesbitt MLA calling for the publication of the report without delay and the immediate implementation of what is being recommended with adequate funding to deliver a such a vital service to so many.</i>	Democratic Services	Noted Correspondence issued	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/044/2025	Notice of Motion – Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support	<p><i>It was agreed that Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas, and expressing its disapproval at the lack of progress to deliver the outcomes within the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme. This Council agrees to writing to the DAERA Minister Andrew Muir MLA calling for enhanced working with his UK counterpart to deliver greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa, and to review the outcomes within the FSDP and outline what projects can be delivered upon in the next financial year.</i></p> <p><i>It was also agreed to write to the DAERA Minister’s Scottish Counterpart and the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.</i></p>	Democratic Services	Noted Correspondence issued	
END					

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 March 2025 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne

In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews Councillor P Campbell Councillor L Devlin Councillor D Finn Councillor O Hanlon Councillor V Harte Councillor T Howie Councillor G Kearns Councillor D Lee-Surginor Councillor A Mathers Councillor L McEvoy Councillor D Murphy Councillor S Murphy Councillor H Reilly Councillor G Sharvin Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor C Bowsie Councillor W Clarke Councillor C Enright Councillor C Galbraith Councillor G Hanna Councillor R Howell Councillor J Jackson Councillor C King Councillor A Lewis Councillor D McAteer Councillor S O'Hare Councillor K Murphy Councillor A Quinn Councillor M Rice Councillor D Taylor Councillor H Young
----------------------------------	--	--

In attendance via Teams:	Councillor M Gibbons Councillor O Magennis Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor M Larkin Councillor M Ruane
---------------------------------	--	---

Officials in attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
 Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
 Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
 Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
 Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
 Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

C/031/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan and Feehan.

The Chairperson congratulated officers and District Electoral Area (DEA) representatives who had worked on the Multiply projects held across the District with Council exceeding expectations in delivering 117 events with further events to be rolled out before the end of March. Members were advised Council had engaged with over 1600 participants to bring mathematics to people within the community in a fun and engaging way.

Councillor Byrne congratulated Youth Voice on a successful conference that had been recently held in the Burrendale Hotel with over 200 young people in attendance from clubs across the District. He commented that they were some of the most engaged young people on important issues such as health and safety and commended their monologue play on ending violence against women.

Councillor Byrne congratulated Community Radio FM 105 and welcomed the new Board of Directors and volunteers who had managed to keep the station going after months of uncertainty.

The Chairperson congratulated former Councillor Finnegan and wished her well in her new role as MLA.

There were no declarations of interest.

C/027/2025: Correspondence Report, Newry Southern Relief Road

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Devlin.

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025 (copy circulated).

Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee: SPR/012/2025, Castlewellan Forest Park

Councillor Devlin enquired if there was any update in terms of further opening up of parks after the storm damage and acknowledged that since the last meeting parts of Castlewellan Forest Park including the Lake Walk had been opened which was appreciated by so many.

Councillor Devlin referred to the Crow Road and other paths around the Forest Park that remained closed, an area park runners in particular used, and asked if there was an updated timeline as to when those additional paths would be opened up again to the public.

Mr Mallon spoke of a visit with Councillors to view the damage that had been caused. Members were advised there was an extensive piece of work solely for Castlewellan Forest Park aside from what was required in the other forest parks. He confirmed a piece of work had been undertaken to quantify and establish the amount of work required for Castlewellan alone and that work was ongoing with the Heritage Lottery Fund to look at interventions that may be accessed to help with the recovery.

Mr Mallon stated one of the biggest issues being faced was the availability of contractors to deal with the trees, especially due to the size and therefore it was impossible to put a date forward at this stage. He reiterated that the health and safety of visitors, staff and contractors was paramount and work was being undertaken in a dangerous environment and would take months to get everything cleared.

Councillor Devlin thanked Mr Mallon for the update and having seen the damage for herself acknowledged that progress was being made and suggested that whenever there was an announcement that it was done so through social media and that Members were kept informed as well.

Councillor Hanna took the opportunity to raise an issue regarding large branches from a tree in the lower car park in Kilkeel having fallen into the river and asked if officers could investigate.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor K Murphy.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/035/2025 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2025

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 February 2025 (copy circulated).

ERT/017/2025: Tourism Events Programme 2025/26

An earlier query from Councillor Reilly was taken at this point and Mr Mallon stated Members were aware a workshop had been held to discuss the Festival of Flight and there were a significant number of actions and options to be explored and work with Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and others was ongoing.

Councillor Reilly queried when officers last spoke with Causeway Coast & Glen Borough Council to which Mr Mallon stated he had not been engaging directly himself, however officials within the department had and he hoped to convene a follow up meeting with Councillors within a few weeks which would be communicated to Members.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor S Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews.**

C/036/2025 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2025 (copy circulated).

SPR/025/2025: Impact of Storm Éowyn on Council Estate

In response for an update regarding the letter that was to be sent to Minister of Finance, the Chief Executive advised the letter would be issued following ratification of the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Minutes.

Councillor Reilly spoke of an issue with litter picking in rural areas and it was agreed he should contact Mrs Murphy directly regarding the matter.

SPR/021/2025: Fuel Policy

Councillor Hanna made reference to a point he had made that it be inadvisable to prioritise one source over another and enquired if there were any figures to support that the maintenance of those type of vehicles was less as he did not believe electric vehicles were.

Mrs Kelly said she did not have figures at hand and Mrs Murphy advised that when a new or replacement vehicle were being procured a business case was completed which examined fuel options and also took into consideration work that was to be carried out by that vehicle, the load of the vehicle, the distance required to travel and that data was available.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

C/037/2025 MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2025

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Howell.

C/038/2025 MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2025

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 February 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/020/2025: Application for Bus Shelter at Hilltown Road, Newry

Councillor Devlin commented that the process for Bus Shelters seemed long and drawn out in terms of Translink and asked for an update in relation a bus shelter she had raised a year and a half ago on the Gravel Road, Hilltown.

Mrs Murphy confirmed she would revert to Councillor Devlin directly on the matter.

Agreed: The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Kearns.

C/039/2025 PLANNING SECTION

Councillor Reilly asked if Council could provide in very clear terms the number of applications pending and how long it was going to take to process them for the public to have sight off.

Mr Mallon advised a report was tabled on a quarterly basis table that set out the number of applications in the system that had been allocated and the number not allocated. He added to provide a timeline was not something that should be done due to 50% of those not processed being outside of Council control from a time perspective.

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly, Mr Mallon confirmed a report had been tabled in February 2024 with the next one due in the summer.

C/040/2025 CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 3 March 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Response from Department of Education: Notice of Motion, Support for Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19

Councillor Howie voiced her disappointment at the response received stating she felt there was not much substance from the Minister in his reply which was frustrating. She spoke of party colleagues on the Education Committee and other parties doing a lot of work and hoped that those in Stormont would try and push this legislation through for those young people.

Response from Minister for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road

In referring to the response received, Councillor Finn said it was her opinion there was ambiguity on the wording in relation to the decision to proceed with a fixed bridge and that Council had asked that as new infrastructure Minister whether or not she agreed with her predecessor. She added that she understood that as a new Minister in post there was an incredible amount of work within the department but it was worth getting clarity on this matter given the strength of feeling.

Councillor Finn proposed Council write back to the Minister for Infrastructure and ask if she was going to reconsider that position.

Councillor McAteer seconded the proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor McAteer to write back to the Minister for Infrastructure and ask if she was going to reconsider her position on the fixed bridge.**

Councillor Young said her initial reaction was disappointment given a recent statement by the Minister's party opposing a fixed bridge, however she did say she was awaiting a report on the consultation and indicated that she would consider this in making a decision and progressing the project so there was a glimmer of hope that the recent support in opposing the fixed bridge would remain the position. Councillor Young agreed with Councillor Finn that clarification was needed.

Councillor Reilly commented the Minister had inherited a decision that was made on the basis of all the practicalities to make a lifting bridge and there was pressure being put on her to overturn a decision that had already been made by previous Ministers.

Correspondence from Minister of Health: NOM Residential Rehabilitation Services

Councillor Truesdale took the opportunity to say Council had collectively drawn attention to this issue and agreed that the only way to tackle it was through a multidisciplinary approach.

In referring to the Notice of Motion he had brought before Council in January 2024, Councillor Larkin welcomed the reply from the Minister of Health and the outlining of actions already in place in relation to the issue. He also welcomed the outcome of the independent review for inpatient Tier 4 detoxification residential rehabilitation services across the north and looked forward to the implementation of those recommendations in the future.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Sharvin to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:**

- **Response from Department of Education: Notice of Motion, Support for Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19**
- **Correspondence from Department for Communities: Storm Éowyn Response**
- **Correspondence from Minister of Health: NOM Residential Rehabilitation Services**
- **Response from Minister for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road**
- **Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes: Meetings held on 12 December 2024 and 9 January 2025**

C/041/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – NEWCASTLE LIFEBOAT STATION

The following Motion was received from Councillor Clarke:

"The Newcastle Lifeboat Station, established in 1825, has been a cornerstone of maritime safety in South Down for two centuries. The station has played a pivotal role in saving countless lives and supporting the wellbeing of sea farers in our community. This year is the 200th anniversary of its formation, it is fitting that we, as a council, formally recognise and celebrate this significant milestone".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Rice.

Councillor Clarke said he respected the decision of the Chairperson to refer the Motion to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group, however sought assurances that the motion would be dealt with in a timely fashion, making reference to a previous Motion regarding the Newcastle Fishing Disaster that had been referred and for which he had not received answers from officials regarding same.

The Chairperson provided assurance to Councillor Clarke regarding this Motion and explained the reason he had referred it to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group was that it was the soonest meeting scheduled to take place in March 2024.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

C/042/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – ARTS FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

The following Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

"NMDDC expresses its deep concern at the lack of equitable distribution of funding for the arts across the North; with particular concern that while Belfast City Council received 71% of all Arts Council funding in the year 2023/24, Newry Mourne and Down Council received a mere 3.18%, further expresses its support for local creative artists, and agrees to write to the Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA calling on him to review the current allocation of resources to deliver a more equitable distribution of resources, and to better help support and sustain the arts across the North regardless of geographical area".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Finn said she was pleased to be able to bring forward a motion that was designed to support artists and creatives and the importance of doing so given that over the last 10 years there had been a cut of over 40% to the Arts Council funding. She stated the motion spoke to the allocation of funding, however it was important to reiterate the frustration at facing the scenario where artists, creatives and organisations were facing budget cuts that were leading to a loss of creatives from the industry, as well as burnout and anxiety for those who were continuing.

Councillor Finn said it was deeply frustrating that this Council area received a mere 3.18% of Arts Council funding, an improvement on the 2022/2023 figure of 2.60%. She added it was even more frustrating given the incredible arts offering across the District. Councillor Finn added she looked forward to the publication of the new Arts and hoped that support from Newry Mourne and Down District Council would help in making the case for both a more equitable and better funding for the Arts.

On behalf of Alliance, Councillor Lee-Surginor stated his Party fully supported the Motion and stood with the local creative artists and believed a more equitable allocation of resources was essential to support and sustain arts in all geographical areas.

Councillor Taylor voiced support for the Motion commenting how Councillor Finn had a deep and personal interest in the Arts and made reference to previous Motions brought forward by her regarding the inadequate support that was provided to the District in terms of funding. He said he would like to find out why there was such a big disparity in terms of the level of funding provided as there was a clear passion for arts within the District.

Councillor Taylor made reference to the Arts Council and asked if they could identify the reasons why there was such a large disparity. He also enquired if there was there an issue with applications going forward and if that was the case, was there something Council could do to support that. Councillor Taylor proposed an amendment that Council also write to the Arts Council to try and identify the reasons why there was such a large disparity.

Councillor Finn accepted and seconded Councillor Taylor's amendment.

Councillor Campbell voiced support for the Motion on behalf of his Party, and as someone who had worked in the Arts for over 20 years, especially in the community and rural sector across the District he fully appreciated the benefits that Arts brings to the community.

Councillor Jackson voiced support for the Motion calling for the Communities Minister to provide more equitable distribution of resources. Councillor Jackson proposed two small amendments in that where it refers to the North that it be replaced that with Northern Ireland.

Councillor Hanna seconded Councillor Hanna's proposed amendment.

Councillor Finn accepted Councillor Jackson's proposed amendment.

In voicing support for the Motion, Councillor Reilly suggested Council investigate how it could reinstate its vigour for Arts.

The Chairperson advised once the Motion was adopted officers would follow up and bring forward more information.

In summing up, Councillor Finn thanked Members for their support and took the opportunity to highlight the Newry Drama Festival was coming up, a local group had recently had a really good win and the Newry Arts Festival. She added that were loads of really good arts things

on and more should be done in promoting that and she was more than happy to work with any colleagues across the Chamber to do so.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Sharvin that NMDDC expresses its deep concern at the lack of equitable distribution of funding for the arts across Northern Ireland; with particular concern that while Belfast City Council received 71% of all Arts Council funding in the year 2023/24, Newry Mourne and Down Council received a mere 3.18%, further expresses its support for local creative artists, and agrees to write to the Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA and the Arts Council calling on them to review the current allocation of resources to deliver a more equitable distribution of resources, and to better help support and sustain the arts across the Northern Ireland regardless of geographical area.

C/043/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICE MODEL

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Andrews:

"Expressing our deep concern at the lack of delivery from the Department of Health of the learning Disability Service Model which would greatly help to deliver a more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with a learning disability , Newry, Mourne & Down District Council expresses our solidarity and support with those who have a learning disability, their families and health practitioners who contributed to establishing this model and have been waiting for the new service model.

Council will write to the Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt MLA calling for the publication of the report without delay and the immediate implementation of what is being recommended with adequate funding to deliver a such a vital service to so many".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Galbraith.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Andrews advised the Learning Disability Service Framework was a set of standards and indicators launched in 2015 to improve the quality of health and social services for those within the community with a learning disability. He added the delivery of these services however was varied largely depending on what the Trust somebody lived in.

Councillor Andrews spoke of the Muckamore Abbey scandal and the need for greater care of those with a learning disability, for better services rooted within the community and the need for compassion and professionalism.

Councillor Andrews paid tribute to the tireless work of those across the District including Mainstay DRP and Knockevin Special School, who carried out these efforts for people with a learning disability and needed a new service model and an associated funding and action plan. There were lessons to be learned from the past, it was time to look to the future and deliver essential healthcare for the most vulnerable in society when they need it most.

In voicing support for the Motion on behalf of her Party, Councillor Truesdale commented that the Department of Health and Health Trusts had said that learning disability services continued to remain a key priority for them and the Independent and private sectors.

Councillor Truesdale stated there had been reviews which exposed significant failings in the care provided to people with a learning disability as inpatients in hospitals and their families which also exposed gaps in the wider system of support for people with learning disabilities. She stated people with a learning disability should be provided with the right care at the right time, by the right workforce.

Councillor Truesdale requested an update on a Motion brought by Councillor Clarke calling for the establishment of a Disability Forum as that provided a good opportunity for Council move ahead with a good service model at a local level.

The Chairperson advised Councillor Truesdale officers would provide information on her query and at the request of Councillor Hanlon it was confirmed the update would be provided to all Councillors.

On behalf of Sinn Féin, Councillor Harte thanked Councillor Andrews for bringing forward the motion. She stated the District served individuals of all ages with a learning difficulty and the lack of delivery of this vital Service Model required immediate attention to ensure a fit for purpose model was implemented in its entirety, to ensure individuals, their families and Health Professionals had the adequate resources and support to benefit their quality of life.

Councillor Hanna voiced support for the Motion and spoke the importance early intervention and getting statements at the early age of nursery school stage as there were no restrictions.

Councillor Hanna proposed an amendment to the Motion to include the following:
 “.....which would greatly help to deliver more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with the learning disability **at the earliest possible age.**”

Councillor Jackson seconded Councillor Hanna's proposed amendment, accepted by Councillor Andrews.

Councillor Taylor said he wanted to see the delivery of the Service Model however ultimately the finance needed to be provided to the Department of Health and that he hoped it was one of the priorities within the Executive's Programme for Government.

Councillor Andrews thanked Members for their support the Motion.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Galbraith that expressing our deep concern at the lack of delivery from the Department of Health of the learning Disability Service Model which would greatly help to deliver a more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with a learning disability at the earliest possible age, Newry, Mourne & Down District Council expresses our solidarity and support with those who have a learning disability ,their families and health practitioners who contributed to establishing this model and have been waiting for the new service model.
Council will write to the Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt MLA calling for the publication of the report without delay and the immediate implementation of what is being

recommended with adequate funding to deliver a such a vital service to so many.

C/044/2025

**NOTICE OF MOTION – FISHING INDUSTRY VISA AND
ENHANCEMENT SUPPORT**

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Sharvin:

"This Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas, and expressing its disapproval at the lack of progress to deliver the outcomes within the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme. This Council agrees to writing to the DAERA Minister Andrew Muir MLA calling for enhanced working with his UK counterpart to deliver greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa, and to review the outcomes within the FSDP and outline what projects can be delivered upon in the next financial year".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Sharvin stated the fishing industry in South Down was part of the lifeblood of the local economy and had been let down time and time again and faced challenges both in sustaining and growing. One of the impacts that had been felt most acutely was the ability of fishermen to recruit crews by the seasonal worker visa route.

He continued that in the absence of a visa mechanism, it was a good fit for the employment of non-EEA workers the industry had little option but to utilise the transit visas. The process for this was complicated, expensive and did not work for those in the sector and without better access to these visas the fishing industry's future was at stake.

The challenges of growing comes with a lack of ambition by the Department in delivering the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme (FSDP). This was programme that could be transformational for both Ardglass and Kilkeel. The programme was set up to conduct a strategic review of the opportunities for developing the sea fishing and seafood sectors in Northern Ireland. The longer the delay, the more out of date this review became and would be back to square one and central government failing the fisheries and seafood sector again.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor McAteer said the situation highlighted the ongoing problems similar to like that which continued to be experienced by mushroom industry where the plight of seasonal workers were required short term periods and there had been no work at all done by the UK Government to alleviate this issue in tandem with the Northern Ireland Executive. The cost to the employer of £8000 for six months did not make economic sense the fishing industries have been brought to their knees by the lack of workers in the sector and with the additional problems and concerns caused by attempting to recruit employees to work for short terms.

Councillor Rice welcomed the Motion on behalf of his Party having brought a similar motion in 2023 regarding concerns with the restriction for seasonal workers in the fishing industry. He said the fishing industry was a major economic driver for communities in Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie and that it was extremely worrying that immigration rules were restricting workers to determine productivity and sustainability of the local fishing industry. Councillor Rice said it was hoped that following another Motion, all relevant agencies and public bodies would act swiftly to ensure the issues surrounding the skilled worker visas

would be rectified to ensure that local fishing industry was fully supported.

Councillor Hanna voiced support for the Motion however he felt it would have little influence with the British Government having sat on their hands for many years and having heavily lobbied on many occasions.

Councillor Enright put forward the following amendment for the Motion to read as follows:

“This Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas and welcomes engagement between the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the UK Government on this issue. This Council agrees to write to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to call for greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa. This Council also agrees to write to the Northern Ireland DAERA Minister to request an update on his department’s work with the Fishery Harbour Authority to consider alternative options to those proposed in the Fishing and Seafood Development Programme Strategic Outline Case”.

Councillor Enright’s proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

Councillor Sharvin did not accept Councillor Enright’s proposed amendment.

Councillor Sharvin confirmed he would accept writing to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Councillor Enright agreed to retract his proposed amendment and it was agreed by all the include writing to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Councillor Taylor stated he was very happy to support the Motion as the fishing industry was key to the local area and anything that placed that under threat, Council needed to do all it could to try and encourage those in power to do what was necessary to protect that .

Councillor Reilly voiced support for the Motion.

Councillor Hanlon explained she had met with Ardglass fishermen and there was a lot of shared working with the Scottish Coast and that it might be helpful to examine what they do there. She proposed a further amendment to include writing to Northern Ireland’s DAERA Minister’s Scottish counterpart. Councillor Murphy seconded Councillor Hanlon’s proposed amendment.

Councillor Sharvin accepted Councillor Hanlon’s amendment and thanked Members for the support for the Motion.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas, and expressing its disapproval at the lack of progress to deliver the outcomes within the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme. This Council agrees to writing to the DAERA Minister Andrew Muir MLA calling for enhanced working with his UK counterpart to deliver greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa, and to review the outcomes within the FSDP

and outline what projects can be delivered upon in the next financial year.

It was also agreed to write to the DAERA Minister's Scottish Counterpart and the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.20pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2025

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 20 February 2025, at 2.00pm, in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

**In attendance
in Chamber:**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor C King
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor G Sharvin	

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
 Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
 Mrs S Murphy, Director Sustainability & Environment
 Mr A Patterson, Director Active & Healthy Communities
 Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
 Ms C Hughes, Head of Performance and Improvement (Acting)
 Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
 Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

**Also in attendance
in chamber:**

Ms K Doey NIAO
 Ms C Hagan NIAO

AC/001/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Howie.

Councillor Bowsie queried why Item 12, Planning Update was tabled as a closed session item despite the same report having been tabled at the February Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting in open session.

Mrs Kelly advised it had been tabled as a closed business item to allow for a discussion that could incorporate any items that should be held in closed session, such as staffing resource. She advised it could be moved to open session if preferred by Members.

Councillor Bowsie proposed to move the item to open session, which was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Ms Slevin advised she would take the item relating to the Planning Update in open session, as Item number 7.

AC/002/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AC/003/2025: ACTION SHEET OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Read: Action Sheet arising from Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 19 September 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly highlighted an outstanding item on the action sheet and advised Democratic Services were sourcing training to be scheduled for March or April for Members.

Mrs Ward advised the training would be open to all councillors and urged Members to be conscious of who may be joining the Audit Committee at the upcoming AGM scheduled for June 2025 and to ensure they attended the training.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2024.

PERFORMANCE

AC/004/2025: MID YEAR ASSESSMENT OF 2024/2025

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Procurement, regarding the Mid-Year Assessment of Performance 2024/2025. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Hughes advised the report had been tabled and agreed at the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 14 November 2024.

Councillor Sharvin queried whether the detail surrounding the Newry Leisure Centre was solely due to the pool closure, or whether it accounted for unscheduled closures due to training days or adverse weather and whether these figures were a cause for concern.

Mr Patterson advised the leisure figures were predominantly related to the pool closure, taking account of the number of young people who would take part in health and wellbeing initiatives. He advised that the expectation was that these figures would be reversed when the facility had reopened.

Councillor Sharvin queried what measures were being put in place to improve on and ensure that enforcement targets would be met.

Mrs Murphy advised work was ongoing regarding the development of a recruitment plan that was reflective of the business-as-usual vacancies with the Directorate, alongside the additional vacancies following the service review and implementation of the new Sustainability & Environment structure. She advised that a recruitment process would be underway prior to the end of the financial year for these roles but stated that this would not be reflected in the fixed penalty notices issued until the 2025/26 financial year.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Mid-Year Assessment of Performance 2024-25.

CORPORATE SERVICES – OPEN SESSION

AC/005/2025: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

Read: Report dated 19 September 2024 from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding the Corporate Risk Register. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly advised the Corporate Risk Register had been updated within the past month by the Senior Management Team and confirmed there had been no change to the actual risks, while control measures and actions taken had been updated.

Following a query from Councillor Hanlon regarding CR 04 – Failure to Provide Robust and Timely Planning Decisions being recorded as amber and not red, Mr Mallon advised that the gross risk remained as red, while the residual risk was more reflective of the ongoing actions and performance improvement plan.

Councillor Hanlon stated she believed it should remain as red until such time as improvements were more visible within the statistics. Mr Mallon advised the risk was reflective of the previous risk register, but he would consider any changes prior to the next Audit Committee Meeting.

Mr Mallon then advised the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Risk Register detailed 8 risks and actions, all of which remained unchanged from the previous review.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, the following was agreed:

- To approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at Appendix 1. Full Corporate Risk Register can be evidenced at Appendix 2.
- To note the revised ERT Directorate Risk Register summary at Appendix 3 and detailed ERT Directorate Risk Register at appendix 4.

AC/006/2025: PROMPT PAYMENT STATISTICS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Procurement, regarding Prompt Payment Statistics **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne outlined the report, confirming that within Quarter 2, 94% of suppliers' invoices had been paid within 30 days, with payments being made on average within 12.39 days. He stated that within Quarter 3, 95% of suppliers' invoices had been paid within 30 days, with the average payment time reduced to 11.61 days.

Councillor Sharvin commended the officers involved in working hard to get the payment process into such a positive position.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 Prompt Payment Statistics 2024/25

AC/007/2025: PLANNING UPDATE

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration, regarding a Planning Update. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon outlined the report, reminding Members it had been subject to debate at the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 13 February 2025.

Following a query from Councillor Devlin regarding the delays from statutory consultees and whether DFI or Central Government had any suggestions to improve on this, Mr Mallon advised Council was in regular contact with statutory consultees to try and resolve any issues, however they were also advising of resource pressures that impacted on their ability to respond to consultations in a timely manner.

Councillor Bowsie referenced his queries at the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee meeting and queried again if Council was considering possible reasons for staff retention issues, and if consideration should be given to pay scales.

Mr Mallon confirmed that an exit interview was carried out with every leaver with reasons for leaving varying from lifestyle changes to relocation. He advised Council had as many leavers to, and new starts from other local authorities. He stressed Council was now close to a full complement of staff following the approval of additional staff and expressed his hope that the next few months would see a marked improvement in the quarterly updates from the Planning Department.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the contents of the Officer's Report.

Items restricted in accordance with Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during the following items which related to exempt information by virtue of Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during these items of business.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

CORPORATE SERVICES (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/008/2025: RISK MANAGEMENT STRATEGY UPDATE

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Procurement, regarding the Risk Management Strategy Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve the revisions to the Risk Management Policy / Strategy in line with the Internal Audit Recommendations. It was also agreed to approve the Risk Appetite Statement at Appendix 3 of the Officer's Report.

AC/009/2025: UPDATE ON AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding an Update on Audit Recommendations **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to note the progress in implementing both internal and external audit recommendations.

AC/010/2025: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note Quarter 2 and Quarter 3 updates in relation to Direct Award Contracts.

AC/011/2024: PROCUREMENT ACTION PLANS

Read: Report Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Procurement Action Plans. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the update and progress in relation to the Directorate Procurement Action Plans.

AC/012/2025: UPDATE ON FRAUD AND RAISING CONCERNS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Fraud and Raising Concerns Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the following:

- The update in relation to Fraud and Raising Concerns cases detailed at Appendix 1 of the Officers Report
- The progress on actions arising from the NIAO Internal Fraud Risk Self-Assessment
- The update in relation to the National Fraud Initiative

AC/013/2025: UPDATE REPORT NCCR

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding an Update Report NCCR. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the following:

- The update on the Notice of Motion March 2024 on the NCCR Project
- The latest correspondence received and issued to the NI Audit Office on the Project.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to write to the Local Government Auditor to express the concerns of the Audit Committee in relation to her communication referring specifically to the Quays shopping centre as a potential site for the Newry Civic Hub, particularly as the Council had previously highlighted detailed reports regarding site selection.

NIAO (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/014/2025: REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE 2023/24

Read: Summary Report dated 19 September 2024 regarding a Summary Report to the Audit Committee. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the Report to those Charged with Governance.

AC/015/2025: AUDIT AND ASSESSMENT REPORT 2024/25 – S95

Read: Correspondence received from Northern Ireland Audit Office re: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council: Improvement Audit and Assessment – Final Audit and Assessment Report 2024/25 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the Audit and Assessment Report 2024/2025**

AC/016/2025: ANNUAL AUDIT LETTER

Read: Correspondence received from Northern Ireland Audit Office re: Annual Audit Letter 2023-24: Newry, Mourne and Down District Council **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Annual Audit Letter 2023/2024**

AC/017/2025: LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITORS REPORT 2024

Read: Local Government Auditor Report 2024 **(Copy circulated)**

Independent Chairperson Ms Slevin requested that officers prepare a brief report on the recommendations detailed on page 9 of the report for the next Audit Committee meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the Local Government Auditor’s Report 2024.**

INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/018/2025: SUMER NI SUMMARY REPORT

Read: Sumer NI Summary Report **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report**

AC/019/2025: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2024/25

Read: Internal Audit Plan 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Plan 2024/25**

AC/020/2025: LEISURE SERVICES

Read: Leisure Services Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Leisure Services Report

AC/021/2025: CAR PARKING

Read: Car Parking Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Car Parking Report

AC/022/2025: USER ACCESS MANAGEMENT

Read: User Access Management Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the User Access Management Report

AC/023/2025: FLOOD GRANT VERIFICATION

Read: Flood Grant Verification Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Flood Grant Verification Report

Cllr Bowsie left the meeting at this stage – 4.05pm

AC/024/2025: GLOBAL INTERNAL AUDIT STANDARDS

Read: Global Internal Audit Standards Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to note the Global Internal Audit Standards Report

CIRCULARS

AC/025/2025: CIRCULAR LG 15/2024 – CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES

Read: Circular LG 15/2024 – Consolidated Councillor Allowances Circular.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to note the Consolidated Councillor Allowances Circular

AC/026/2025: THE NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND 2024

Read: The National Fraud Initiative in Northern Ireland 2024 Circular.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to note the National Fraud Initiative in Northern Ireland 2024 Circular.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 4.21pm

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

Signed: Ms J Kelly
Director Corporate Services

Signed: Ms B Slevin
Independent Chairperson

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

27

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 10 February 2025 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row**

Chairperson: Councillor A Lewis

**Committee Members
in attendance:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor M Ruane

Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor W Clarke Councillor J Truesdale

**Non-Committee Members
in attendance:**

Councillor C Bowsie

Officials in attendance:

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:**

Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

ERT/019/2025:

APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Kearns

ERT/020/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ERT/021/2025:

**ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read:

Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy,
Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 10
February 2025 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

**On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by
Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the Action
Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration &
Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 10
February 2025.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/022/2025:

BALLYKINLAR HUT REMOVAL UPDATE

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Ballykinlar Hut Removal Update. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth confirmed the expression of interest process was completed with two applications received, one for the hut and contents, and a second for digital assets associated with the structure. She advised the recommendation was to accept the request for the hut and contents, which was in line with eligibility criteria defined within the Expression Of Interest (EOI). If approved, Council would engage with the applicant regarding a work plan to support the removal of the hut and contents to another location and investigate a copy of digital contents to be made available to the second applicant. Members were advised there could be a requirement for capital works following the removal of the structure with an update report would be brought to Committee if required.

In proposing the officer's recommendations contained within the report, Councillor Hanlon stated her Party had always expressed their wishes for the hut to remain within the District and she believed the proposed approach was sensible to the two applications.

Councillor Andrews seconded Councillor Hanlon's proposal and spoke of his delight at reaching an historic milestone in relation to the preservation of the importance of the Ballykinlar Hut.

Councillor Hanna also spoke of his delight that the hut would be restored and located in a place that would appreciate the history.

Councillor Bowsie thanked officers for their work, commenting it was important for this vital part of history to be sustained and commended Mike King for his work on the project over the years. He queried if the interpretation panels could be reprinted by the new owners at a later date or would the application for the hut and contents have exclusive rights to the content.

Mrs Smyth advised Council would retain copyright of the content but the request could be considered.

Councillor Truesdale spoke of her Party's support for the recommendations and commended officers for their hard work. She queried if a clause could be added that stated the contents must remain with the hut and not be separated in the future.

Following a request for clarity from Councillor Hanlon with regard to Councillor Truesdale's question, Mr Mallon advised that the applicant was the most appropriate person to advise on their intentions and that this issue could be raised with them.

Councillor Andrews expressed confusion regarding Councillor Truesdale's query as he believed that option 2 of the officer's report regarding the hut and contents being relocated together would support the preservation of the hut.

Mrs Smyth stated that if the recommendations were approved, Council would engage with the applicants as outlined within the report.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by

Councillor Andrews, the following was agreed:

- **To note the update on the expression of interest process relating to the Ballykinlar Hut**
- **To accept the Expression of Interest from Applicant 2 for the Ballykinlar Hut and all physical contents, subject to an agreed work plan**
- **To approve the request from Applicant 1 for a copy of the digital information associated with the Ballykinlar Hut project held by the Council**

ERT/023/2025:

DESTINATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Destination Management System. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, advising that the Destination Management System related to the Council tourism website that held all the tourism and arts and culture information. She advised that the delivery partner, Tourism NI, had recently reprocurd their delivery partner and it was for the approval of Members to continue to partner with Tourism NI for the provision of the management system.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to continue as a partner with Tourism NI for the provision of Destination Management system for provision of Council's Tourism Website, which now includes Arts Services and Museum Services, and to extend the Deed of Agreement which sets out the Terms and Conditions as required.

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed while in closed session.

ERT/024/2025:

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 1 REVENUE

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Partnership Agreements for 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to accept the Officer's Recommendations. It was also agreed that the call for the 80th Commemoration for VJ day be re-opened to utilise the underspend due to the short turnaround time for this call only.

ERT/025/2025:

FOOD CURATOR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Food Curator Service Level Agreement **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to establish a Service Level Agreement with the organisation named within the Officer's Report for delivery of the Food Curator element of both Wake the Giant and Eats and Beats 2025 Festivals.

FOR NOTING

ERT/026/2025:

LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Local Economic Partnership. **(Copy circulated)**

Following a query from Councillor Hanlon regarding the mention of a presentation with the report, Mr Mallon advised that the presentation had been included as part of the Local Economic Partnership meeting papers and could be shared with Members if requested.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the update on the establishment of the NMD Local Economic Partnership and the action report from their inaugural meeting of 27 January 2025.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.37pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

**Signed: Councillor A Lewis
Chairperson**

Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

31

Signed: **Conor Mallon**
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

32

**Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Thursday 13 March 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre**

In the Chair: Councillor T Howie

**In Attendance
in Chamber:**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor C King	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice	Councillor G Sharvin

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor D Taylor

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/026/2025:

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Enright, and from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism.

SPR/027/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/028/2025:

**ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY &
RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 13 FEBRUARY
2025**

Read:

Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 13 February 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 13 February 2025.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

33

SPR/029/2025: DRAFT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2025-26

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance and Performance regarding Draft Performance Improvement Objectives. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr G Byrne outlined the Report, advising that the objectives would be subject to an audit over the coming months. He advised that the Report proposed to carry forward all 5 performance improvement objectives from 2024/25, and although the objectives remained the same, some of the targets within those had additional and amended targets included, which was outlined within the Report.

Mr Byrne outlined that if agreed, the consultation on the Performance Improvement Plan would begin on 14 March 2025 and end on 6 May 2025, utilising tools such as the website, public advertisement and engagement through the DEA forums and Section 75 groups, with any feedback being incorporated into the 2025/26 plan.

In proposing the Report, Councillor Reilly expressed his concern that the Plan could be little more than good intentions, using the example of dog fouling across the district. He stated that unless adequate resources were allocated to the issue, it would continue to be a problem, further stressing that Council should consider ways of increasing awareness of responsible dog ownership.

Councillor Sharvin noted his understanding of a statutory target of 15 weeks for processing a planning application but cautioned that this could be an impossible target when considering the trend of the previous 3 years. He queried if Council could input their own internal targets that would show that the Planning Department was continuously improving but stressed his concern that 15 weeks was an unrealistic target that could demoralise staff.

Mrs Ward stressed that the 15 week was a statutory target, and Council reported against statutory targets, but advised that the Senior Management Team were considering reviewing targets for the coming year, and updates would be brought back as required. She advised that there was work being carried out regarding the planning sector at a regional level, and Council Officers were in place on that group to bring any relevant actions forward.

Councillor Hanlon noted the issues that staff turnover could cause, referencing an example whereby emails directed to a member of staff who had left Council had not been actioned, which caused further delays to some planning applications.

Mrs Ward advised that the diversion of emails could be addressed internally, highlighting that the Planning Department was almost at a full complement of staff. She advised that Senior Planners do look to reallocate the work of leavers, but with each case officer carrying a significantly high case load this could unfortunately result in delays to applications.

Councillor King welcomed cleanliness being a focal point in the new plan, noting a recent constructive meeting with the Sustainability & Environment Director where a discussion was had on the cleanliness of the District. He welcomed the community outreach aspect of the plan but stated that he believed that a strategic plan and a new and updated approach was needed from the Department as soon as possible.

Mrs Ward reminded Members of the significant piece of work that was being carried out regarding District cleansing, advising that an update was being tabled at the Sustainability & Environment Working Group scheduled for 19 March 2025.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve:

- **The five draft performance improvement objectives 2025-26, as outlined in Appendix 1**
- **The proposed approach and timetable for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26, as outlined in Appendix 2, including approval to commence the consultation and engagement process on 14 March 2025**

Councillor Quinn joined the meeting during the above discussion – 06.10pm

SPR/030/2025:

PROCUREMENT POLICY

Read:

Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the Procurement Policy. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly advised a new Procurement Act 2023 commenced on 24 February 2025 and stated the Council had updated their Procurement Policy to reflect the requirements of the Act along with an additional section outlining the policy approach to Ethical Procurement, Social Value and Sustainability. She advised procedures had been updated and training for staff had been undertaken and further training would also be organised over the next number of months.

Councillor Reilly in proposing the Policy highlighted the issue that many small businesses throughout the District found the procurement portal daunting and therefore did not tender for Council work. He asked if it was possible to organise workshops that local businesses could access to prepare for tendering for Council contracts.

Mrs Ward advised that considerable training had been organised across the District for buyers over the last few years.

Mrs Smyth advised that in advance of the new procurement system being introduced, officials worked with small businesses to use the system. She stated through the Business Support programme, procurement workshops and tender support with businesses to make them aware of how to find opportunities in the public sector. Mrs Smyth advised future workshops could be considered under the new phase of Business Support programmes being released.

Councillor Hanlon stated she felt the addition of the ethical procurement did not reflect the actual motion she had tabled. She queried whether there was something else within the background of the policy that would refer to the Geneva principles and parameters that had been mentioned within the motion.

Mrs Kelly stated there were various sections within the policy and these would be reflected within the Terms and Conditions that are sent out with Tenders to ensure the ethical procurement was considered before awarding contracts.

Councillor Sharvin asked whether there would be a notice on the existing procurement system to ensure that all suppliers register on the new system. He asked when the first procurement system would be launched.

Mrs Kelly advised the information would be put on the website and officials were investigating portal information for suppliers. She advised this would be sometime between now and summer.

Councillor McAteer queried whether there were statistics as to what level of goods and services supplied to Council was from local suppliers.

Mrs Kelly advised she did not have the figures to hand however would look at the system to see if this information was available. She stated there was a huge remit of procurement across Council , and the idea of social value was to encourage businesses of different sizes to tender for Council services.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the updated Procurement Policy and to note the legislative updates contained within the report.**

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

SPR/031/2025: **LAND AT DAISY HILL, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding lands at Daisy Hill, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to sell the lands hatched blue on the map attached to the Officer's Report to the party identified within the report for the market value.**

SPR/032/2025: **LICENCE OF LANDS AT DONARD PARK, NEWCASTLE**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding licence of lands at Donard Park, Newcastle. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, the following was agreed:

- To grant a licence in respect of the new 3G pitch at Donard Park, Newcastle as outlined in green on the map attached to this report for a licence period of 25 years with the party identified in the Officer's Report subject to the market value licence fee set out in this report.
- To grant a licence in respect of the placement of a container at Donard Park, Newcastle for a licence period of 5 years with the party identified in the officer's report at a peppercorn licence fee subject to Departmental consent.

SPR/033/2025: RENEWAL OF LEASE OF LANDS ADJACENT TO KILKEEL LEISURE CENTRE

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding renewal of lease of lands adjacent to Kilkeel Leisure Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to grant a further lease in respect of the lands shaded red to the party noted within the report for a period of twenty-five years at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.

SPR/034/2025: RENEWAL OF LICENCE AT COUNCIL DEPOT, KILKEEL

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding renewal of licence at Council Depot, Kilkeel. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to enter into a further five-year licence agreement in respect of the Lands as shown outlined in red on the plan attached to the Officer's Report with the party identified at a peppercorn licence fee subject to Departmental Consent.

SPR/035/2025: LEASE OF BUILDING & LANDS AT ANNALONG MARINE PARK

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding lease of building and lands at Annalong Marine. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to enter into a lease variation with the existing tenant named in the officers report, to extend the term of the existing lease by 20 years, to extend the leased area to include the area outlined in green on the map attached to the Officer's Report at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.**

Cllr Bowsie left the meeting at this stage – 6.56pm

SPR/036/2025: LEASE OF LANDS AT KILTYBANE, NEWRY

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding lease of lands at Kiltybane, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to enter into a further lease with the party named within the Officers Report for a term of 25 years and to move forward on the basis of option a as outlined in section 2.3 in the Officer's Report.**

SPR/037/2025: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACT

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the recommendations contained within the Officer's Report.**

SPR/038/2025: AHC FACILITY LEASE

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding AHC Facility Lease. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to approve the updated lease arrangements as detailed in the Officer's Report.**

SPR/039/2025: SALE OF LAND, NEWRY

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the sale of land, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to accept the current offer and move to sale agreed.**

SPR/040/2025: **NMDDC LGSC CONTRIBUTIONS**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the sale of land, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the payment from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the period April 25 – March 26.**

SPR/041/2025: **CEARANCE WORKS – CASTLEWELLAN ARBORETUM AND ANNESLEY GARDEN – NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND PROJECT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, and Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, Clearance Works – Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden – NLHF Project. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve a compensation event to the contractor to undertake clearance works necessary to enable the contractor to continue with the relevant contract works.**

Councillor Reilly left the meeting at this stage – 7.22pm

FOR NOTING

SPR/042/2025: **POSTAL SERVICES CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Postal Services Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the extension and Tender of Postal Services for Council's main collection and sorting mail service using a Postal Services Framework Agreement available to public sector bodies.**

SPR/043/2025: **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance and Performance regarding Management Accounts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, to the quarter three 2024/25 Management Accounts.**

SPR/044/2025: **DAERA PROJECT - CASTLEWELLAN**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding DAERA Project – Castlewellan. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to accept the recommendations of the Officer's Report.**

SPR/045/2025: **MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING 6 DECEMBER 2024**

Read: Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting 6 December 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the minutes.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/046/2025: **MINUTES OF WOMEN'S WORKING GROUP**

Read: Minutes of Women's Working Group Meeting held on 16 January 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the Minutes of Women's Working Group Meeting held on 16 January 2025.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.33pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

Signed: **Councillor Tierna Howie**
Chairperson

Signed: **Josephine Kelly**
Director of Corporate Services

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2025

**Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on
Tuesday 18 March 2025 at 6.00pm in the Mourne Room,
Downshire Civic Centre**

Chairperson: Councillor C Galbraith

**In attendance
in Chamber:**

Councillor D Finn	Councillor R Howell
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor L McEvoy	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor K Murphy	

**Committee Members in
attendance (via Teams):**

Councillor L Devlin	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor H Young

Officials in Chamber:

Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

AHC/019/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

There were no apologies received.

The Chairperson congratulated all those who organised the Sports Awards and expressed his gratitude at being invited to attend. He congratulated all those who had been nominated and the winners on the night stating there was a huge amount of sporting talent within the District.

He congratulated all those who organised and participated in the St Patrick's Day celebrations across the District, stating that the feedback on the Downpatrick parade was good.

AHC/020/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AHC/021/2025: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 17 February 2025. **(Copy circulated).**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Howell, to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 17 February 2025.**

AHC/022/2025: NOTICE OF MOTION: RUNNING TRACK IN EAST DOWN

Read: Report dated 18 March 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living regarding a Notice of Motion in relation to a Running Track in East Down. **(Copy circulated).**

Mr Haughey provided an update on the status of a running track and recommended that officers provide an update to the AHC Committee once further progress had been made on options for available land and suitable sites for the location of a running track. This would be as part of a multi-sports hub in partnership with a school or other statutory body, in line with the approved recommendations of the Council's Sports Facilities Review.

Councillor Devlin welcomed the update stating there was so much sporting talent across the District, the options were limitless if the correct facilities were in place in East Down, particularly for females. She stated she understood the limitations that existed in terms of suitable land, however, welcomed that officers were working hard in the background to progress the installation of a running track. She asked whether the update as outlined in the recommendation could be timebound in some way.

Mr Haughey advised that officials were working on this and looking at various site options, particularly in the Downpatrick DEA area and should be able to bring a report back to the Committee in May.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, that officers provide an update to AHC Committee as further progress is made on options for available land and suitable sites for the location of a running track as part of a multi-sports hub to be developed in partnership with a school or another statutory body, in line with the approved recommendations of the Councils Sports Facilities Review.**

AHC/023/2025: LEISURE CENTRE ARRANGEMENTS

Read: Report dated 18 March 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living regarding a Notice of Motion in relation to proposed amendments to the leisure centre closure arrangements for the 2025 period.

Mr Haughey advised the report was seeking approval to change the public opening/closing time in line with the reopening of the leisure centre in Newry.

Councillor Howell asked whether the Trade Unions had been consulted on the proposed changes.

Mr Haughey advised the staffing times had not changed, the proposals would assist staff to complete cleaning at the end of their shifts. Councillor Howell, while appreciating this, stated it was important that the Trade Unions be spoken to also.

Councillor Finn raised a query on private swim lessons and whether there was a timeframe as to when they would resume in Newry Leisure Centre.

Mr Patterson advised engagement was ongoing with the providers of the private swim lessons and an update would be brought back in terms of arrangements.

Councillor Devlin stated communication with the public was important when amending the hours of operation.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, to approve the amended leisure centre closure arrangements for 2025 as per the officer's report.**

AHC/024/2025: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE REPORT

Read: Report dated 18 March 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Jackson, to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheets attached for:**

- **Crotlieve DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 25 February 2025.**
- **Newry DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 18 February 2025.**
- **Slieve Croob DEA Private Forum Meeting held on 25 February 2025.**
- **Downpatrick DEA Private Forum Meeting 11 February 2025.**

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 5 to 7, which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that**

information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

AHC/025/2025: USAGE AGREEMENT FOR AHC FACILITY

Read: Report dated 18 March 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living, regarding the Usage Agreement for AHC Facility. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Howell, to approve the sporting club's sole use of the Council facility for the duration of their development works, subject to agreed terms and periodic review.

AHC/026/2025: FUNDED PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Read: Report dated 18 March 2025 from Mrs A Robb, regarding Funded Programme Delivery. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Finn, to proceed with the delivery of the funded programme as detailed within the Officer's Report to July 2025, pending receipt of a Letter of Offer from the programme funder.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Finn that Council send a letter urging the Department to consider sending a Letter of Offer as soon as possible.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.27pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

Signed: Councillor Galbraith
Chairperson

Signed: Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2025

**Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on
Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 6.15pm in Council Chamber,
Monaghan Row, Newry**

Chair: Councillor C Enright

**In attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor V Harte
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor H Young	

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Campbell
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor D Taylor

Officials in Chamber:

Mrs S Murphy, Director Sustainability and Environment
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director Environment
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

**Officials in attendance
Via Teams:**

Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SE/031/2025:

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Kearns.

As the Chairperson was an apology, it was agreed that the Deputy Chairperson would host the meeting.

SE/032/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Reilly declared an interest in Item 7 – Response to Department of Health Consultation on Hospitals.

SE/033/2025:

**ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 February 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

SE/017/2025: Notice of Motion – Sharing financial information with other Councils regarding Climate Change.

Councillor Enright requested an update regarding the potential for redacting sensitive information in order to make the document shareable.

Mrs Murphy advised that she would revert to the Member directly on the matter.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 February 2025.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/034/2025: OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – STREET LIGHTING

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Notice of Motion – Street Lighting (**Copy circulated**)

Mrs Murphy advised that statutory responsibility for street lighting on public roads lay with DFI Roads, with certain criteria to be considered for the location and design of street lighting, however advised that Council would engage with DFI Roads to address the issue of lighting across the District as detailed within the report.

Councillor Finn thanked officers for bringing the report, advising that while she understood that the statutory responsibility lay with DFI, she believed that Council should also consider reviewing lighting within green spaces that were Council owned. She stated that a number of people were undertaking physical activities within these spaces, such as dog walkers and young families and stressed the need for additional lighting in relation to women's safety. She also noted that while street lighting may not resolve the issue, it would certainly deter fly tipping due to the visibility with additional lighting.

Councillor Finn proposed that in addition to the recommendations within the report, that Council owned green spaces would be reviewed to identify any areas that could avail of additional lighting across the District.

This was seconded by Councillor Feehan.

Mrs Murphy advised that an update report would be brought back to Committee regarding consideration of lighting in park areas but advised that any lighting scheme would be subject to business case approval and an environmental impact assessment within the area.

Councillor Harte noted the lack of street lighting in areas, stating that the issue was a double-edged sword as after engagement with Play Board NI and Crime Prevention, the advice had been against lighting some areas as it raised anti-social behaviour in the area, and to close some parks at night. She further noted that DFI had removed street lighting from the rear of some residential homes leaving the elderly residents there in fear, stating that lighting was an issue that needed widespread assessment.

Councillor Jackson supported the amendment as proposed by Councillor Finn, stating that lighting was an issue across the District. He referenced a situation where a small rural cluster of homes had street lighting under a historical NIE scheme, however DFI had removed this lighting as their legislation noted a minimum of 10/12 houses. He highlighted the negative

impact on the residents in terms of their safety and wellbeing, given the increase in vandalism and theft within the small area.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to write to the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) Roads to advise of concerns in relation to areas that have little or no street lighting and request that a scoping exercise is undertaken to identify areas that could avail of additional street lighting across the District.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan, that that Council owned green spaces would be reviewed to identify any areas that could avail of additional lighting across the District.

SE/035/2025:

SUSTAINABILITY CHARGES FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/2026

Read:

Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Sustainability Charges for Financial Year 2025/2026 **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage outlined the report, noting that there were no amendments to the charging scales from the previous financial year.

Councillor Feehan requested an update to the ongoing issues at Monkshill Cemetery regarding cleanliness.

Mr Sage advised that following a recent review, regular checks on cleanliness were to be carried out and facility checklists were being utilised to ensure that cleanliness was maintained.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to approve the following:

- **Councils pricing structure for burial charges in 2025/2026**
- **Councils pricing structure for market charges in 2025/2026**
- **Councils pricing structure for Newcastle Harbour mooring dees in 2025/2026**

SE/036/2025:

HOME TO HOSPITAL UPDATE

Read:

Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Home to Hospital Update **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Trainor outlined the report, advising that approval was being sought to continue the funding as outlined within the report. She noted that there were 368 trips undertaken to medical facilities within the Mournes area and 175 trips taken within the Slieve Gullion area.

Councillor Reilly queried how the service was promoted and advertised and what the qualifying criteria was for a registered user, noting that the benefit seemed minimal for the annual cost.

Mrs Trainor advised that the service was undertaken through Bolster Community Association, and that she was unsure of the qualifying criteria requirement but would revert to the Member on the query.

Councillor Andrews expressed his heartfelt appreciation for the service volunteers and asked if there was any way Council could assist in signposting and raising awareness of the services offered across the District, such as this scheme and the Down Community Rural Network.

Mrs Trainor advised that she would look at all services across the District and revert to the Member on the services available, and how they compared across the District.

Councillor Taylor noted his support for the scheme and recognised the support it offered to the most vulnerable and isolated individuals within the community. He reiterated Councillor Reilly's query regarding cost effectiveness and asked if Council could assist with the promotion of the scheme in the coming year.

Mrs Trainor advised that she would look at what Council could do to assist with the promotion of the scheme.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve the continued funding for The Mournes and Slieve Gullion Home to Hospital Volunteer driver schemes from 01 April 2025 – 31 March 2026, and that Council seek Expressions of Interest from suitable Community and Voluntary Sector organisations to administer the schemes, subject to funding being identified.

SE/037/2025:

RESPONSE TO DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH CONSULTATION ON HOSPITALS – CREATING A NETWORK FOR BETTER OUTCOMES

Read:

Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Response to department of Health Consultation on Hospitals – Creating a Network for Better Outcomes. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Trainor outlined the report and consultation response, advising that although submitted it was subject to amendment following Council approval.

In proposing the report, Councillor Feehan thanked officers for their time in compiling the response. He noted that he had called for the Department of Health (DoH) to facilitate an in-person information session prior to the closure of the consultation, and their inability to do so was met with anger within the local community. He reiterated the need for an area hospital

within Newry and welcomed the powerful response as submitted by Council as he believed that it represented the views of the local people well.

Councillor Reilly requested clarification on Council's position on the proposal of the type of hospitals at Q6 of the consultation, to which Mrs Trainor advised that Council strongly disagreed with the proposal regarding Daisy Hill hospital, as understood by officers.

Councillor Andrews highlighted the valuable work carried out within hospitals and supported all efforts to keep the hospitals open. He noted that he had been contacted regarding the position of the Downe Hospital as a local hospital and felt that it also needed to be reconsidered.

Councillor Enright clarified that the report was primarily focusing on Daisy Hill as an area hospital, and not the Downe hospital as an area hospital. He further noted that Belfast had the largest number of hospitals of any city within the UK and was fully sportive of the consultation response.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the consultation response in Appendix 1 entitled Hospitals – Creating a Network for Better Outcomes by the Department of Health.**

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following items, which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local /Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed to come out of closed session.**

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

SE/038/2025: **BUSINESS CASE FOR MONITORING AND LINE RENTAL OF COUNCIL PUBLIC SPACE CCTV**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability, regarding Business Case for Monitoring and Line Rental of Council Public Space CCTV. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to approve the**

recommendations of the Business Cases as per section 2.2 of the Officer's Report.

FOR NOTING - ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

SE/039/2025: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN COMMITTEE MINUTES OF 30 JANUARY 2025 AND MEMBERS BULLETIN OF 27 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting In Committee Minutes of 30 January 2025 and ARC21 Joint Committee Members Monthly Bulletin of 27 February 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the documents.**

SE/040/2025: **MINUTES OF CLEANSING AND REFUSE TASK GROUP HELD 19 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Cleansing and Refuse Task Group of 19 February 2025 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the minutes.**

FOR NOTING

SE/041/2025: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 30 JANUARY 2025**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting Minutes of Meeting held 30 January 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the minutes.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.53pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025

Signed: **Councillor Cadogan Enright**
Deputy Chairperson

Signed: **Mrs Sinead Murphy**
Director of Sustainability & Environment

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

50

Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Monday 24 March 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor T Howie

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor C Enright
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor C King	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin	

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor D Taylor	

Non-Committee Members

In Attendance: Councillor J Truesdale Councillor H Young

Non-Committee Members in

Attendance via Teams:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor R Howell	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor J Tinnelly	

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Also in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs A Reavey, Capaxo Management Consulting

SPR/047/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Martin Hearty to the chamber.

SPR/048/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/049/2025:**NCCR OVERVIEW****Read:**

Presentation from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding NCCR Overview.

Mrs Ward in presenting, provided some background regarding the NCCR project, highlighting that it had been conceived as part of the 2011 Newry Master Plan. She advised that the Master Plan had considered a number of initiatives in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC), various business organisations and the then Newry and Mourne Council.

Mrs Ward gave an overview of the overall plan, highlighting the Hill Street Public Realm, development opportunities for Daisy Hill Hospital, the Monaghan Street Public Realm, the Albert Basin development, the Arts Centre and associated development, the city-wide greenway and the Southern Relief Road. She noted that Council had been successful in delivering some of these and continued to deliver on others in accordance with the Master Plan.

Mrs Ward reminded Members about the site selection process and stressed that there had been significant work carried out between 2018 and 2019 in relation to a site analysis for the Civic Hub. She reiterated that 33 sites had been considered, 16 had been long listed and the final decision was that Abbey Way had been the highest scoring site and avoided any additional spend as the land was already under Council ownership.

Mr Mallon then spoke on the project to date, advising that the planning process had been ongoing since 2018 with the pre-application notice, and that continuous engagement with a range of sectors as detailed within the presentation had helped guide the proposals to date. He utilised images of the previous proposals, highlighting the amendments that had been made following feedback from the engagement process.

Mr Mallon then outlined the Regional Innovation Hub that was proposed to be cited within the Civic Hub, the Theatre & Conference Centre that would attract visitors from all over the District and beyond, and Newry City Park that would reflect the historical maritime port and outlined how this aligned with a number of Council strategies.

Mr Mallon then introduced Ms Angela Reavey to the Committee.

Ms Reavey advised the Committee that her background was in economics and that she had been a practicing accountant for over 30 years, advising that the last 20 years had been spent extensively developing business cases for local and central government. She confirmed that she had worked on a number of Belfast City Region Deals with Derry and Strabane Council, and Causeway and Coast Council.

The Chairperson thanked officers for their presentation and invited questions.

Councillor Mathers stated that it was important to remain focused on the delivery of these developments for the benefit of the whole District, but that the detail needed to be scrutinised while the projects were ongoing to help deliver the message that Newry was open for business. He advised that Newry was strategically placed on the main travel corridor between Belfast and Dublin, and these developments would bring employment benefits to the District, along with the positive promotion of the Council area.

Councillor Finn voiced her concern that the NCCR Programme Board had not had sight of the Full Business Case (FBC) and stressed that while she wanted to see progress made on the

projects, she was concerned that Council's own governance procedures had not been followed.

Mrs Ward noted Councillor Finn's concerns, stating that the draft FBC had been tabled for approval to submit to the Department, and would be tabled at a subsequent NCCR Programme Board prior to the minutes being ratified at the next Full Council meeting scheduled for 7 April.

Councillor Enright noted that while his Party was supportive of the NCCR as a whole, they had reservations regarding the Civic Hub. He stated that the Newry Masterplan dated back to 2011, which existed prior to the merger of Newry and Mourne Council and Down District Council and questioned its relevance in 2025. He stated that Downpatrick, Ballynahinch and Newcastle Masterplans had been overhauled since the Councils had merged and stated that the Newry Masterplan should also be overhauled. He further stressed that a second headquarters was not needed in Newry but noted that adequate office space was.

Mrs Ward advised that while the NCCR programme of works reflected the 2011 Newry Masterplan, she stressed that it was important to note that Council had given thorough consideration to the Civic Hub and that it was a decision of the newly formed Council in 2014 and 2015 to have two chambers due to the size of the District. She also stressed the importance of correct information being disseminated, noting that the aforementioned Masterplans had not been overhauled as stated, but that projects had been reprioritised against a delivery action plan. She advised that while nothing had been removed, the action plan was being progressed with updates tabled at Economy, Regeneration and Tourism meetings regularly.

Councillor Hanlon, in response to Councillor Finn's statement regarding sight of the FBC documents, noted that the item had been tabled regularly at this Committee and all Councillors were able to view the documents and attend the meeting if they wished. She further welcomed that the item was to be tabled at a subsequent programme board meeting but expressed her concerns regarding Council not having followed their own governance procedures and requested clarity on the process.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed any investment into the District, noting that there were some good concepts proposed within the Civic Hub, but highlighted his concerns regarding parking. He referenced recent Sinn Féin motions regarding parking in Newry, questioned the benefit of the proposed shuttle bus and stressed the need for more clarity with regard to parking in the area. He further questioned the need for a second Council Chamber, stating that Downpatrick was the County capital, and that the Downpatrick chamber was more than adequate for the District's needs.

Councillor Byrne then noted his concern regarding governance procedures given the statement from Councillor Finn regarding the programme board meetings and proposed a recess to discuss these. This was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

The meeting did then recess – 6.35pm
The meeting did then resume – 6.56pm

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed that discussion on item 4 – NCCR Full Business Case be adjourned to a Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting to be held on Thursday 3rd April at 5pm.

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

SPR/050/2025: PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR WARRENPOINT WELLBEING HUB

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Procurement Strategy for Warrenpoint Wellbeing Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to proceed with the procurement strategy and change in design team fees as detailed in the Officer's Report.

SPR/051/2025: RESIDUAL WASTE CONTRACT

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Residual Waste Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve the extension of the Contract for the Treatment of Residual Waste with the current contractor from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.05pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

Signed: **Councillor Tierna Howie**
 Chairperson

Signed: **Josephine Kelly**
 Director of Corporate Services

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	7 April 2025
Subject:	Correspondence to Council
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	x	For noting only	
1.0			Purpose and Background
1.1			To provide an update on correspondence received for attention of Council.
2.0			Key issues
2.1			This paper refers to correspondence to be brought to the attention of Council. Items are referred to in 3.0 below.
3.0			Recommendations
			That Council considers and notes the following correspondence:
3.1			National Association of Councillors – Council’s 2025 Local Enterprise Champions Council received notification from the National Association of Councillors in relation to Council’s 2025 Local Enterprise Champions.
3.2			Correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council Council received correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council in relation to a Motion passed by the Council regarding Donald Trump’s White House.
3.3			Correspondence from Minister for Health Council received a reply from the Minister for Health in relation to NOM C.028.2025 - Department of Health Consultation on Hospital Reconfiguration Framework Daisy Hill Hospital.
3.4			Correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council Council received a response from Ards and North Down Borough Council in relation to NOM C.188.2024, Gender Based Violence Against Women.
3.5			Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes Council received a copy of the Minutes from a meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on 13 February 2025.

3.6	<p>Correspondence from HM Treasury</p> <p>Council received a response from HM Treasury in relation to NOM C.181.2024, Inheritance Tax.</p>
3.7	<p>Correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council</p> <p>Council received correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in relation to a Motion on Diversity and Inclusion.</p>
3.8	<p>Correspondence from DAERA</p> <p>Council received a response from DAERA in relation to NOM C.044.2025, Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support.</p>
3.9	<p>Correspondence from Minister of Health</p> <p>Council received a response from Health Minister in relation to NOM C.43.2025, Learning Disability Service Model.</p>
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Not applicable.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<p><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p>

	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Rationale:</i>	
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/> If no, please complete the following: The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs <input type="checkbox"/>	
7.0	Appendices	
8.0	Background Documents	
	None	



National Association of Councillors Northern Ireland Region

3rd March 2025

FAO: Marie Ward, Chief Executive

Dear Marie,

Who Will Be Your Council's 2025 Local Enterprise Champions?

The National Association of Councillors (N. Ireland), whose membership covers the 462 elected members of our 11 councils, is delighted to offer a unique opportunity for each local authority's members and officers to participate in 4 Learning and Development workshops on the crucial subject of planning and delivering sustainable, local enterprise.

NAC (NI) is keen to support its strategic aim of enabling councillors, supported by officers, to have a better understanding of how enterprise is fostered and works, what the local building blocks are, planning and investing in our future, sustainable, local economies, together with adding real value and an innovative approach to the emerging Local Economic Partnerships in each council area.

Following on from three NAC (NI) led interactive conferences on Local Enterprise training, entitled "Developing a New Economy," over the past 18 months, together with practical development of next steps with partner bodies including SOLACE, APSE, and Ulster University, NAC (NI) seeks your council's nominations to participate in the 4 afternoon workshops per below:

Friday 25 April 2025, Ulster Bank, Donegall Square East, Belfast (1200 – 1545),

Friday 30th May 2025, North West Regional College (tbc), Strand Rd, Derry / Londonderry (1200 – 1530),

Friday 20th June 2025, Craigavon Civic Centre, Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council (1200 – 1545),

Friday 5th September 2025, Mallusk Enterprise Park (tbc), Mallusk Park, Newtownabbey (1200 – 1545).

Importantly, your nominations are asked to participate in all four of the workshops, in order to complete the strategic learning and development aim of fostering a Council Wide network of informed Local Enterprise Champions in 2025, and beyond.

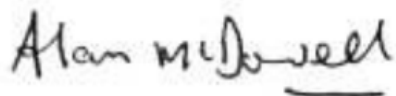
Each workshop has the same framework, allowing fully interactive debate following a networking lunch, and the creation of an outcomes report co-designed by participants and facilitators for the benefit of council and its enterprise partners. It's also proposed that ALL participants will be brought together for a VIP Recognition Event after the final workshop.

NAC (NI) is ensuring that all participants share, learn and develop their own enterprise insights, using the principle of co-design. As such, the workshops will be interactive, collaborative and outcomes driven via core, specialist facilitation rather than "top-down" presentations. To ensure the very best outcome for all proposed Local Enterprise Champions, we are encouraging three or four nominations from each of our 11 councils, one of which may at Council's discretion be a senior support officer.

We have designed the entire workshop series for £395 per participant (for all 4) and the attached Workshop Outline and Nominations Page provides finer detail.

We look forward to receiving your Council's Local Enterprise Champions nominations for the Class of 2025, through forwarding to relevant Committees, members and ultimately per Full Council.

Yours sincerely,



Alderman Alan McDowell
Chair
NAC (NI)



Councillor Joe Boyle
Secretary
NAC (NI)

Enc: Workshop Outline and Nominations Details

OUTLINE OF WORKSHOPS

A. WORKSHOP 1 (FRI 25th April, Belfast)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Overview of the Local Economy. Three hours, in person. Maximum 2 speakers, and a facilitator, with the emphasis on interactivity, oral / written input from the floor. Overview, Analysis, Emerging Trends. Emphasis on practical data and simple, strategic info that assists participants to “design out” local economy weaknesses and “design in” local economy strengths, enterprise challenge and action summary developed and sent, leading to Module Two.

1545: Close

B. WORKSHOP 2 (Fri 30th May, Derry/Londonderry)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Strategies, Funding, Key Partners. Two and a half hours, in person. Maximum 2 speakers, and a facilitator with interactivity emphasis, breakout sessions to enable participants to provide & take away core info – including lateral thinking such as crowd funding, participatory budgeting for entrepreneurs, working outside of but in concert with the “big” strategies and grants, building place and people led local investment architecture, bringing it back to the full group, enterprise challenge and action summary developed and sent, leading to Module Three.

1515: Close

C. WORKSHOP 3 (Fri 20th June, Craigavon)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Roles & Responsibilities of Councillors. Three hours, in person. Maximum 2 speakers, potentially including a former councillor and a facilitator, again with interactivity emphasis, breakout sessions to enable participants to build on the core info in terms of legislation, being a champion, scrutiny, effective, inclusive decision taking (21st Century Councillor building blocks tailored to local enterprise, community wealth building, locality-based investment), Local Economic Partnerships, short presentations by participant sub groups on how they would fulfil the roles and responsibilities, enterprise challenge and action summary developed and sent, leading to Module Four.

1530: Close

D. WORKSHOP 4 (Friday 5th September, Mallusk)

1200: Registration, Networking, Lunch

1245: Enterprise Site Visit and Champions Forward Plan. Three hours, in person. Participants are shown considered by enterprise peers' best practice by local enterprise partners and host council members / officials. Participants see and discuss "someone else's enterprising back yard." This will focus on successful start-ups, local enterprise planning and performance, council led initiative breaking the mould, a partner agency's high impact social value work, with reflections and summing up. Action summary and Forward Plan Outcomes Report drafted for each newly affirmed "LOCAL ENTERPRISE CHAMPION" to finalise and submit back.

1545: Close

A VIP Recognition Event for participants completing the four workshops is planned for 12th September, details to follow.

Who Will Be Your Council's 2025 Enterprise Champions?

How to Nominate:

Councils are cordially invited to nominate elected members (and senior / support officers, if desired) to attend the full Workshop series, no later than Thursday, 10th April 2025, by e-mailing Councillor Hazel Legge –

office@nac-ni.org

THANK YOU.



Derry City & Strabane
District Council
Comhairle
Chathair Dhoire &
Cheantar an tSratha Báin
Derry Cittie & Strabane
Districk Council

Our Ref: SM/C106/25

14 March 2025

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry Mourne & Down Council

By Email: Marie.Ward@nmandd.org

Dear Chief Executive

At a Meeting of Derry City and Strabane District Council held on 26 February 2025, the following Motion was passed:

that this Council calls on Irish Politicians, North and South, to back the Palestine solidarity movement campaign to boycott Donald Trump's White House on Saint Patrick's Day.

Council notes that since taking office, Trump welcomed the war criminal Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House, resumed delivery of 2,000 pound bombs to Israel, reversed sanctions against violent illegal settlers, and announced the US will take over all of Gaza.

Council agrees Trump's stated intention of occupying and ethnically cleansing the population of Gaza would constitute one of the most egregious war crimes of this century.

Council notes Trump's cabinet of far-right billionaires are opposed to trade unions, while more than 40 million Americans live in poverty and 10 million are denied healthcare.

Council stands in solidarity with workers, immigrants, women, LGBTQ people and communities feeling the brunt of ramped-up racism, discrimination and capitalism.

Derry

C/o Council Offices
98 Strand Road
Derry
BT48 7NN

Strabane

C/o Council Offices
47 Derry Road
Strabane
BT82 8DY

John Kelpie MEng., CEng., MStructE., MIEI

Chief Executive
Derry City and Strabane District Council

+44 (0) 2871 253 253
chiefexecutive@derrystrabane.com
www.derrystrabane.com

f Derry City & Strabane District Council
@dcsdcouncil

Council reaffirms its commitment to tackling gender-based violence by having no truck with a Trump White House steeped in misogyny, embracing far-right organisations promoting attacks on women's equality and complicit with the murder of tens of thousands of women and girls in Gaza.

Derry City and Strabane District Council supports BDS and will write to the Stormont Executive, the Dáil government and all Councils across Ireland calling on them to support this motion not to breach BDS by accepting invitations to Trump's White House.

I would appreciate your consideration in this important matter and would be grateful for a response at your earliest opportunity.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Kelpie', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

John Kelpie
Chief Executive

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



64

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org
democratic.services@nmandd.org

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: COR-0262-2025

Date: 4 March 2025

Dear Marie

Thank you for your correspondence of 17 February 2025 regarding the Departments ongoing consultation 'Hospitals – Creating a Network for Better Outcomes'.

To assist the public in providing considered responses to the consultation, the Department organised a series of public engagement sessions across Northern Ireland, both in-person and online. The in-person events were arranged in collaboration with each of the Health and Social Care Trusts with one event held in a central location within each Trust area.

As the consultation focused on how our hospitals can better function as a collaborative network; the timing and locations of each event were selected to try and maximise public participation within the consultation timeframe, which ran from 2 October 2024 to 28 February 2025. Indeed, the deadline for response was extended in order to ensure that one event could take place in each Trust with adequate time following the last event to allow people to respond. The purpose of the in-person events was to give people the opportunity to ask questions and support their written responses to the consultation questionnaire. For those unable to travel to an in-person meeting, and to ensure equitable access and opportunity for all, two online engagement events were organised which were open to all, irrespective of their Trust area.

The consultation document proposed that Daisy Hill Hospital be one of three Northern Ireland hospitals categorised as 'General Hospitals'. The other two are South-West Acute Hospital (SWAH) in Enniskillen and Causeway Hospital in Coleraine. Rather than

representing any sort of downgrade, this designation reflects the size, location and capacity of the hospitals, as well as the catchment areas in the local populations they serve and the hospital services they provide. The consultation document was crystal clear that the General Hospitals (SWAH, Causeway and Daisy Hill) will continue to provide acute hospital services. Any claim that they would not continue to operate as acute hospitals is entirely groundless.

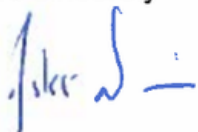
The consultation document made clear that each of the general hospitals will continue "delivering a range of acute and rehabilitation services" (Section 6, page 32). It stated that they will have emergency departments that are open 24/7, with "acute and diagnostic services" on site including "acute and general medicine" (page 32). Other core services at the general hospitals would include radiology, laboratory services, anaesthetic cover and acute elective care (page 32). It is also clear we intend to carry out extensive engagement and consultation in advance of any changes including adherence to the extant guidance (Annex B) and indeed the principles set out in the document (page 17). DoH can categorically confirm that there are no plans to downgrade Daisy Hill Hospital or remove its acute hospital status as part of this consultation. A core objective of the Department is to ensure Daisy Hill Hospital and other hospitals have a stronger and better future as part of a Northern Ireland network of care. This objective is spelt out in the Department of Health's published consultation paper "Hospitals – Creating a Network for Better Outcomes" (page 30-31). This document made clear that no existing acute hospital in Northern Ireland will close and further states: "The reality is that we will continue to need every square inch of current Acute Hospital capacity." (page 9)

This consultation was not about specific service changes, instead it set out a direction of travel for the future of our acute hospitals. It reflected any previous decisions and permanent changes by Southern Health and Social Care Trust, for example, to Emergency General Surgery at Daisy Hill Hospital.

In terms of cross-border collaboration, I very much recognise the benefits of working jointly with the Republic of Ireland on areas of health and social care where there are mutual benefits to be gained. My Department continues to explore opportunities for cross border working and are actively engaging with key relevant stakeholders.

I hope you find this information useful and thank NMDDC for taking the time to provide a response to the consultation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health

6 March 2025

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry Mourne and Down District Council
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

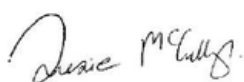
Dear Marie,

Further to your letter dated 16th December 2024 regarding your Councils' notice of motion in December about gender-based violence against women, I can advise that this was reported to Ards and North Down Borough Council's Community and Wellbeing Committee in February 2025. The committee recommended that the Council supports the actions proposed.

However, it was noted by the committee that as legislation referred to in the letter from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council is owned by the Department of Finance, and not the Department of Justice, that the wording in any letter from Ards and North Down Borough Council be amended to reflect that.

The recommendation to support the request was ratified by the Council at its meeting on 26th February 2025 and a letter issued to the Department of Finance.

Yours sincerely



Susie McCullough
Chief Executive



Minutes of the 514th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 13th February 2025 at 10.30 in the Mid Ulster Council offices, Magherafelt

Present:

- | | |
|----------------------------|--|
| Cllr Mark Cooper | Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council |
| Cllr Aaron Skinner | Mid & East Antrim Borough Council |
| Cllr Mary O'Dowd | Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council |
| Cllr Deirdre Varsani | Mid Ulster Borough Council |
| Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald | Fermanagh & Omagh District Council |

Virtual:

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| Ald Amanda Grehan | Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council |
| Cllr Sean McGlinchey | Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council |
| Ald Stephen McIlveen | Ards & North Down Borough Council |

In Attendance:

- | | |
|------------------|----------------------------|
| David Polley | Department for Communities |
| Caira Lynch | Department for Communities |
| Sorcha Hassay | Department for Communities |
| Kelly Cameron | Secretary, Housing Council |
| Maria McLaughlin | Executive Assistant, NIHE |

Apologies:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--|
| Alderman Keith Kerrigan | Derry City & Strabane District Council |
|-------------------------|--|

1.	Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.	
2.	Declarations of Interest There were no declarations.	

3.	<p>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 9th December 2024</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by Cllr Mary O'Dowd and seconded by Cllr Deirdre Varsani.</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p>	
4.	<p>Matters Arising from the Minutes</p> <p>4.1 Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</p> <p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session, the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons cannot attend the March meeting due to other commitments. An invitation has been extended to him to join the May meeting.</p> <p>4.2 Housing Executive Board Membership</p> <p>The Chair congratulated the two Housing Council Members to the Housing Executive Board – Stephen McIlveen & Deirdre Varsani.</p> <p>It was noted that, although Aoife Finnegan was also appointed, she has now been elected as an Assembly Member and, therefore, has formally resigned as a member of the Housing Council and Housing Executive Board.</p> <p>Members recorded their congratulations to Cllr Aoife Finnegan and wished her well in her endeavours.</p> <p>4.3 Non attendance at meetings</p> <p>In accordance with Housing Council Standing Orders, several letters have been issued to Belfast City Council in relation to their representative's non-attendance at meetings. The Secretary received a call from Belfast City Council giving assurance that Paul McCusker would be in attendance at today's meeting</p> <p>Unfortunately, Cllr McCusker didn't attend the meeting. Members reiterated their disappointment, and it was agreed to contact Belfast City Council requesting them to take action.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	Secretary
5.	<p>Department for Communities – Housing Top Issues</p> <p>David Polley & Sorchá Hassay gave an update on the Department's Housing Top Issues:-</p> <p>5.1 Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) – to provide an additional 400 social homes by March 2025 of which 10% will be wheelchair accessible;</p>	

5.2	Complete preparations and present the Minister with advice on viable options to tackle the significant investment challenge and address the maintenance backlog faced by the Housing Executive;	
5.3	To develop way forward policy options and legislative proposals in response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy;	
5.4	To review the Decent Homes Standard to ensure that all those living in the social rented sector have access to a fit and decent home suitable for modern living;	
5.5	To review Housing Executive Administered Private Sector Grants, including the Disabled Facilities Grant, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Housing Executive;	
5.6	Deliver 2758 affordable warmth measures to 1428 homes by 31 March 2025 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme;	
5.7	To progress all appropriate tenancy fraud provisions within the Financial Provisions Bill;	
5.8	Develop proposals and draft legislation on Injunctions against Anti-Social Behaviour and Grounds for Possession;	
5.9	Deliver 846 new shared ownership homes by March 2025 (<i>via £22 million in Financial Transactions Capital funding</i>);	
5.10	Develop new affordable housing options (Intermediate Rent);	
5.11	To work with the Housing Executive and across Government to implement the Homelessness Strategy (PFG target) to tackle homelessness;	
5.12	To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022;	
5.13	Deliver a Housing Supply Strategy and Action Plan(s) to provide a framework for the delivery of the homes we need over the next 15 years.	
5.14	<p>Members Questions/Comments</p> <p>Members were keen for the Department to give an overview of the Intermediate Rents, at a future meeting, even though they are aware that the scheme will not be implemented for a while.</p> <p>Referring to the Decent Homes Standards, the Department agreed to provide a presentation at a future Housing Council meeting.</p> <p>Councillor Varsani reiterated her concern of newbuild developments and the challenges of water connections stalling people moving into these schemes.</p>	<p>D Polley</p> <p>S Hassay</p>

It was agreed to invite, to a future meeting, representatives from the Department for Communities, Department of Infrastructure and the Water Service.

In response to a query from Councillor Fitzgerald on tenancy fraud, Ciara Lynch explained that the Department for Communities' (DfC) is proposing provisions within DoF's Financial Provisions Bill to enable social landlords to work better together on the investigation of tenancy fraud.

The proposals are to provide the Housing Executive with the power to undertake tenancy fraud investigations on behalf of the Registered Housing Association (RHA) sector.

It is proposed that the Housing Executive should, if requested by a Registered Housing Association, be empowered to carry out tenancy fraud investigations in respect of that Association's properties. The provision is also required to allow the Housing Executive to charge Housing Associations for investigation and related services (e.g. in the event of a fraud case going to court).

A data sharing provision is also proposed to cover the two-way exchange of information between Registered Housing Associations and the Housing Executive for the purpose of investigating tenancy fraud. This provision would facilitate the collection of more evidence to determine if tenancy fraud was being committed. It may also expediate the progression of a case.

In relation to Affordable Warmth Scheme, it was requested that a breakdown, by Council area, is provided detailing the number and location of homes in the scheme.

Secretary

6. PRESENTATION ON THE REMOVAL OF INTIMIDATION POINTS

Members received in their packs, for their information:-

- (1) Department for Communities and Housing Executive press releases following the Minister's Statement on Intimidation Points – Noted;
- (2) Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIHFA) on Intimidation Points – Noted;
- (3) Impact of Intimidation on the work of Registered Housing Associations (NI) and the allocation of housing – Noted.

Ciara Lynch, DfC, gave a presentation on the removal of intimidation points via the Fundamental Review of Allocations (FRA) - Intimidation points, in the form of Rule 23 of the Selection Scheme, will be removed. The allocation of 200 points will cease.

	<p>Members welcomed the recent announcement on removal of the intimidation points, and, in particular, the focus on victims of domestic violence and coercive behaviour.</p> <p>In response to the timescale for the removal of the intimidation points, it was noted that it is hoped that the Bill will be introduced by the end of the year.</p> <p>Several Members welcomed the Minister's announcement in relation to the victims of domestic violence and those at risk of violence, are prioritised appropriately.</p> <p>Members requested a breakdown by Council area on how many are currently on the waiting list with intimidation points and also how many allocations were made in the last two years with intimidation points.</p> <p>Ciara Lynch confirmed that, as at November 2024, with a waiting list of 47,000 there were 150 people awarded intimidation points. It was noted that intimidation points have significantly reduced over the past 10 years, in 2014 from 380 to 226 in 2024. Whereas domestic abuse has shown an increase in 2014 from 721 to 1,046 in 2024.</p> <p>Councillor O'Dowd express her concern that there was no shelter for victims of domestic violence in her area. The Secretary undertook to provide a contact within the Housing Executive to discuss further.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Ciara Lynch for a very informative presentation.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
7.	Any Other Business	
7.1	<p>Press Release Housing Executive Rent Increase</p> <p>Members noted the Press Release.</p>	
7.2	<p>Reply from DfC on the Commencement of Private Tenancy Act - Rent Increase frequency and 3 month notice</p> <p>Paper noted.</p>	
7.3	<p>Housing Council update queries following the Homeless Presentation in December</p> <p>Responses were noted.</p>	
7.4	<p>Response letter from HM Treasury re Budget</p> <p>Letter was noted.</p>	

7.5	<p>Response letter re FRA and NIHE Fundamental Review of Allocations Update</p> <p>Response letter was noted.</p>	
7.6	<p>All Ireland Awards Ceremony – Friday, 21st February in the Titanic</p> <p>The Housing Council has sponsored an award at the All Ireland Awards. It was noted that the Chair, the Vice Chair and Councillors O'Dowd and Varsani would represent the Housing Council at the ceremony.</p>	
7.7	<p>Rural Housing Awards – Tuesday 25th March 2025</p> <p>Prior to the meeting, Members had received details of the Rural Community Network Awards which were being held in the Seamus Heaney Centre, Bellaghy on 25th March 2025. The Housing Council is sponsoring an award at the event..</p> <p>It was noted that the Chair and Cllr O'Dowd would attend this event. It was agreed that Cllr O'Dowd should present the award on the night on behalf of the Housing Council.</p>	M O'Dowd
7.8	<p>Any other Member who wished to attend should contact the Secretary.</p> <p>Housing Community Summit – 8th 9th September in Liverpool</p> <p>As discussed in the 'In Committee', details of the Housing Community Summit had been circulated to Members and the Chair encouraged Members to attend. He added that the Summit is community led and focused through UK Councils. The Chair advised that he has written to the Housing Executive's Chief Executive regarding their presence at the Summit this year as it is a platform to showcase the work that takes place in Northern Ireland especially in relation to Supporting People and Community Cohesion.</p> <p>If any Member wished to attend, they should contact the Secretary before the end of June 2025.</p>	All
7.9	<p>Clamping Pods being used for temporary accommodation</p> <p>The Chair asked for confirmation if clamping pods are being used for temporary accommodation.</p> <p>He reiterated the Finland model addressing homelessness should be looked at in more detail. Members supported looking at different ways and options to tackle temporary accommodation etc.</p>	Secretary
8.	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 13th March 2025 at 10 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast.</p>	

514th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council

	It was noted that the Chair, Mark Cooper is on holiday and in his absence the Vice Chair, Aaron Skinner will chair the meeting.	
--	---	--

Meeting ended 12.30 pm.

POA2025/00012

76



HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry
BT35 8DJ

24 March 2025
Your ref: C/181/2024

Dear Marie

Thank you for your letter of 16 December to the Prime Minister about inheritance tax. Your letter has been passed to HM Treasury and I am replying as Minister responsible for the UK tax system. I am sorry for the delayed response.

At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government took a number of difficult but necessary decisions on tax, welfare, and spending to restore economic stability, fix the public finances, and support public services. These were tough decisions given the situation we inherited from the previous administration, but the Government has done so in a way that makes the tax system fairer and more sustainable.

I understand that people feel strongly about inheritance tax, and that some people worry they may be affected by the decision to reform agricultural property relief from April 2026. It is important to understand why this decision was taken, and what it means in practice. This decision was not taken lightly and, despite a tough fiscal context, the Government will maintain very significant levels of relief from inheritance tax beyond what is available to others.

In 2021/22, the most recent year for which data is available, the median value of assets qualifying for agricultural property relief was £486,000 and three-quarters of estates claimed for agricultural property below £1 million. The data also shows that a very small number of claimants each year claim a very significant amount of relief - 40 per cent of the total Exchequer cost of the relief went to the top seven per cent of claims. It is not fair to maintain such significant relief for a very small number of claimants, when this money could better be used to fund our public services. This data is available at

www.gov.uk/government/publications/agricultural-property-relief-and-business-property-relief-reforms

The general inheritance tax rules remain unchanged. If an individual's estate goes to their surviving spouse or civil partner, it is completely exempt from inheritance tax. When an estate goes to anyone else, there is a £325,000 nil-rate band, which

increases to £500,000 where a residence is left on death to a direct descendant, such as a child. Any unused nil-rate bands are transferred to a surviving spouse or civil partner, which means the qualifying estate of a surviving spouse or civil partner can pass on up to £1 million to a direct descendant without any inheritance tax liability when they pass away.

Agricultural property relief and business property relief are in addition to these general allowances. The reforms announced at Autumn Budget 2024, which apply from 6 April 2026, mean the first £1 million of combined agricultural and business assets will not result in any inheritance tax. Above the £1 million allowance, individuals will access 50 per cent relief from inheritance tax and will pay inheritance tax at a reduced effective rate up to 20 per cent, rather than the standard 40 per cent. These tax reliefs can be combined with the general allowances mentioned above, and this means a couple could pass on up to £3 million tax-free between them.

Furthermore, any gifts of assets made more than seven years before death are fully excluded from inheritance tax. Taper relief can also apply in certain circumstances, which reduces the tax payable on gifts made within 7 years of death. Where inheritance tax is due, those liable for a charge can in most circumstances pay any liability on the relevant assets over 10 annual instalments, interest-free.

The new system remains significantly more generous than it has been in the past: the rate of relief prior to 1992 was a maximum of 50 per cent on all agricultural and business assets, including the first £1 million. Alongside these tax reliefs, the Government has also confirmed that the existing scope of agricultural property relief will be extended from 6 April 2025 to land managed under certain environmental agreements.

The reforms are expected to result in up to around 520 estates claiming agricultural property relief in 2026/27 paying more inheritance tax. This means almost three-quarters of estates claiming agricultural property relief, including those that also claim for business property relief, would not pay any more tax as a result of the changes in 2026/27, based on the latest available data.

I know there has been some speculation about the number of farms expected to be affected by the reforms. Part of the confusion has arisen because there is a difference between the total value of a farm and the amount being passed on at death. A farm can be jointly owned by multiple people or family members, meaning each individual's claim for tax relief can relate to less than the total value of the whole farm. For example, if a couple jointly own a farm then, at the point they pass away, each of them can benefit from the full allowances and agricultural property relief (and/or business property relief) on their half of the assets. More detail on the Government's estimates are available in a letter from the Chancellor of the Exchequer to the Chair of the Treasury Select Committee in November 2024, which is available at committees.parliament.uk/publications/45691/documents/226235/default/

The Government believes this approach gets the balance right between protecting farms and fixing the public finances in a fair way. More information about the reforms is available at www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-the-changes-to-agricultural-property-relief

Some people have suggested the reforms will have an impact on food security. The UK has robust domestic production, and these reforms will only affect a small number of estates. The small number of landowners affected will not necessarily need to sell the land and, if they choose to, then it does not necessarily mean the land would stop

being used for food production. At Autumn Budget 2024, the Government announced the largest ever investment in sustainable food production in England.

These reforms should also be seen in the broader context of the significant existing support for the farming industry in the wider tax system, which the Government is maintaining. The existing rules already provide considerable support for the agricultural sector beyond the general support for businesses. This includes the exemption from business rates for agricultural land and buildings, the ongoing entitlement for vehicles and machinery used in agriculture to use rebated diesel and biofuels, and the exemption from the plastic packaging tax for the plastic film used by farmers to produce silage bales. Furthermore, farmers are able to claim to add together their profits from farming for two years or five years and be taxable on the average of those profits.

The Government's commitment to farmers and the vital role they play in feeding our nation remains steadfast. There is also an urgent need to repair the public finances which is why we are implementing these reforms.

I hope this is a helpful explanation. Thank you for taking the time to make me aware of your concerns.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'J. Murray', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

JAMES MURRAY MP
EXCHEQUER SECRETARY TO THE TREASURY

[NAME OF DRAFTING OFFICIAL]

[Full telephone number]

[Full email address]

[MEMBER OF THE SCS APPROVING THE DRAFT]

[Full telephone number]

[Full email address]

Provide below any extra information the minister and private office need to know, for example, related policy development or causes of delays in responding.

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

81

Our Ref: Council/March 2025/20.4

Date: 24 March 2025

Email: fiona.dillon@fermanaghomagh.com

Ms Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Monaghan Row
NEWRY
BT35 8DL

Dear Ms Ward,

At the March Council meeting, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council adopted the following motion, and asked that it be forwarded to all Northern Ireland Councils.

As we are now living in a growingly diverse community - and the richness in which that brings to our workplaces, homes and communities - FODC believes that a diverse workplace is important for embedding anti-racism. As such, the Fermanagh and Omagh Council should show leadership by having a diverse and welcoming workforce.

We therefore propose that FODC commits to;

- ***conducting an annual review of its workforce demographics***
- ***developing strategies to increase diversity across all levels of its employment***
- ***comprehensively train all employees on diversity and inclusion, including areas such as unconscious bias and inclusive communication.***
- ***apply outreach positive action to encourage candidates, from diverse backgrounds, for any available posts.***

The Council looks forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive

**From the Office of the
Minister of Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs**



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Department of

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

www.daera-ni.gov.uk

Marie Ward
Newry and Mourne District Council
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick
BT30 6GQ
Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org

DAERA Private Office
First Floor, Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Sydenham Intake
Belfast, BT3 9ED
Telephone: 028 9052 4140
Email: private.office@daera-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: COR-0221-2025
Date: 01 April 2025

Dear Marie

NOTICE OF MOTION – FISHING INDUSTRY VISA AND ENHANCEMENT SUPPORT

Thank you for your letter of 10 March 2025 where you have outlined the motion agreed at a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. Firstly, I am writing to address the concerns you have raised regarding the impact of UK Immigration Policy changes on Northern Ireland's fishing industry. I am aware that these changes have significantly affected the industry's ability to secure appropriate labour, causing serious operational and financial challenges at both business and sector levels. Stakeholders have continuously communicated these concerns, and I share their apprehensions.

It remains vital that labour solutions can be found for NI sectors currently reliant on migrant labour, until such time that automation is more advanced and accessible. A transition period is needed to scale these plans up to create a genuine impact and provide the industry with some level of stability to inform longer term planning.

I wrote to the Defra Secretary of State in October, setting out the issues that are being faced by the fishing industry and the wider agri-food sector, and suggested modest changes to UK immigration policy to provide a resolution to these issues. The Defra Secretary of State rejected my recommendations and, with regards to the fishing sector, Minister Reed indicated that Defra would work with the seafood industry to understand concerns about labour shortages and ways to increase the attractiveness of seafood jobs to UK workers.

At a meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment Food and Rural Affairs on 18 November 2024, I reiterated to Minister Daniel Zeichner MP the labour shortage pressures that are faced by the fisheries and mushroom sectors.

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE®
We invest in people Standard

On 13 February 2025, I met with representatives from the fishing industry who have provided a comprehensive paper outlining their key asks. This document will be instrumental in developing an Executive paper, and industry representatives have consented to its use for this purpose.

The issue of access to labour is not confined to the agri-food sector but is a challenge across the entire economy. Consequently, it has been agreed that DAERA officials will collaborate with the Department for Economy officials to develop a cohesive immigration policy position. This position will be subject to agreement by the Executive before being submitted to the Home Secretary for consideration.

Furthermore, DAERA officials met with the Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation (NIFF) on 5 March 2025 to help in the development of this paper. The Prime Minister has recently announced that the UK Government plans to introduce an Immigration White Paper imminently, which will outline measures to reduce immigration. We are eagerly awaiting the details of this White Paper and will thoroughly examine its impact on Northern Ireland's fishing industry upon its release.

On the harbour development element within the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme, on my visits to Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie, I recognised the need for further investment in ports, despite the extremely challenging budget position.

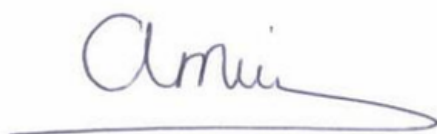
Unfortunately, the budget allocated to my department for this financial year was significantly less than the bids, and priority had to be given to meeting statutory obligations. Consequently, there was, unfortunately, no additional budget to take forward new work such as the harbour development programme, where, due to recent inflationary pressures, the projected cost of delivery has increased from £98 million to £143 million.

I have asked my officials to consider alternative options that provide investment on a scale that is affordable and enables the harbours to be modernised. That would include installing the infrastructure that will be needed to support the decarbonisation of the fishing sector and ensure that harbours are resilient to the impacts of climate change.

On a number of occasions, industry stakeholders have advised that the key objective of the fishing industry currently was not expansion but the transition to a more modern, economically and environmentally resilient fleet supported by modern harbour infrastructure to assist delivering net zero and address the current issue relating to crewing and labour shortages and costs."

I can assure you that my officials will continue to work closely with fishing industry representatives on these critical issues.

Yours sincerely



ANDREW MUIR MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Marie Ward
 Chief Executive
 Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org
democratic.services@nmandd.org.

Castle Buildings
 Stormont Estate
 BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
 Tel: 028 9052 2556
 Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: COR-0465-2025

Date: 1 April 2025

Dear Marie

Thank you for your correspondence of 10 March 2025 regarding the motion passed by the Newry, Mourne, and Down District Council on 3 March 2025 concerning the publication and implementation of the Learning Disability Service Model.

Since assuming the role of Health Minister, I have actively engaged with individuals with learning disabilities and their families. While significant progress has been made, much remains to be done to ensure that appropriate services and support are in place to achieve the best possible outcomes for individuals with learning disabilities in Northern Ireland.

I acknowledge the existing variations in services, pathways, and criteria across Trusts. However, I would also like to highlight that many adults with learning disabilities receive excellent support from dedicated Health & Social Care (HSC) professionals. This is facilitated by substantial annual funding from the Department, which allocated £500 million to adult learning disability services in 2024.

Despite these investments, challenges persist across the HSC system, including healthcare access, provision of day services and short breaks, housing, acute assessment and treatment, increasing complexity in childhood disabilities, and a growing population of children with Special Educational Needs – these children will inevitably transition into adult services.

The Learning Disability Service Model (LDSM) aims to establish a regionally standardised service for adults, enhancing early-stage community-based support. In March 2023, the

Department established a Task & Finish Group, supported by sub-groups, to develop and finalise the LDSM. The following key activities were undertaken between 2023 and 2024:

- A thematic review of published research and clinical guidelines to identify best practices across the UK and ROI.
- A comprehensive analysis of HSC data to assess population needs and service capacity.
- A stakeholder engagement review consolidating feedback from individuals with learning disabilities, families, carers, professionals, and service providers.
- A financial review to evaluate current funding structures and identify areas for reprioritisation.
- A study commissioned by the HSC Leadership Centre on individuals with co-occurring learning disabilities and autism, completed in October 2024.

These efforts culminated in the development of a draft Learning Disability Service Model focused on regional consistency and early community intervention. The model outlines a vision for improved transitions, health and well-being, meaningful lives, citizenship, family and carer support, housing, and mental health services.

A Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP) has been developed to translate the model into actionable steps, outlining measurable outcomes. Following public consultation, a final SDP will be fully costed to support future funding bids.

In November and December 2024, the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) shared a draft options paper with Mental Health/Learning Disability Trust Directors to facilitate agreement on a regional inpatient care model. The Department convened Trusts to finalise the inpatient model at a workshop in March 2025.

I recognise concerns that progress has not moved fast enough. However, I want to emphasise that significant work has been undertaken, despite the pressures of responding to urgent demands in learning disability and autism services. The Department has remained committed to moving this forward at pace while ensuring a well-informed, evidence-based approach. The engagement, research, and financial reviews completed demonstrate the urgency with which this has been addressed.

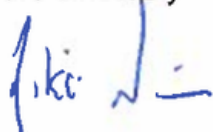
Health will continue to engage across government and agencies to ensure this work is not progressed in isolation and that every opportunity is taken to align with broader strategic initiatives.

The original target date for consultation has been adjusted due to the high volume of work on learning disability and autism services for both children and adults, as well as staff redeployment to address urgent needs in children's disability services.

My officials have confirmed that all necessary preparatory work has been completed to establish a strong evidence base, strategic direction, and implementation approach. Additional resources have been engaged from the HSC Leadership Centre to expedite the consultation process.

The final phase involves consolidating progress into a comprehensive document for public consultation, planned for release in the coming months, subject to my approval. Given the substantial changes proposed in service delivery, public consultation is essential to ensure transparency and stakeholder engagement.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	7 April 2025
Subject:	Request from Councillors to attend conferences
Reporting Officer:	Marie Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Sarah Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	<input type="checkbox"/>	For noting only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------------	--------------------------	------------------------	-------------------------------------

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	Retrospective approval is being sought for members outlined below to attend conferences.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	Councillor Campbell to attend Architecture 2025: Reuse and Revitalise conference on Friday 4 th April at a cost of £168+VAT.
2.2	Councillor Enright to attend NI Environment Forum 2025 conference on Tuesday 8 th April at a cost of £245+VAT.
2.3	Party Representatives have recommended approval for the above Councillors to attend conferences with retrospective approval being sought at the Council meeting.
2.4	Councillors Campbell and Enright to complete conference attendance form to feedback their learning at said conferences.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Members to agree retrospective approval for attendances at conferences as outlined in 2.0 of the report, following Party Representatives recommendation of approval.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Conference costs as outlined above.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i>

	It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following:	
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened	<input type="checkbox"/>
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation	<input type="checkbox"/>
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves	
	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<i>Rationale:</i>	
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following:	
	Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	<input type="checkbox"/>
7.0	Appendices	
	Conference Attendance Form	
8.0	Background Documents	
	N/A	

TITLE OF CONFERENCE	
DATE	
COST	

SHORT RECAP OF CONFERENCE: Themes, debates, business transacted

BENEFITS TO COUNCIL OF ATTENDING:

ANY ISSUES ENCOUNTERED:

WOULD YOU RECOMMEND ATTENDANCE AT FUTURE EVENTS:

Signed: _____

Date: _____