



August 7th, 2023

**Notice Of Meeting**

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 7th August 2023** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre & MS Teams.**

# Agenda

## 1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

M Ward

J Kelly

## 2.0 Declarations of Interest

## 3.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023

*For Approval*

[Action Sheet Council Meeting 03.07.2023.pdf](#)

Page 1

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### *Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing*

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## 4.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023

*For Approval*

[Council Minutes 03.07.2023.pdf](#)

Page 9

## 5.0 Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023

*For Approval*

[Special Council Minutes - 03-07-2023.pdf](#)

Page 28

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### *Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption*

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## 6.0 Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 4 July 2023

*For Approval*

[Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting 4 July 2023.pdf](#)

Page 33

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(i) **Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23**

*For Information*

Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23 - For Noting.

[Audit Committee Annual Report.pdf](#)

Page 41

## 7.0 Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 24 July 2023

## 8.0 Planning Section

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### Correspondence

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## 9.0 Email Response from NIO re: Notice of Motion C/075/2023 - Reduction in Minimum Voting Age

*For Information*

Copy correspondence attached.

Email from NIO dated 20th July stating: "Thank you for your letter dated 7 July 2023. As per our letter to you dated 21 April 2023 (attached for ease of reference), the UK Government position remains the same."

📄 *C.075.2023 Response email from NIO Reduction in Minimum Voting Age July 2023.pdf* Page 53

📄 *C.075.2023 Response from Council to Sec of State July 2023.pdf* Page 54

📄 *C.075.2023 Response from NIO Voting Age Reduction June 2023.pdf* Page 55

📄 *C.075.2023 Response to Sec of State June 2023.pdf* Page 56

📄 *C.075.2023 Response in April from NIO re Reduction in minimum voting age.pdf* Page 58

📄 *C.075.2023 Letter to Sec of State March 2023.pdf* Page 59

(i) Response from Scottish Government arising from Notice of Motion C/075/2023 - Reduction in Minimum Voting Age

📄 *Response from Scottish Government NOM C.075.2023.pdf* Page 60

## 10.0 Response from Permanent Secretary re: Notice of Motion C/084/2023 - Fixed Bridge Design for Newry Southern Relief Road

*For Information*

Copy correspondence attached.

📄 *C.084.2023-Emergency Notice of Motion - Fixed Bridge Design for Newry Southern Relief Road - Perm Sec Response.pdf* Page 62

## **11.0 Response from Department of Education re: Notice of Motion C/132/2023 - School Sports Programme**

### *Instructions*

Copy correspondence attached.

 **C.132.2023 - FR - SCORR 0403-2023 - Notice of Motion - School Sports Programme.pdf**

**Page 64**

## **12.0 Response from Ulster University re: Notice of Motion C/136/2023 - University Graduations**

### *For Information*

Copy correspondence attached.

 **C.136.2023 - Response from Ulster University.pdf**

**Page 66**

## **13.0 Responses re: Notice of Motion C/138/2023 - Conversion Therapy**

Copy correspondences received from Department of Justice, Department for Communities and Department of Health attached.

 **C.138.2023 - Ltr to Marie Ward - Notice of Motion - Conversion Therapy.pdf**

**Page 67**

 **C.138.2023 PSC 0537.23 Letter to Marie Ward CEO.pdf**

**Page 68**

 **C.138.2023-SCORR-0835-2023 - Conversion Therapy.pdf**

**Page 69**

## **14.0 Response from TEO Permanent Secretary re: Notice of Motion C/139/2023 - Glebe House, Kilclief**

Copy correspondence attached.

 **C.139.2023 - Glebe House-Harmony Community Trust - Letter to Ms Marie Ward from TEO Permanent Secretary.pdf**

**Page 70**

## **15.0 Response from Department for Infrastructure re: Notice of Motion C/135/2023 - Electronic Copies of Valid Insurance**

Copy correspondence attached.

 **C.135.2023 - Electronic Copies of Valid Insurance.pdf**

**Page 72**

## 16.0 Notice of Motion - Homelessness

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Truesdale:

"That this Council notes that the number of households with homelessness status on the social housing waiting list across NI has increased from 9,878 to 26,310 households in the last ten years, an increase of 166%; notes the enormous strain the homelessness system is under with the number of households in temporary accommodation at unprecedented levels; agrees that this council has a role to play in preventing homelessness in this district alongside other organisations and bodies in the Public, Statutory and Voluntary sectors; calls on this Council to assess how it contributes to homelessness prevention through carrying out an audit of its services and requests that Officers bring back a report detailing the homelessness prevention work currently supported as well as how the Council's community planning function can further support homelessness prevention work in the local area".

## 17.0 Notice of Motion - Newry City Park Funding Application

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Lee- Sarginor:

*"Noting the Council has failed to deliver on previously agreed motions to submit funding bids for the Newry City Park to the Levelling up and Shared Island Fund, council will now urgently prepare a capital funding bid to the Peace plus programme for the remainder of funding required to complete all phases of the project and deliver the world class park that was promised to ratepayers; and for full Council to approve this motion as deadline for this application is Tuesday 5th September 2023 at 5pm."*

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## 18.0 Notice of Motion - Back to School Costs

Notice of Motion received from Councillor McEvoy:

*"That this Council notes the findings of the 2023 Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) survey on Back to School costs which show 41% of parents in this jurisdiction go into debt due to back to school costs, with the largest expense for both primary and secondary school parents being uniforms; is deeply concerned that the high cost of some school uniforms is a source of financial stress for many families impacting their health and wellbeing; acknowledges that the positive attributes of school uniforms, such as promoting equality amongst pupils, is at risk of being undermined by unaffordable costs; and calls for the urgent restoration of the Assembly and Executive so that legislation can be brought forward that will require schools to have competitive tendering processes, removes requirements for expensive branded items, and permits the use of cheaper high street alternatives."*

## 19.0 Notice of Motion - Young Carers

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Devlin

*"Noting that there are currently 220,000 unpaid carers across the North; recognising the essential role that young carers in particular play within the community; expressing its concern that during holiday periods such carers can face increased stress, loneliness and isolation, and further noting that unpaid carers save*

*the government an estimated £1million per year, this Council agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health calling for increased financial support for these unpaid carers to be used for respite, residential breaks or recreation for their health and well-being."*

## **20.0 Notice of Motion - Recycling**

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Finn

*"Noting with concern estimations that while 9 in 10 people in the North recycle at home only 4 in 10 recycle while outdoors; further notes with concern DAERA estimates that consumers in the North use 420 million plastic bottles and 90 million cans every year, and welcomes that across the North the successful Hubbub CircleCity programme which has run across the UK and seen an additional 2.5million plastic bottles, glass bottles and cans recycled while outdoors, this Council agrees that more work is needed across out District to encourage recycling while outdoors, will seek a meeting with Hubbub to recommend Newry, Mourne and Down for a similar CircleCity scheme, will undertake an education programme for District residents on the benefits of outdoor recycling and will commence a pilot scheme for new recycling bins to be installed across key public spaces and parks."*

# Invitees

- Cllr Terry Andrews
- .....
- Cllr Callum Bowsie
- .....
- Cllr Jim Brennan
- .....
- Cllr Pete Byrne
- .....
- Mr Gerard Byrne
- .....
- Cllr Philip Campbell
- .....
- Mr Andrew Cassells
- .....
- Cllr William Clarke
- .....
- Mrs Linda Cummins
- .....
- Cllr Laura Devlin
- .....
- Mr Eoin Devlin
- .....
- Ms Louise Dillon
- .....
- Cllr Cadogan Enright
- .....
- Cllr Doire Finn
- .....
- Cllr Aoife Finnegan
- .....
- Ms Joanne Fleming
- .....
- Cllr Conor Galbraith
- .....
- Cllr Mark Gibbons
- .....
- Cllr Oonagh Hanlon
- .....
- Cllr Glyn Hanna
- .....
- Cllr Valerie Harte
- .....
- Cllr Roisin Howell
- .....
- Cllr Jonathan Jackson
- .....
- Cllr Geraldine Kearns
- .....
- Miss Veronica Keegan
- .....
- Mrs Josephine Kelly
- .....
- Cllr Tierna 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
- .....
- Jonathan McGilly
- .....
- Cllr Andrew McMurray
- .....
- Catrina Miskelly
- .....
- Cllr Declan Murphy
- .....
- Cllr Kate Murphy
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Cllr Selina Murphy  
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare  
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Mr Andy Patterson  
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Cllr Áine Quinn  
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Cllr Henry Reilly  
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Cllr Michael Rice  
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Ms Alison Robb  
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Cllr Michael Ruane  
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Cllr Michael Savage  
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin  
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Donna Starkey  
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Sarah Taggart  
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Paul Tamati  
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Cllr David Taylor  
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly  
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Cllr Jill Truesdale  
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Mrs Marie Ward  
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**ACTIONS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETINGS**

<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Actions taken/ Progress to date</b>	<b>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</b>
<i>C/178/2019</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – C/131/2019: Live Animals in Circuses</i>	<i>At the request of Councillor McAteer it was agreed the motion remain on the action sheet.</i>	<i>Democratic Services</i>		<i>N</i>
<i>C/084/2022</i>	<i>Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28.03.22 – with NIAS &amp; SHSCT</i>	<i>It was agreed to bring forth problem solving solutions to the NIAS in all facets of their work and for this action to be retained on the Action Sheet to keep track of progress</i>	<i>Democratic Services</i>		<i>N</i>

**ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 3 JULY 2023**

<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Actions taken/ Progress to date</b>	<b>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</b>
<i>C/120/2023</i>	<i>Action Sheet from Council 05.06.23</i>	The action sheet was noted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Noted</b>	<i>Y</i>
<i>C/121/2023</i>	<i>Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 05.06.23</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Noted</b>	<i>Y</i>
<i>C/122/2023</i>	<i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 05.06.23</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Noted</b>	<i>Y</i>



<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Actions taken/ Progress to date</b>	<b>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</b>
<i>C/125/2023</i>	<i>Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19.06.23</i>	<p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.</p> <p>Councillor Sharvin and Hanlon both spoke of their concerns regarding dumping for a bonfire at the Mount Crescent Car Park in Downpatrick and asked that PCSP get in touch with Downpatrick DEA Councillors as soon as possible.</p> <p>Mr Mallon confirmed he would speak with the PCSP team and ask them to contact the DEA Councillors.</p>	<p><i>Democratic Services</i></p> <p><i>C Mallon</i></p>	<p><b>Noted</b></p> <p><b>Complete</b></p>	Y
<i>C/126/2023</i>	<i>Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2023</i>	<p>The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.</p>	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Noted</b>	
<i>C/128/2023</i>	<i>Amendment to Standing Orders</i>	<p>It was agreed to adopt the amendment to Standing Orders to reflect the changing title of Neighbourhood Services Committee to Sustainability &amp; Environment Committee.</p> <p>Standing Orders training to be rolled out to Members.</p>	<p><i>S Taggart</i></p> <p><i>S Taggart</i></p>	<p><b>Actioned</b></p> <p><b>Training organised 30<sup>th</sup> August</b></p>	
<i>C/129/2023</i>	<i>Response from Department for Infrastructure re: C/084/2023: Emergency Notice of Motion – Fixed Bridge Design for</i>	<p>The letter was noted.</p> <p>It was agreed to note the correspondence received from Department for Infrastructure regarding the fixed bridge design for Newry Southern Relief Road dated 19 April 2023.</p>	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Noted</b>	

<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Actions taken/ Progress to date</b>	<b>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</b>
	<i>Newry Southern Relief Road</i>	<p>It was agreed that Council write to the Permanent Secretary to ask if engagement could be sought from the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach for an engineering solution to allow access for tall ships and vessels to the Newry Canal and ask what other potential engineering opportunities were there aside from a lifting bridge and if they had all been explored and exhausted ; and that Council write to the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to ask if there was a possibility of bridging the gap in funding for the project.</p> <p>It was agreed to enquire of the Permanent Secretary if any change to the bridge design would delay the delivery of the Southern Relief Road.</p>		<p><b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b></p> <p><b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b></p>	
<i>C/130/2023</i>	<i>Response from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re: Notice of Motion C/075/2023 – Voting Age Reduction</i>	<p>The letter was noted.</p> <p>Letter to be sent indicating Council's disappointment at the unsatisfactory response received.</p>	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Noted</b>	
<i>C/131/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Disposable Barbeques</i>	The Motion was referred to the Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.	<i>C Mallon</i>	<b>Paper to ERT Committee 14<sup>th</sup> Aug 2023</b>	
<i>C/132/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion –</i>	It was that Council oppose the recent decision taken by the Department of Education to end the funding	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	

<i>Minute Ref</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Lead Officer</i>	<i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i>	<i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i>
	<i>School Sports Programme</i>	for the Primary School Sports Programme in response to Tory budget cuts; Recognises the negative impact this will have on the physical and emotional well-being of thousands of children and young people across the district; Agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, outlining this Council's opposition to these funding cuts and to urge him to reconsider this proposal in advance of the new school term in the Autumn.			
<i>C/133/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Study of Languages</i>	It was agreed that Council notes with concern the British Council's Language Trends 2023 report which states that 'Northern Ireland has the shortest time for compulsory language learning of any country in the continent of Europe'; Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person's development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	
<i>C/134/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Leisure Centres</i>	The Motion was referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.	<i>Democratic Services</i>  <i>P Tamati</i>	<b>Report to be tabled at AHC Committee</b>	
<i>C/135/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Accepting Electronic Copies of Valid Insurance</i>	It was agreed that the practice of requiring paper copies of insurance certificates for car taxation purposes at Northern Ireland Post Offices, is considered obsolete and archaic, creating	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	

<i>Minute Ref</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Lead Officer</i>	<i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i>	<i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i>
	<i>Certificates for the purposes of Car Taxation throughout Northern Ireland Post Offices</i>	unnecessary burdens on individuals and organisations in our jurisdiction, when presentation of electronic copies are just as valid, efficient and more practical. I call on this council, in recognising the advantages of electronic documentations and best practice in Great Britain, proposes the following actions: This Council will contact other Northern Ireland councils, seeking their agreement that electronic copies of valid car insurance certificates or cover notes, should be accepted at Northern Ireland Post Offices. Additionally, a letter will be drafted to the Department of Infrastructure Permanent Secretary; to implement administrative changes, allowing the acceptance of electronic insurance certificates or cover notes, at all Northern Ireland Post Offices for car taxation purposes".			
<i>C/136/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – University Graduations</i>	It was agreed "This Council notes recent concerning reports that many university students may not be able to graduate and receive their qualifications as normal this summer; Council recognises that this is an issue for many students across this district who have worked hard over a number of years in their respective universities; Calls on Ulster University to use their influence to urge the Universities and Colleges Employer Association (UCEA) to engage constructively with workers on demands for fair pay and working conditions, fair pensions and an end to casualisation; and further calls on the University to	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	

<i>Minute Ref</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Lead Officer</i>	<i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i>	<i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i>
		end the uncertainty for the students in relation to their Grades and their Graduation".			
<i>C/137/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Seasonal Workers</i>	<p>It was agreed that Council recognises the acute pressures that apple and mushroom producers are currently under as a consequence of the severe shortage of seasonal workers. This Council calls on the UK Government to relax immigration rules to allow for visas for seasonal agriculture workers to ensure that food can be fully harvested and to prevent the collapse of the horticulture industry as a consequence of the inability to acquire necessary workers.</p> <p>It was agreed to include the shortage of workers within the fishing industry within the wording of the correspondence to be sent.</p>	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	
<i>C/138/2023</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Conversion Therapy</i>	<p>It was agreed in acknowledging Council's previous agreement to oppose conversion therapy practices; expressing its disappointment that the Executive failed to act on the outlawing of this practice; expresses further dissatisfaction that the practice of conversion therapy remains legal; stands in solidarity with members of the LGBT+ community and recognising the ongoing absence of an Assembly, Executive and Ministers, this Council reaffirms its opposition to conversion therapy and support for the LGBT+ community, and will write to the Permanent Secretaries of Health, Justice and Communities to detail what work can be undertaken by their offices to prepare for the implementation of such a ban in advance of a re-established Executive.</p>	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	

<i>Minute Ref</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Lead Officer</i>	<i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i>	<i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i>
<i>C/139/2023</i>	<i>Emergency Notice of Motion – Glebe House</i>	<p>It was agreed that Newry, Mourne and Down Council call on the Executive Office to restore funding levels to Glebe House, Kilclief which enables people of all backgrounds to explore conflict and difference within our community, to promote self-confidence and build mutual respect, tolerance, and trust through positive shared experiences.</p> <p>The Council will write to the Permanent Secretary highlighting the impact the funding cut will have on Glebe House staff and programmes, and the wider community.</p>	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<b>Letter sent 7 July 2023</b>	
<i>END</i>					

**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL****NMD/C/**

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**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 July 2023 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber**

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**In the Chair:** Councillor V Harte

<b>In attendance in Chamber:</b>	Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Brennan
	Councillor P Byrne	Councillor P Campbell
	Councillor C Enright	Councillor D Finn
	Councillor A Finnegan	Councillor C Galbraith
	Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
	Councillor J Jackson	Councillor G Kearns
	Councillor T Kelly	Councillor C King
	Councillor M Larkin	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
	Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
	Councillor D McAteer	Councillor L McEvoy
	Councillor A McMurray	Councillor S O'Hare
	Councillor D Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
	Councillor A Quinn	Councillor M Savage
	Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor J Truesdale

<b>In attendance via Teams:</b>	Councillor W Clarke	Councillor M Gibbons
	Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
	Councillor M Ruane	

**Officials in attendance in Chamber:**

Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment  
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism  
 Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services  
 Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
 Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

**C/118/2023      APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, Devlin, Howell, Lewis, K Murphy, Taylor and Tinnelly and Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive.

The Chairperson congratulated Newry All Stars Special Olympics Club on their brilliant wins at recent games in Berlin including Dearbhail Savage and her partner Chloe Hillen who won silver for golf and Leah Fegan on winning 2 bronze medals and a 5<sup>th</sup> place

ribbon for equestrian. The Chairperson advised she had the pleasure of meeting the club before they left for the games and spent an enjoyable evening with them.

The Chairperson congratulated Cathal Fegan Schools of Taekwon-do on their success at the 2023 Open European Taekwon-do Championships where they obtained 26 gold medals, over 20 silver medals and 40 bronze medals.

A huge well done was extended to young Alfie Pentony from Newry who had won the Spirit of Northern Ireland Award. The Chairperson spoke of how Alfie was an inspirational young boy who suffered from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and that he and his family were dedicated to raising awareness and funding for research to find a cure for this life limiting disease.

### **C/119/2023      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **C/120/2023      ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Savage.**

### **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING**

#### **C/121/2023      MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

#### **C/122/2023      MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Bowsie.**

**COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION****C/123/2023      MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JUNE 2023**

Read: Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 June 2023 (copy circulated).

*ERT/073/2023 – Ballykinlar Hut Relocation*

Councillor Hanna enquired if Council would consider the possibility of an interested party from Saintfield having the opportunity to re-erect and display the Ballykinlar Hut rather than have it put into storage.

Mr Mallon said he would be happy to have discussions with the individual.

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Quinn.**

Read: Minutes of Appeal Hearing re: Application for Entertainments Licence by Quinn's Bar, Newcastle held on Monday 12 June 2023.

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of Appeal Hearing re: Application for Entertainments Licence by Quinn's Bar, Newcastle held on Monday 12 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Bowsie.**

**C/124/2023      MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2023**

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 June 2023 (copy circulated).

*SPR/063/2023: Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference*

Councillor Byrne spoke of how he had raised concerns regarding the number of reports being considered in-committee and acknowledged officers were guided by legislation but asked if Senior Management Team could provide a response for Members.

Mrs Kelly confirmed the matter was being considered the Senior Management Team with a report to be presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August.

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the**

**proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers.**

**C/125/2023      MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 June 2023 (copy circulated).

*AHC/058/2023: Financial Assistance*

Councillor Sharvin referred to the financial assistance award under major and minor sports capital grants advising he had been contacted by a club who had met with Council officials for the pre application process and told they met the criteria and then acquired consultants etc only to be told once they had applied that they did not meet the criteria. He asked Council officials to review the information given to applicants to avoid clubs like this one incurring costs.

Councillor Kelly echoed Councillor Sharvin's comments and enquired when the process would reopen and if feedback could be provided directly to applicants.

Mr Mallon advised he was happy to provide more detail after the meeting.

Councillor Sharvin and Hanlon both spoke of their concerns regarding dumping of materials for a bonfire at the Mount Crescent Car Park in Downpatrick and asked that PCSP get in touch with Downpatrick DEA Councillors as soon as possible.

Mr Mallon confirmed he would speak with the PCSP team and ask them to contact the DEA Councillors.

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Finnegan.**

**C/126/2023      MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Savage.**

**C/127/2023**      **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues to be considered.

**C/128/2023**      **AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS**

Read:                      Report dated 3 July 2023 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive presented by Ms Taggart, Democratic Services Manager regarding an amendment to Standing Orders. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a request for training on Standing Orders from Councillor Hanlon, Ms Taggart confirmed she was in the process of rolling out training and stressed the importance of all members attending.

Councillor Byrne asked that as part of the training the pathway for motions through Council be included in the training. Ms Taggart confirmed that she was working with Mrs Kelly on that matter with a report to be presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August.

**Agreed:                      It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McEvoy to adopt the amendment to Standing Orders to reflect the changing title of Neighbourhood Services Committee to Sustainability & Environment Committee.**

**CORRESPONDENCE****C/129/2023**      **RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE RE: C/084/2023: EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – FIXED BRIDGE DESIGN FOR NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD**  
**(Copy circulated)**

Read:                      Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure regarding the fixed bridge design for Newry Southern Relief Road dated 19 April 2023.

Councillor Savage voiced his disappointment at the response received to the strongly worded letter sent from Council outlining concerns for the bridge design in Newry and spoke at length about the need for a lifting bridge solution for the oldest navigational canal in Newry and how there was an obligation to look beyond short term potential.

Councillor Savage proposed Council write to the Permanent Secretary to ask if engagement could be sought from the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach for an engineering solution to allow access for tall ships and vessels to the Newry Canal and ask what other potential engineering opportunities were there aside from a lifting bridge and if they had all been explored and exhausted.

Councillor Savage further proposed that Council write to the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to ask if there was a possibility of bridging the gap in funding for the project.

Councillor McAteer seconded Councillor Savage's proposal.

Councillor King stated he shared frustration at the response received and the intention to proceed with the fixed bridge design.

Councillor McMurray echoed the sentiments of both Councillors Savage and King and voiced support for the canal to be navigational for tall ships.

Councillor Hanna voiced concern at any delay to the Southern Relief Road and asked that it be enquired of the Permanent Secretary if any change to the bridge design would delay the delivery of the Southern Relief Road.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed to note the correspondence received from Department for Infrastructure regarding the fixed bridge design for Newry Southern Relief Road dated 19 April 2023.**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Council write to the Permanent Secretary to ask if engagement could be sought from the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach for an engineering solution to allow access for tall ships and vessels to the Newry Canal and ask what other potential engineering opportunities were there aside from a lifting bridge and if they had all been explored and exhausted ; and that Council write to the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to ask if there was a possibility of bridging the gap in funding for the project.**

**C/130/2023** **RESPONSE FROM SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/075/2023 – VOTING AGE REDUCTION**

Read: Email from the office of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding Notice of Motion C/075/2023, Voting Age Reduction. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Byrne voiced his disappointment at the response received from the NI Office and the way it was written simply stating that their position remained unchanged.

Councillor Byrne stated there were a number of speeches made on the night regarding changes and they needed to be addressed.

Councillor Quinn also voiced concern at the unsatisfactory response received and proposed Council write back on the matter.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed to note the correspondence received from Secretary of State regarding Notice of Motion C/075/2023, Voting Age Reduction and to write indicating the Council's disappointment at the unsatisfactory response received.**

**C/131/2023** **NOTICE OF MOTION – DISPOSABLE BARBEQUES**

The following motion was received from Councillor Clarke:

*"Council notes with concern the damage caused by the irresponsible use of disposable barbecues to some council facilities as well as to vulnerable environmental areas; In response to the situation, Council should explore options to reduce the use of disposable barbecues in all Council facilities and on Council land which is deemed to be environmentally sensitive; Council should also seek to develop an awareness programme in partnership with relevant stakeholders to highlight the potential harm that disposable barbecues can cause to sensitive environmental areas".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

**Agreed:** **The Motion was referred to the Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

**C/132/2023** **NOTICE OF MOTION – SCHOOLS SPORTS PROGRAMME**

The following motion was received from Councillor Campbell:

*"This Council opposes the recent decision taken by the Department of Education to end the funding for the Primary School Sports Programme in response to Tory budget cuts; Recognises the negative impact this will have on the physical and emotional well-being of thousands of children and young people across the district; Agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, outlining this Councils opposition to these funding cuts and to urge him to reconsider this proposal in advance of the new school term in the Autumn".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Brennan.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Campbell stated that as someone who had volunteered in the local sporting community for over 15 years, it was deeply concerning that the funding for the primary schools' sports programme was to be cut. It was a vital sports programme delivered by GAA and IFA coaches to over 200 schools and over 24,000 children across the north with many schools within the District being set to miss out.

Members were advised dedicated coaches delivered much-needed physical education lessons and this ensured pupils were getting some form of physical activity and was proven to help children and young people both physically and mentally and was essential in supporting their overall wellbeing.

Councillor Campbell stated it was another consequence of immoral and indefensible Tory cuts that had decimated public services and was punishing children and young people. He stated the British government must end the cycle of cuts and properly invest in the education system and the Executive to be established now was also needed so local parties could support children and young people. At Council level, there was a need to demonstrate opposition to this decision and collectively urge Department of Education officials to rethink this decision.

Councillor Sharvin voiced support for the motion on behalf of SDLP and spoke of the great programme that was offered. He pointed out that the cuts went against the Council's own corporate objective of an active and healthy society. He spoke of how the programme provided extra PE classes and lessons in athletics, dance, games, gymnastics as well as soccer and GAA and provided advice to teachers. Councillor Sharvin stated it was vital the programme was reinstated and funded.

Councillor Kelly echoed the comments from Councillors Campbell and Sharvin and spoke of how cuts such as this were due to the lack of Stormont Executive.

Councillor Jackson voiced support for the motion.

Councillor Campbell thanked Members for their support.

**Agreed:**                    **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Brennan that Council oppose the recent decision taken by the Department of Education to end the funding for the Primary School Sports Programme in response to Tory budget cuts; Recognises the negative impact this will have on the physical and emotional well-being of thousands of children and young people across the district; Agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, outlining this Councils opposition to these funding cuts and to urge him to reconsider this proposal in advance of the new school term in the Autumn.**

### **C/133/2023            NOTICE OF MOTION – STUDY OF LANGUAGES**

The following motion was received from Councillor O'Hare:

*"This Council notes with concern the British Council's Language Trends 2023 report which showed that pupils in the north are required to learn languages less than those in any other country in Europe;  
Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person's development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his*

*officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here”.*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

In presenting the motion, Councillor O’Hare referred to the British Council’s recent report which stated that the north had the shortest curriculum time for compulsory language learning of anywhere on the continent of Europe. She spoke of how learning different languages brought with it a range of cognitive and social benefits.

Councillor O’Hare added that in recent years, the direction of travel was fixed towards the modern economy and equipping young people with the skills necessary to succeed in a world of technology and the report confirmed recent findings that languages played a significant role in international trade and that investment in languages had huge financial benefits.

Members were informed the report also found young people often did not see the value of languages for their future career, or the importance of languages in the global workplace and Councillor O’Hare said that had to change.

She added Newry, Mourne and Down was an ever diversifying and multi-cultural District and it was up to policy makers to take on board these concerns and look at new ways in which language learning could be promoted and enhanced from primary level onwards. In the absence of a functioning Assembly and Executive, it was important platforms and forums such as Council register concerns and called on fellow members to support the motion.

In thanking Councillor O’Hare for bringing the motion forward Councillor Bowsie proposed the following amendment:

*"This Council notes with concern the British Council’s Language Trends 2023 report which states that ‘Northern Ireland has the shortest time for compulsory language learning of any country in the continent of Europe’; Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person’s development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here”.*

Councillor O’Hare accepted Councillor Bowsie’s amendment.

Councillors Enright and Byrne spoke in support of the motion and the amendment.

Councillor O’Hare thanked Members for their support.

**Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O’Hare seconded by Councillor Mathers that Council notes with concern the British Council’s Language Trends 2023 report which states that ‘Northern Ireland has the shortest time for compulsory language learning of any country in**

**the continent of Europe'; Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person's development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here.**

**C/134/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – LEISURE CENTRES**

The following motion was received from Councillor Hanlon:

*"This Council recognises that in the aftermath of Covid our local leisure facilities & services across the district are experiencing a number of significant challenges; Notes that residents and service users are not getting the services or access to the facilities that they are entitled to; And calls for an urgent and robust review of the planning; management; and delivery of Newry, Mourne & Down's leisure services to be undertaken in order to sustain an operation model that meets the needs of service users, ratepayers, and supports council staff in their ability to deliver first class services".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

**Agreed:                      The Motion was referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

**C/135/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – ACCEPTING ELECTRONIC COPIES OF VALID INSURANCE CERTIFICATES FOR THE PURPOSES OF CAR TAXATION THROUGHOUT NORTHERN IRELAND POST OFFICES**

The following motion was received from Councillor Lee-Surginor:

*"The practice of requiring paper copies of insurance certificates for car taxation purposes at Northern Ireland Post Offices, is considered obsolete and archaic, creating unnecessary burdens on individuals and organisations in our jurisdiction, when presentation of electronic copies are just as valid, efficient and more practical. I call on this council, in recognising the advantages of electronic documentations and best practice in Great Britain, proposes the following actions: This Council will contact other Northern Ireland councils, seeking their agreement that electronic copies of valid car insurance certificates or cover notes, should be accepted at Northern Ireland Post Offices. Additionally, a letter will be drafted to the Department of Infrastructure Permanent Secretary; to implement administrative changes, allowing the acceptance of electronic insurance certificates or cover notes, at all Northern Ireland Post Offices for car taxation purposes".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor McMurray.

Councillor Lee-Surginor stated that for many it was a simple process when they get a new car to present insurance papers, MOT papers and choose how long they wish to tax it for and how to pay. However, for some people in our society, it was not that straightforward.

Councillor Lee-Surginor explained the motion was brought forward following problems met by an older gentleman who had been denied a simple service at his local post office because he did not have a printout of his car insurance. He explained it had been observed that in Great Britain, it wasn't a requirement. Even though every registered car with a valid car insurance was entered into a central database that could be accessed to confirm if a car had valid car insurance or not. Post Offices in Northern Ireland used the same infrastructure as those in GB. He stated it was time Northern Ireland car taxation services were more aligned with Great Britain's to make car taxation easier for everyone that lived in Northern Ireland.

During discussion Councillors Hanna, Hanlon and McAteer questioned the motion as processes were in place to enable cars to be taxed easily online and without the need to produce hard copy documents. It was acknowledged by Members that it may be a requirement if showing change of ownership of a vehicle for the first time.

Despite this Members did however support the motion. Councillor Hanlon commented that her party were happy to support if it was restrictive for people who were elderly, vulnerable and needed support.

Councillor Lee-Surginor thanked Members for their comments and advised the motion was being presented to make life easier for everyone.

The motion was put to a vote by way of a show of hands and voting was as follows:

FOR:	28
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	4

The motion was carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor McMurray that the practice of requiring paper copies of insurance certificates for car taxation purposes at Northern Ireland Post Offices, is considered obsolete and archaic, creating unnecessary burdens on individuals and organisations in our jurisdiction, when presentation of electronic copies are just as valid, efficient and more practical. I call on this council, in recognising the advantages of electronic documentations and best practice in Great Britain, proposes the following actions: This Council will contact other Northern Ireland councils, seeking their agreement that electronic copies of valid car insurance certificates or cover notes, should be**

**accepted at Northern Ireland Post Offices. Additionally, a letter will be drafted to the Department of Infrastructure Permanent Secretary; to implement administrative changes, allowing the acceptance of electronic insurance certificates or cover notes, at all Northern Ireland Post Offices for car taxation purposes”.**

**C/136/2023**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – UNIVERSITY GRADUATIONS**

The Chairperson advised the motion had not been withdrawn from the agenda as previously advised.

The following motion received from Councillor Rice had been amended to read as follows:

*"This Council notes recent concerning reports that many university students may not be able to graduate and receive their qualifications as normal this summer; Council recognises that this is an issue for many students across this district who have worked hard over a number of years in their respective universities; Calls on Ulster University to use their influence to urge the Universities and Colleges Employer Association (UCEA) to engage constructively with workers on demands for fair pay and working conditions, fair pensions and an end to casualisation; and further calls on the University to end the uncertainty for the students in relation to their Grades and their Graduation”.*

The motion was seconded by Councillor King.

In presenting the motion Councillor Rice welcomed that the issues had been resolved with staff and unions at Queens University, with all marking to be completed by 7th August 2023. This had been a welcoming development for students and staff, ending a period of incredible uncertainty and confusion however in Ulster University the issue was still ongoing.

Councillor Rice called on Ulster University to engage similarly with the unions as their counterparts in Queens University. He added academic staff in local institutions performed a vital service for students and were invaluable to the economic and social wellbeing of society and it was paramount that they were valued and listened to. Students and staff needed reassurances and senior management were implored to address these long standing issues as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Rice stated local universities must use their influence within Universities UK to encourage meaningful negotiations in order to bring about a fair and acceptable resolution.

In seconding the motion, Councillor King commented how over the past few weeks, Members had seen how frustrating this whole ordeal had been for students, especially those who were left in limbo regarding their graduation and future plans and it was

recognised this could not be left at the door of University Staff, as they have been forced into taking industrial action after a long campaign for better working conditions. Councillor King implored University Management to do everything they could to resolve the current impasse.

Councillor Kelly voiced support for the motion.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor King "This Council notes recent concerning reports that many university students may not be able to graduate and receive their qualifications as normal this summer; Council recognises that this is an issue for many students across this district who have worked hard over a number of years in their respective universities; Calls on Ulster University to use their influence to urge the Universities and Colleges Employer Association (UCEA) to engage constructively with workers on demands for fair pay and working conditions, fair pensions and an end to casualisation; and further calls on the University to end the uncertainty for the students in relation to their Grades and their Graduation".**

### **C/137/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – SEASONAL WORKERS**

The following motion was received from Councillor Byrne:

*"This Council recognises the acute pressures that apple and mushroom producers are currently under as a consequence of the severe shortage of seasonal workers.*

*This Council calls on the UK Government to relax immigration rules to allow for visas for seasonal agriculture workers to ensure that food can be fully harvested and to prevent the collapse of the horticulture industry as a consequence of the inability to acquire necessary workers".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Councillor Byrne spoke at length about the perilous position the food and vegetable industry was facing particularly mushroom growers due to labour shortages and the discrepancies that now existed north and south as a result of Brexit.

Members were advised of the following key points; the mushroom industry in Northern Ireland which was particularly at risk accounted for 40% horticultural output with the sector estimated to be worth £65m per annum, providing 10% of mushrooms across the UK. There were over 1,000 people employed in the mushroom supply chain including those in transportation, packaging, compost and casing manufacture, equipment supply and manufacture and marketing. Councillor Byrne advised the industry had approximately 95% of people employed in the sector that come from EU member states and outlined the reasons for this.

Councillor Byrne explained that what was unique to Northern Ireland was its shared border with an EU member state and the comparative advantage it provides to the ROI. The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) enabled fruit and vegetable growers to employ migrant workers as seasonal workers for up to six months at a time. With a minimum training time of 16 weeks, growers in Northern Ireland could expect a maximum of three months efficient output. This impacted on production levels and the efficiency of operations, and when considered against the context of the advantages the Republic of Ireland enjoy, this made the NI product less competitive.

Members were informed many workers were travelling south of the border after the expiry of their visa. As an EU member state, the Republic of Ireland benefited from freedom of movement as well as more favourable visa conditions for migrants with non-domestic workers able to stay for up to five years.

Councillor Byrne advised he had visited a mushroom farm in Mayobridge and listened to the problems being faced.

In seconding the motion Councillor Hanlon spoke of how it was such an important issue and how the Sinn Féin MP team had recently met with mushroom farmers to provide support to them and how it was extremely worrying that immigration rules were restricting seasonal workers from accessing work.

Councillors McAteer, Hanna and McMurray spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Hanna proposed an amendment to the motion to include the fishing industry. Councillor Jackson seconded the proposed amendment.

In understanding the sentiment of Councillor Hanna's amendment, Councillor Byrne did not wish to take away the focus from the horticulture industry which was on the brink of collapse and whilst he did not accept the amendment to the motion he agreed to include the shortage of workers within the fishing industry within the wording of the correspondence to be sent.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon that Council recognises the acute pressures that apple and mushroom producers are currently under as a consequence of the severe shortage of seasonal workers. This Council calls on the UK Government to relax immigration rules to allow for visas for seasonal agriculture workers to ensure that food can be fully harvested and to prevent the collapse of the horticulture industry as a consequence of the inability to acquire necessary workers.**

**C/138/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – CONVERSION THERAPY**

The following motion was received from Councillors Finn & Quinn:

*"Acknowledging Council's previous agreement to oppose conversion therapy practices; expressing its disappointment that the Executive failed to act on the outlawing of this practice; expresses further dissatisfaction that the practice of conversion therapy remains legal; stands in solidarity with members of the LGBT+ community and recognising the ongoing absence of an Assembly, Executive and Ministers, this Council reaffirms its opposition to conversion therapy and support for the LGBT+ community, and will write to the Permanent Secretaries of Health, Justice and Communities to detail what work can be undertaken by their offices to prepare for the implementation of such a ban in advance of a re-established Executive".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Quinn.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Finn spoke of how in Newry that week young people from across organisations and communities in the city had come together to host a number of events as part of youth pride and congratulated all of those involved.

Members were reminded that over two years on from a Stormont motion which rejected the practice of conversion therapy and called on the Communities Minister to bring forward legislation, progress was yet to be seen. Councillor Finn stated she believed Council had the capacity to fight to ensure that no person was subjected to this cruel and regressive practice.

Councillor Finn spoke of how conversion therapy had many forms, and in its most basic it was the practice of trying to suppress or change someone sexual identity and could often leave people with lifelong mental or physical health impacts. She said there were countless harrowing accounts from those who had been subjected to conversion therapy and how difficult it made their journey to come to terms with who they were and that she believed nobody should ever be made to feel ashamed because of who they love or who they were.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Quinn voiced disappointment at having to re-highlight this issue due to a lack of Assembly.

She spoke of how despite its name, conversion therapy was not therapy and how the practice inflicted severe pain and suffering, resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage. Reference was made to the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and it was noted that conversion therapy constitutes an egregious violation of rights to bodily autonomy, health and freedom of expression.

Conversion therapy was outlawed in many parts of the world and the practice had been rejected by mainstream medical and mental health organisations with evidence that it causes significant mental and physical harm with extent of the damage done by conversion therapy both unlimited, and underreported.

Councillor Quinn stated Sinn Féin condemned the practice of Conversion Therapy and what it stood for and were resolute in our opposition to homophobia, and discrimination of any type. She added that under international human rights law, the State had a duty

to protect its citizens and provide so they can live freely without interference. She stated as a person with family, friends and colleagues who identify as LGBTQ+ she found it disheartening that we were still having to discuss a person's right to be who they are.

During the debate, Councillors Lee-Surginor and Byrne spoke in support of the motion on behalf of their parties.

Councillor Jackson advised the DUP believed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was wrong and that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity and supported a ban on the harmful and coercive practices involved with conversion therapy. He added the party would not support any legislation which did not contain robust protection of religious freedom.

Councillor Jackson expressed concern with many practices previously promoted under the umbrella of conversion therapy including electroconvulsive therapy, forced isolation, aversion therapy, food deprivation, hormone therapy and hypnotherapy. He advised there was broad agreement on the need to ban conversion therapy but the difficulty for any legislation was actually defining what conversion therapy was. That had led to very wide-ranging legislation in other jurisdictions. The lack of a clear definition was what had delayed legislation being brought in at Westminster.

Councillor Jackson advised legislation could not realistically proceed on that basis as a clear and evidence-based definition of conversion therapy was needed and it was the lack of this, not the absence of an executive, that was the main barrier to progress and would be abstaining from the motion.

Councillor Byrne voiced disappointment at the DUP's commentary and touched on his own personal experiences and called on the DUP to engage and listen to people. The motion was put to a vote by way of a show of hands and voting was as follows:

FOR:	30
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	3

The motion was carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Quinn in acknowledging Council's previous agreement to oppose conversion therapy practices; expressing its disappointment that the Executive failed to act on the outlawing of this practice; expresses further dissatisfaction that the practice of conversion therapy remains legal; stands in solidarity with members of the LGBTQ+ community and recognising the ongoing absence of an Assembly, Executive and Ministers, this Council reaffirms its opposition to conversion therapy and support for the LGBTQ+ community, and will write to the Permanent Secretaries of**

**Health, Justice and Communities to detail what work can be undertaken by their offices to prepare for the implementation of such a ban in advance of a re-established Executive.**

**C/139/2023      EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – GLEBE HOUSE, KILCLIEF**

The Chairperson advised an emergency Notice of Motion had been received, the wording of which had been emailed to all Councillors and to enable it to be heard, it would be necessary to suspend Standing Orders 16.1.1 for which a qualified majority vote was required. (80% of Members present and voting).

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Hanlon to suspend Standing orders 16.1.1 at this point in the meeting to allow for the tabling of the emergency motion.

The Chairperson put the matter to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows:

**FOR:                      33**  
**AGAINST:                0**  
**ABSTENTIONS:        0**

It was agreed by a qualified majority vote to suspend Standing Orders 16.1.1 (copy attached).

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

*"Newry, Mourne and Down Council call on the Executive Office to restore funding levels to Glebe House, Kilclief which enables people of all backgrounds to explore conflict and difference within our community, to promote self-confidence and build mutual respect, tolerance, and trust through positive shared experiences.*

*The Council will write to the Permanent Secretary highlighting the impact the funding cut will have on Glebe House staff and programmes, and the wider community".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

In presenting the emergency motion Councillor Galbraith stated that with having 22yrs experience as a youth worker he saw the positive impact provisions such as Glebe House had on young people.

Members were informed funding for Glebe House was reliant on grants from the NI Executive Government Departments. Recent pressures on the Northern Ireland budget had directly impacted on the funding that Glebe House might have otherwise had and the decision by the Executive Office to not provide any funding had reduced Glebe House salary contributions by more than £69k. As a result, and regrettably, Glebe House management had proposed commencing a redundancy consultation process for all posts as the situation was unviable.

In seconding the motion Councillor Sharvin informed Members Glebe House had been providing support to all members of the community since 1975 and as someone that attended many programmes throughout his life he had experienced first-hand the great work they do. Glebe House provided for good relations, wellbeing and environmental programmes that had participants coming from across County Down and the island.

On an annual basis Glebe House has over 200 people aged from 9 to 90 involved in their programmes with a small staff team of 6 and a team of volunteers. Their work had been funded by a wide range of funders over the year, but key to this had been support from the Department of Health and the Executive Office. With the ever missing Stormont Executive and the continued budget difficulties, the key funding from the Department of Health had been halved and in the last week The Executive Office funding has gone from £90,000 to nothing. For an organisation that had given so much to the community, it now faced immediate viability and sustainability challenges.

Councillors Hanlon, Enright and Jackson voiced the support of their parties for the emergency motion.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Sharvin that Newry, Mourne and Down Council call on the Executive Office to restore funding levels to Glebe House, Kilclief which enables people of all backgrounds to explore conflict and difference within our community, to promote self-confidence and build mutual respect, tolerance, and trust through positive shared experiences.**

**The Council will write to the Permanent Secretary highlighting the impact the funding cut will have on Glebe House staff and programmes, and the wider community.**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.11pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 August 2023.

**Signed:**

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**Chairperson**

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**Chief Executive**

**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**RECORDED VOTE**

DATE: 3rd July 2023 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: Council Meeting

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Qualified Majority Vote to Suspend Standing Orders to hear Emergency Motion – Glebe House, Kilclief

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews				1
C Bowsie	1			
J Brennan	2			
P Byrne	3			
P Campbell	4			
W Clarke	5			
L Devlin				2
C Enright	6			
D Finn	7			
A Finnegan	8			
C Galbraith	9			
M Gibbons	10			
O Hanlon	11			
G Hanna	12			
V Harte	13			
R Howell				3
J Jackson	14			
G Kearns	15			
T Kelly	16			
C King	17			
M Larkin	18			
D Lee-Surginor	19			
A Lewis				4
O Magennis	20			
A Mathers	21			
D McAteer	22			
L McEvoy	23			
A McMurray	24			
S O'Hare	25			
D Murphy	26			
K Murphy				5
S Murphy	27			
A Quinn	28			
H Reilly				
M Rice	29			
M Ruane	30			
M Savage	31			
G Sharvin	32			
D Taylor				6
J Tinnelly				7
J Truesdale	33			
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>

**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL****NMC/SC**

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**Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 at 5.00pm in Downshire Chamber and via Microsoft Teams**

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**In the Chair:** Councillor V Harte**In attendance in Chamber: (Councillors)**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor C Enright
Councillor D Finn	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor T Kelly
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor A McMurray	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor M Savage	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor J Truesdale	

<b>In attendance via Teams:</b>	Councillor W Clarke	Councillor M Gibbons
	Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
	Councillor M Ruane	Councillor D Taylor

**In attendance in Chamber: (Officials),**

Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment  
 Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services  
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism  
 Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
 Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer

**In attendance via Teams: Southern Trust**

Dr M O'Kane, Chief Executive  
 Dr S Austin, Medical Director  
 Ms T Reid, Director of Medicine and Unscheduled Care  
 Ms A Turbitt, Senior Head of Planning

**SC/011/2023 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, Devlin, Lewis, K Murphy, Tinnelly and M Ward Chief Executive.

**SC/012/2023****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**SC/013/2023: RESPONSE FROM SOUTHERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST**

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and invited them to make their presentation.

Dr M O'Kane provided a detailed overview of challenges faced within Daisy Hill Hospital and the Trust in general.

Members asked the following questions:

- The issues causing the current crisis had been caused by the total mismanagement of the hospital in the Southern Trust.
- In the event of having a stroke would patients be taken directly to Craigavon area hospital and what was the Trust doing to recruit staff, retain staff and to reassure patients in the Mourne and wider South Down area that an ambulance would reach them on time especially with the importance of the golden hour being critical in receiving treatment.
- How could this pathway deliver good outcomes for stroke patients from South Armagh given the length of time it takes an ambulance to respond before then having to travel to Craigavon hospital?
- How was the decision made to determine which hospital stroke patients were referred too?
- What efforts were being made to recruit new staff to fill stroke vacancies at Daisy Hill.
- Could 100% assurances be given that the Emergency Department at Daisy Hill was not under threat?
- Part of the Stabilisation Programme was to integrate 6 High Dependency Unit (HDU) beds into the Acute Medical Unit, was this a scaling back of the original HDU beds and would existing HDU staff be transferred over or would they be redeployed?
- Stabilisation plan was welcomed in the short term, what steps had been taken to prepare for inevitable winter pressures?
- Clarity required on what would happen to the excess patients above the 104 commissioned beds. How would they receive the right care at the right place at the right time if there were further bed reductions when pressures and demand had not decreased?
- HDU Beds - What steps had been taken in relation to infection control and nature of patients being treated, would highly dependent patients be transferred to Craigavon?
- Had recent interviews taken place for recruitment of new Consultants.
- Had the Trust identified trends or themes in relation to reasons why Consultants were leaving Daisy Hill and what actions had been taken to mitigate against those factors?
- What specific assistance had been requested by the Southern Trust to help address issues around Consultants leaving Daisy Hill.
- Had the Trust lobbied to the Department for Health and the UK Government for enhancement remuneration packages for specialist staff in Daisy Hill and when was the most recent representations made and what was the response?
- The Stabilisation Plan was a short-term solution, was it ever envisaged that there would be a time when Daisy Hill would be back to where it should be?
- The Ambulance situation was getting worse and needed drastic intervention to improve especially in the South Armagh and South Down area.

- Confidence in the community had declined regarding Daisy Hill hospital, especially in light of all the negative media coverage and scare mongering that had been happening.
- Was the lack of domiciliary care still contributing to bed blockages?
- The current situation at Daisy Hill was part of the wider political failure of not having a function Executive and the management team were being unfairly targeted.
- Had a Rural Needs Impact Assessment been carried out and what mitigations had been put in place as a result?
- Clarity sought on how many ambulances were now available at Daisy Hill and did this go far enough to reverse and improve waiting times of which there had been a 26% increase in?
- Reports received that the Emergency Department at Daisy Hill was unorganised and no evidence of leadership, patients were essentially being left to their own device with no dignity or respect.
- Was there adequate staffing levels for both the Winter and long term plan and if not what was being done to ensure there was enough staff?

The delegation responded to queries as follows:

- It was the same Senior Management Team that managed the rest of the system that also managed general internal medicine on the Daisy Hill site. There were no difficulties in other areas other than would like them to be bigger and better. Issues were within a certain group of providers within in a much bigger system and was a tiny percentage of what was done overall. Over generalisations were not helpful and undermined a lot of work that went on in general.
- Aware of the ambulance response times in South Armagh and South Down and was part of the discussions with NIAS and part of the reasons why they had doubled up on internal ambulance provision and extended to 24 hours a day to try and alleviate some of the pressures.
- The golden hour around stroke was a complete misnomer. The golden hour was linked to trauma, it was important to be precise in language used so as not to cause confusion between the two.
- Stroke strategy in NI was never delivered due to Government constraints. Experts advised it should be centralised. From a practical point of view this was difficult. Southern Trust had to take a split approach on how they provided stroke services at Daisy Hill.
- Anyone who rang a 999 service were taken to Craigavon, those who presented at Daisy Hill as walk ins were assessed, stabilised, given Lysis Therapy Treatment if needed and then transferred or managed on site dependent on their needs. The percentage of patients who presented with stroke symptoms that needed Lysis Therapy Treatment was less than 20%.
- Recruitment ongoing for Stroke vacancies in Daisy Hill and across the Southern Trust, however the tendencies had been to train in sub specialities rather than general provision which meant there were fewer stroke Consultants than previously across the whole of NI.
- 3 Plans working on at present – Stabilisation Plan, Winter Plan and longer Stabilisation Plan for Daisy Hill.
- HDU beds were currently on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, as part of short-term Stabilisation Plan those beds and nursing staff would move to the medical floor. Part of the rationale was to concentrate medical experts on the same floor to ensure safe management of patients.
- The Acute Medical ward would not require the same volume of beds as previously

allocated with the implementation of the new pathways. There would be less patients admitted or expedited early discharge with acute care at home or attending a hot clinic for follow up care if required.

- The expectation was that infection control standards would be maintained with any temporary relocation of the HDU.
- Commissioned level of beds was previously 104, anticipated with rehabilitation of beds approximately 14 beds would be removed. It was further anticipated through acute care at home, extension of Ambulatory Unit and extension of Emergency Department this would offset the loss of those beds.
- The right patient at the right time in the right place by the right professional would result in fewer patients needing a bed.
- Pension taxation was controlled by central government and not the Trust.
- Additional clinical space, better carparking, the development of an MRI was all things that was currently being done to help improve Daisy Hill and make it more appealing for staff to want to stay there and work and a review had been undertaken.
- Aspects of supervision, training and administration had been taken off Consultants to allow them to focus more. Still an area of concern filling the registrar rota at the level of doctor below a Consultant which was a perineal problem and the process was still ongoing.
- Lobbying and discussion had continued on an almost daily basis with the Department for Health about stabilisation and issues raised.
- Ambulance Delays – NIAS was outside the Trust control. One of challenges they faced was they don't have enough capacity, this would require an additional £40 million to get them up to the level of responsive capacity required. Appealed to members to lobby hard to get an Executive back up and running to make those decisions on where money was spent.
- Media coverage in relation to Daisy Hill hospital closing had not been helpful and nobody in the Trust had ever suggested that was the case. It was undermining the confidence of the public and was off putting to the recruitment of staff. There had been a direct correlation as a result that the public were choosing to bypass Daisy Hill therefore increasing waiting times in other hospitals.
- Domiciliary carers would be employed by the Trust. One of the biggest challenges faced regionally was the level of pay. Actively working on ways to try and to professionalise the role with third level education colleges in terms of education and career opportunities.
- Facing a difficult Winter in terms of finance and some key decisions needed to be made in terms of modernisation of Health Service right across Northern Ireland.
- Regional Executive support was needed and appealed to members to help support this.
- Regional blueprint was being developed in relation to all hospital networks in Northern Ireland and feedback would be requested from staff and the public in terms of the future of Daisy Hill in the Autumn once the Winter Plan had been finalised.
- There were 15,500 staff in the Southern Trust and it was impossible to communicate with everyone effectively at the same time and accepted there was gaps in communication due to the size of the organisation, however would keep working to improve this as communication was key.
- Rural Needs Assessment wouldn't be done in an emergency change such as had been done recently but in terms of a long-term plan and future of Daisy Hill it would be done as part of the process.
- Single biggest thing that would help NIAS get the public into Emergency Department quicker was to get people discharged from hospital quickly and urged members to encourage people to leave hospital quickly and safely as it would save lives within the

community overall.

- Daisy Hill was an Acute hospital it also had to be part of the Acute hospital network so patients could be safely dealt with throughout the entire system.
- Not sure of the specifics of problems in leadership in the Emergency Department would need more information to investigate further.
- Actively recruiting for doctors locally and on a national level.
- Southern Trust to circulate a fact sheet which would address a lot of issues raised.
- Once the Trust got to the point of working through each of the plans it would be clearer what staffing levels were required.

Mrs O'Kane advised that due to timing constraints members could forward on any further questions they may have in writing for a response.

**There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 18.17pm.**

For adoption at next Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

**Signed:**

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**Chairperson**

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**Director**

## NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 04 July 2023, at 2.00pm, in the Mourne Room Downshire Civic Centre Downpatrick and via Microsoft Teams.**

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**Chairperson:** Ms B Slevin Independent Chairperson  
(Chamber)

**In attendance:** **(Committee Members)**

Councillor C Bowsie	Teams
Councillor J Brennan	Chamber
Councillor O Hanlon	Chamber
Councillor T Kelly	Teams
Councillor C King	Chamber
Councillor S O Hare	Chamber
Councillor G Sharvin	Teams

**Officials in attendance:** Mrs J Kelly Director Corporate Services  
Ms C Hughes Head of Performance (Acting)  
Ms E Cosgrove Head of Compliance  
Ms S McConville Procurement Manager  
(Acting)  
Ms S Taggart Democratic Services Manager  
Ms L Dillon Democratic Services Officer

**Also in attendance:**

Ms C Hagan	ASM	Chamber
Ms K Costley	NIAO	Chamber
Mr S Wade	NIAO	Chamber

**AC/047/2023: APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRPERSON**

**Read:** Report dated 04 July 2023 from Ms J Kelly Director of Corporate Services regarding the appointment of Chairperson of the Audit Committee.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note that extension of Ms B Slevin, as Independent Chairperson of the Audit Committee, has been extended by 4 months to allow time for the recruitment of this position.**

**AC/048/2023: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

The following apologies were received:

Councillor L Devlin  
Councillor A Quinn  
Ms M Ward Chief Executive  
Mr G Byrne Assistant Director (Finance)

**AC/049/2023: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest.

**AC/050/2023: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM:  
AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING  
TUESDAY 04 APRIL 2023**

Read: Action Sheet arising from Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 04 April 2023.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon seconded by Councillor Brennan it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 04 April 2023.**

**AC/051/2023: AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT**

Read: Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23 from Ms B Slevin Independent Chair of Audit Committee.  
**(Copy circulated)**

Ms Slevin gave an overview of the Audit Committee Annual Report.

She highlighted to Members the importance of attending Audit Committee meetings explaining the fundamental role of the Committee within Council.

She referred to the unqualified opinion received by NIAO regarding Council's Financial Statements 2021/22, and the satisfactory opinion from Internal Audit.

Ms Slevin extended thanks to the Members, Officers and senior management.

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor O Hare seconded by Councillor Sharvin it was agreed:

- a) To note the Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23.
- b) The Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23 be included for noting at the Council Meeting 07 August 2023.

### **CORPORATE SERVICES (OPEN SESSION)**

#### **AC/052/2023: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER**

Read: Report dated 04 July 2023 from Ms J Kelly Director of Corporate Services regarding the Corporate Risk Register including the Neighbourhood Services Directorate Risk Register. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Kelly presented the Corporate Risk Register explaining it was a live document reviewed regularly by senior management.

Members raised the following concerns:

- A number of risks have been signed by personnel who are no longer working within the Council organisation.
- Significant gaps in the senior management structure:
  - recruitment for the position of Director of Active & Healthy Communities has not taken place
  - inadequate number of Council members trained to sit on interview panel.
  - the gaps created by a number of Assistant Directors leaving the organisation.

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Brennan seconded by Councillor Bowsie it was agreed as follows:

- a) 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.
- b) To note the revised Neighbourhood Services Directorate Risk Register at Appendix 3 and ensure document is kept up to date in terms of personnel changes within Council organisation.

- c) **Interview Panel Training for Elected Members to be arranged via HR Department.**
- d) **Officers to examine possible changes required to the Terms of Reference for the recruitment panel for Director posts.**

**AC/053/2023: PROMPT PAYMENT STATISTICS**

Read: Report dated 04 April 2023 from Ms C Hughes Head of Performance regarding Prompt Payment Statistics – Quarter 4 2022-2023. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor King seconded by Councillor Sharvin it was agreed:**

- a) **To note the Quarter 4 2022-23 Prompt Payment statistics.**
- b) **Officers to report back to Councillor Sharvin with further detail regarding content of report; arrange to alter the format of the report for the next meeting of the Audit Committee; include average figures to reflect the year.**

**AC/054/2023: ASSRUANCE FRAMEWORK AND CODE OF GOVERNANCE**

Read: Report dated 04 July 2023 from Ms J Kelly Director Corporate Services regarding Assurance Framework and Annual Governance Statement. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Brennan seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the Council's Assurance Framework and the Code of Governance, illustrated and described at Appendix 1.**

**CORPORATE SERVICES (CLOSED SESSION)**

***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 Brennan it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during**

**discussion on this matter 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 Hanlon seconded by Councillor O Hare it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.**

**AC/055/2023: ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND ACCOUNTS 2022-23**

Read: Report dated 04 July 2023 from Ms J Kelly Director Corporate Services regarding Annual Governance Statemen and Accounts 2022-23. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Brennan seconded by Councillor Bowsie it was agreed:**

- a) To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 at Appendix 1 (page 20-32)**
- b) To note the draft Statement of Accounts and Financial Statements at Appendix 1**

**AC/056/2023: UPDATE RE: AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Read: Report dated 04 July from Ms E Cosgrove Head of Compliance regarding an update on Audit Recommendations. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the update in relation to legacy audit recommendations.**

**AC/057/2023: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS**

Read: Report dated 04 July 2023 from Ms S McConville Procurement Manager regarding DAC/STA Register – Quarter 1. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Brennan seconded by Councillor Sharvin it was agreed to note the Quarter 1 update in relation to Single Tender Actions.

**AC/058/2023: FRAUD & WHISTLEBLOWING**

Read: Report dated 04 July 2023 from Ms C Hughes Head of Performance, regarding an update on Fraud and Raising Concerns. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie seconded by Councillor King it was agreed:

- a) To note the update in relation to Fraud and Raising Concerns cases which have been detailed at Appendix 1.
- b) To note the Risk Based Approach to sampling of National Fraud Initiative matches as per NIAO guidelines.
- c) To note the progress on actions arising from the NIAO Internal Fraud Risk self-assessment.

**INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)**

**AC/059/2023: 2022/2023 ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT**

Read: ASM Annual Internal Audit Assurance Report dated 01 April 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Brennan it was agreed to note the 2022/2023 Annual Assurance Report.

**AC/060/2023: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2023/24**

Read: ASM Internal Audit Draft Strategy and Internal Audit Charter dated 29 June 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Brennan it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Plan 2023/24.

**NIAO (CLOSED SESSION)****AC/061/2023: NIAO AUDIT STRATEGY 2022-23**

Read: Correspondence dated 28 June 2023 from NIAO regarding the NMDDC Audit Strategy 2022-23.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor King seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the Newry Mourne & Down District Council Audit Strategy 2022-23.**

**PERFORMANCE (OPEN SESSION)****AC/062/2023: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2023-24**

Read: Report dated 04 July 2023 from Mr G Byrne Assistant Director of Finance regarding the Performance Improvement Plan 2023/24. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Hughes presented the above Report, explaining the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24 had been approved at the Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting in June 2023, and formally ratified at the Council Meeting on 03 July 2023, and would now be published on the Council website and social media channels.

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Brennan seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the Performance Improvement Plan 2023-24, (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2023-24 and Objective Delivery Plans 2023-24.**

**CIRCULARS****AC/063/2023: LG-13-2023 RE: FILLING POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY ON A COUNCIL**

Read: Letter dated 25 April 2023 from Department for Communities regarding Filling Positions of Responsibility on a Council.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the above correspondence.**

**AC/064/2023: LG-14-2023 RE: APPOINTING COUNCILLORS TO COMMITTEES**

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Read: Letter dated 25 April 2023 from Department for Communities regarding Appointing Councillors to Committees.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the above correspondence.**

**AC/065/2023: LG-15-2023 RE: DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

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Read: Letter dated 25 April 2023 from Department for Communities regarding Declaration of Acceptance of Office.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin seconded by Councillor Hanlon it was agreed to note the above correspondence.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.25 pm.

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 07 August 2023.

**Signed: Ms J Kelly**  
**Director Corporate Services**

**Signed: Ms B Slevin**  
**Independent Chairperson**

**Newry, Mourne and Down District Council**  
**Audit Committee**  
**Annual Report for 2022/2023**

## **1. Overview**

1.1 This Annual Report provides an overview of the Audit Committee activities for the Financial Year 2022/23 and demonstrates how the Committee has met its key responsibilities.

1.2 The Audit Committee met on four occasions during the year; on 19 July 2022, 22 September 2022, 18 January 2023 and 04 April 2023. A programme of work had been agreed by the Audit Committee and was allocated over a schedule of four meetings during the year.

1.3 The role of the Audit Committee is to support the Chief Executive (Accounting Officer) and Council by reviewing the comprehensiveness and reliability of assurances on governance, risk management, the control environment and the integrity of the financial statements.

## **2. Attendance**

2.1 Members' attendance at committee meetings were as follows:

<b>ATTENDANCE NARRATIVE – AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETINGS (July 2022 – April 2023)</b>						
<b>COUNCILLOR NAME</b>	<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE 19 July 2022</b>	<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE 22 September 2022</b>	<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE 18 January 2023</b>	<b>AUDIT COMMITTEE 04 April 2023</b>		<b>TOTAL MEETINGS ATTENDED</b>
<b>Indp Chair Ms B Slevin</b>	√	√	√	√		<b>4/4</b>
<b>Cllr K Owens</b>		√	Was not a Committee Member	Was not a Committee Member		<b>1/2</b>
<b>Cllr Bowsie (replaced K Owen – 13.01.2023)</b>	Was not a Committee Member	Was not a Committee Member	√	√		<b>2/2</b>
<b>Cllr J Brennan (replaced C Mason &amp; appointed to AC Cmttee after Sept Mtg)</b>	Was not a Committee Member	Was not a Committee Member		√		<b>1 / 2</b>
<b>Cllr P Byrne</b>	√	√	√	√		<b>4/4</b>
<b>Cllr L Devlin</b>		√	√			<b>2/4</b>
<b>Cllr C Enright</b>						<b>0/4</b>
<b>Cllr M Gibbons</b>						<b>0/4</b>
<b>Cllr G Kearns (replaced C Casey – 13.01.23)</b>	Was not a Committee Member	Was not a Committee Member				<b>0/2</b>
<b>Cllr A Lewis</b>		√	√	√		<b>3/4</b>

2.2 Ms Brona Slevin was appointed as an Independent Member of the Audit Committee in March 2019 and in accordance with the Committee’s terms of reference took up the role of Chairperson in July 2019 after the previous Chairperson Mr Joe Campbell, stepped down. The appointment has been extended to October 2023.

2.3 The Audit Committee meetings requires the attendance of the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services and the Internal Auditors. The Assistant Director of Finance and Performance and NIAO representatives also usually attend and the Senior Management Team and other Senior Officers attend by invitation.

### 3. Performance Evaluation

3.1 In accordance with best practice, the Audit Committee self-assessed its performance against the National Audit Office Checklist for Audit Committees during the year which found it to be performing at a high level. The results were presented to the meeting on 04 April 2023. The Committee agreed the following actions/recommendations to build further effectiveness:

#### Principle 2: Skills

- (a) political parties to be asked to give consideration to appointing Elected Members for a term greater than one year where possible which will enable knowledge and skills to be built up in this area. Generally there is little change in the Audit Committee make up which shows the Council is committed to keeping the experience and knowledge of Members on the Audit Committee.
- (b) training for all Members on the Audit Committee to be progressed.

#### Principle 3 and 4: The role and scope of the Committee

- (c) the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference is approved by the Audit Committee annually. This is completed annually.

#### Principle 5: Communication and Reporting

- (d) Officers continue to strive to ensure internal audit reports are completed and reported on a timely basis to the Audit Committee.
- (e) Officers continue to strive to ensure that all papers are provided on a timely basis to Democratic Services so that papers are issued in compliance with Standing Orders so that Members have sufficient time to review them.

Members can take reassurance from the number of good practice questions that have been answered 'yes' demonstrating that the Audit Committee is following best practice and operating effectively.

3.2 An appraisal of the Chairperson performance was also completed by the Assistant Director of Finance and Performance and Councillor Murphy and it was agreed that the Chair carried out their role very effectively.

### 4. Terms of Reference

4.1 A review of the Audit Committee's Terms of Reference was undertaken and approved by Council on 5 March 2019 as part of the review of the terms of references of all Committees of Council. The Audit Committee noted the approved Terms of Reference at its meeting on 15 April 2019. The Audit Committee's Terms of Reference was again approved at the Audit Committee Meeting in July 2020, in April 2021, April 2022 and April 2023.

## 5. 2021/22 Financial Statements and External Audit

5.1 The Council's Audited Financial Statements for 2021/22 including the Annual Governance Statement were reviewed by the Audit Committee on 22 September 2022. The Committee also reviewed the draft Report to Those Charged With Governance.

5.2 The Audit Committee was pleased to note that the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) had certified the financial Statements with an unqualified audit Opinion and the Audit Committee approved the Accounts for signing.

5.3 The Audit Committee noted the contents of the final Report To Those Charged With Governance with management responses and the Annual Audit Letter at its meeting on 18 January 2023.

## 6. Risk Management

6.1 The Committee welcomed the continued good progress made by Officers on Risk Management and the structure put in place to ensure ownership and management of risk at all levels of the organisation.

6.2 The Council has a Corporate Risk Register which identifies the key corporate level risks faced, and to be managed. Each corporate risk is linked to specific priorities set out by the Council in its Corporate Plan. The Corporate Risk Register and mitigating actions are scrutinised at each Audit Committee meeting. Risk management is also a standing agenda item at monthly meetings of the SMT.

6.3 There were 11 corporate risks on the Corporate Risk Register at April 2023 and the corporate risks with the highest residual scores (shown in brackets) were as follows:

CR. 01 Failure to develop and deliver the capital investment programme for the District (20)

CR.02 Non-compliance with legislative requirements, including procurement (20)

CR. 03 Failure to effectively manage waste (20)

CR. 04 Failure to provide timely planning decisions (16)

CR.05 Failure to adequately plan for the future and deliver efficiencies and improvement (16)

CR. 07 Failure to implement an economic development programme to regenerate the District and attract inward investment due to financial uncertainties caused by the current economic and political climate, including the NI Protocol (20)

CR. 09 Risk that Council does not adequately react to the Economic Shocks facing the district, therefore failing in its objectives to regenerate and build a prosperous district due to the inability of Council to be financially sustainable in the long term (20)

CR. 10 Failure to effectively plan for and manage a cyber security attack (20)

CR. 11 Risk of Industrial Action leading to the failure to have necessary staffing structures and resourcing to deliver services (20)

## 7. Internal Audit

7.1 ASM Limited were reappointed on 01 April 2019 as Internal Auditors with the final one year extension period approved in April 2022 to cover the year 2022/23.

7.2 From the Internal Audit Plan 2022/23, 8 Internal Audit Reports were reported to the Audit Committee during the year, 7 of which received a satisfactory assurance rating. One service area, Community Centres – compliance with building checklist, received a limited assurance rating. A review of grant funding applications to DfC was also completed.

7.3 All of the Internal Audit assurance work as detailed in the final Internal Audit Plan 2022/23, as approved by the Audit Committee, was completed.

7.4 ASM also supported the Council in a HR matter and completed a TOIL payment review – Strangford Road Officers (Cleansing and Refuse) with the final report dated 15 September 2022.

7.5 ASM, the Council's Internal Auditors, raised significant control issues in their Annual Report dated 01 April 2023. ASM stated that the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards ("PSIAS") requires that they bring to the Council's attention those significant control issues which may be relevant to the preparation of the Governance Statement for the year ended 31 March 2023. On this basis, they highlighted

- a) the limited assurance provided in the Community Centres - compliance with building checklist review
- b) the limited progress made in implementing the recommendations in the 2021/22 review of Estates Management and Security; IT Strategy; and IT systems and security. In particular, the Estates Management and Security and IT Strategy reviews which were previously issued with a limited assurance rating and there has been a lack of progress, exposing the Council to unacceptable risk
- c) the recommendations and learnings from the TOIL payment review – Strangford Road Officers (Cleansing and Refuse)

### Internal Audit Annual Assurance Opinion

7.6 The Committee reviewed the Annual Internal Audit Assurance Report for 2022/23 at its meeting on 04 April 2023 and noted the Auditor's overall opinion that notwithstanding the significant issues identified above, the Council's systems in relation to internal control, risk management and governance were, in general adequate and operated effectively and they were able to provide satisfactory assurance in relation to the effective and efficient achievement of the Council's objectives.

7.7 The Audit Committee welcomed the overall opinion of Satisfactory Assurance and commended Officers for their good work. The Committee also requested regular progress

updates on the actions taken to address the significant issues referred to the Internal Audit Annual Assurance Report.

#### Follow up Review of Internal Audit Recommendations

7.8 The Committee also reviewed on 04 April 2023 a follow up report from Internal Audit on the Implementation of Prior Year Internal Audit Recommendations for 2021/22. The review identified that, out of the 40 accepted recommendations, 11 recommendations were fully implemented, 10 recommendations were partially implemented, 18 recommendations were not implemented, 1 recommendation was no longer accepted.

7.9 The Assistant Director of Finance and Performance also reported during the year the progress on the implementation of the Internal Audit Recommendations in the years prior to 2021/22. This included an update on the risk facing the Council when these recommendations were not implemented on a timely basis which enabled the Audit Committee to have a fuller understanding of the implications of these recommendations not being in place.

7.10 The Audit Committee is committed to ensuring the prior year Internal Audit recommendations are completed and reported to the Audit Committee at each meeting.

#### Tender for Internal Audit Services

7.11 Newry Mourne and Down District Council procured the services of ASM again as its Internal Audit Services provider from 01 April 2019. The contract was for two years with the options of two one-year extensions. The Audit Committee agreed to the second one year extension period which will be utilised to work on the fourth year of the four year Internal Audit Plan, i.e., 2022/23.

#### Approval of Internal Audit Plan 2023/24 and Internal Audit Strategy

7.12 The Annual Internal Audit Plan for 2023/24 will be brought to the Audit Committee Meeting in July 2023 for approval.

7.13 The Internal Audit Plan will then be kept under review throughout the year and will be considered against any emerging risks identified as part of the Council's wider risk management processes. Any future proposed changes will be brought to the Audit Committee for consideration.

### **8. External Audit Strategy**

8.1 The NIAO will present their Annual Audit Strategy for the Year Ending 31 March 2023 to the Audit Committee on 04 July 2023.

8.2 The Audit certification deadline for certifying local government bodies' accounts is 30 September 2023 and to ensure compliance a meeting has been scheduled for 21 September 2023 to review and approve the audited accounts so they can be signed by the deadline.

## 9. Performance Improvement Arrangements

9.1 Every year the LGA is required to report on whether each Council has discharged its duties in relation to improvement planning, the publication of improvement information and the extent to which each Council has acted in accordance with the Department's Guidance.

9.2 The LGA proposed an unqualified audit and assessment opinion, with no statutory recommendations being made. An Audit and Assessment certificate of compliance has been received.

9.3 The LGA has certified that the Council has discharged its duties in connection with improvement planning and the publication of improvement information in accordance with section 92 of the Act and has acted in accordance with the Department for Communities guidance sufficiently.

9.4 The LGA has been unable to assess whether the Council has discharged its duties under Part 12 of the Act, however, has acted in accordance with the DFC's guidance sufficiently during 2022/23.

9.5 The LGA has put forward the 3 following 'proposals for improvement' to assist the Council in meeting its performance improvement responsibilities in future years.

- a) An electronic performance management system would help to achieve long term continuous improvement as it would provide the basis for a more reliable system for identifying and monitoring improvements, as well as creating efficiencies in the process that could free up time to spend on value adding activities.
- b) The Council should consider using Internal Audit to review the performance improvement arrangements.
- c) Council should consider enhancing transparency of the self-assessment report by providing more detailed narrative to allow the reader to better understand how Council has determined the ratings of the trends in performance. Furthermore, where there are downward trends in performance or the Council has assessed targets are not likely to be achieved, appropriate explanations should be included as to how Council intends to address this

9.6 Strengthening existing performance management arrangements and embedding a culture of performance and improvement has gained momentum within Newry Mourne and

Down District Council. It is vital that performance is used as a key driver to identify improvements and facilitate the delivery of effective, efficient and value for money services in the post COVID-19 environment.

## **10. Acknowledgments**

10.1 As Chair of the Audit Committee, I wish to extend my thanks to the Members for their support during the year and to the political parties for ensuring continuity of membership on the Committee from year to year. On behalf of the Audit Committee, I wish also to thank officers, the Internal and External Auditors for their hard work, also their open engagement with the Committee, thereby allowing it to meet its responsibilities.

**Brona Slevin**  
**Independent Chairperson**  
**04 July 2023**

**NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

50

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**Minutes of Special Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 24 July 2023 at 6.00pm via Microsoft Teams &  
Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre**

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<b>In the Chair:</b>	Councillor L McEvoy (Chamber)	
<b>In Attendance in Chamber</b>	Councillor J Brennan Councillor R Howell Councillor D McAteer Councillor H Reilly	Councillor O Hanlon Councillor A Lewis Councillor A Mathers
<b>In Attendance via Teams:</b>	Councillor P Byrne Councillor T Kelly Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor C Enright Councillor S O'Hare Councillor D Taylor
<b>Non-Members in Chamber:</b>	Councillor P Campbell Councillor J Jackson	Councillor V Harte Councillor A McMurray
<b>Non-Members via Teams:</b>	Councillor T Andrews Councillor W Clarke Councillor G Hanna Councillor O Magennis Councillor K Murphy Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor C Bowsie Councillor L Devlin Councillor M Larkin Councillor D Murphy Councillor M Savage Councillor J Truesdale
<b>Officials in Attendance:</b>	Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director Leisure and Sport Mrs C Miskelly, Assistant Director Corporate Services (HR & Safeguarding) Mr P Preen, HR Operations Manager Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting) Mrs L Cummins (Democratic Services Officer)	
<b>Also in Attendance Via Teams:</b>	Ms N Largey, Legal Advisor Belfast City Council	

**SPR/095/2023:                    APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

There was an apology received from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive.

**SPR/096/2023:                    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

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

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on item 3 deemed to be exempt under paragraphs 4 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014:

**4. Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council.**

**5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.**

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Brennan seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

**SPR/097/2023**

**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BRIEFING PAPER**

**Read:** Report dated 24 July 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Industrial Relations Briefing Paper (**Copy circulated**)

**Agreed:** It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Brennan, that Elected members note the following:

- **The progress made to date on the ongoing negotiations and a further paper to be brought back to Council with regards to the Consultative Forum.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 8.06pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 August 2023.

**Signed:** **Councillor Leeanne McEvoy**  
**Chairperson**

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

**LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN (CLOSED SESSION)**

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor S Murphy, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following items:

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

When the Committee came out of closed session, the Chairman advised the following had been agreed:

**P/044/2023: LDP PROGRESS REPORT**

**Read:** Report dated 28 June 2023 from Mr A McKay Chief Planning Officer regarding the Local Development Plan: Progress Report on Revised Timetable and Work Programme for finalising the draft Plan Strategy.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Enright seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed:

- a) To approve the draft revised Timetable (Appendix 1)
- b) Following Council approval, the Planning Department liaises with the PAC and other key stakeholders prior to submitting the revised Timetable to DfI for it's agreement.
- c) Following agreement of the revised Timetable by DfI, it be made available and published in accordance with Regulation 8 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.
- d) To note the work programme for finalising the draft Plan Strategy (Appendix 2)

**P/045/2023: CONSULTATION RESPONSE**  
**RE: REVISED REGIONAL STRATEGIC PLANNING POLICY**  
**- RENEWAL AND LOW CARBON ENERGY**

**Read:** Report dated 28 June 2023 from Mr A McKay Chief Planning Officer regarding a consultation response on the Revised Regional Strategic Planning Pollicy – Renewal and Low Carbon Energy.  
**(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Enright seconded by Councillor Larkin, it was agreed to approve the Council's response to the Revised Regional Strategic Planning Policy on Renewable Energy and Low Carbon Energy public consultation document, subject to including points made regarding the grid.

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FW: FW: C/075/2023 - Notice of Motion - Voting Age Reduction

Taggart, Sarah-Louise  
To: Starkey, Donna

Reply
 Reply All
 Forward

Mon 24/07/2023 12:08

C.075.2023 Response to Sec of State.docx 144 KB
 MC\_23\_125 - Response.pdf 477 KB

**From:** Correspondence Mailbox <[correspondence@nio.gov.uk](mailto:correspondence@nio.gov.uk)>  
**Sent:** Thursday, July 20, 2023 9:37 AM  
**To:** Taggart, Sarah-Louise <[Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)>  
**Subject:** Re: FW: C/075/2023 - Notice of Motion - Voting Age Reduction

Good morning

Thank you for your letter dated 7 July 2023. As per our letter to you dated 21 April 2023 (attached for ease of reference), the UK Government position remains the same.

Kind regards  
Shannon

On Fri, 7 Jul 2023 at 17:18, Taggart, Sarah-Louise <[Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)> wrote:

**From:** Taggart, Sarah-Louise  
**Sent:** Friday, July 7, 2023 5:16 PM  
**To:** [chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk)  
**Cc:** [democratic.services@nmandd.org](mailto:democratic.services@nmandd.org)  
**Subject:** C/075/2023 - Notice of Motion - Voting Age Reduction

**Marie Ward**  
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn  
agus an Dúin**  
**Newry, Mourne  
and Down**  
District Council

54

Our ref: C/075/2023  
Your ref: MC/23/125

7 July 2023

The Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP  
Secretary of State for N. Ireland  
Erskine House  
20 - 32 Chichester Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4GF

Email: [chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Secretary of State

**Re: Notice of Motion: Voting Age Reduction**

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 3 July 2023, Members voiced their extreme disappointment at the unsatisfactory response received from your offices and ask you again to strongly support the call for the right to vote for 16 year old plus to be extended in order to ensure young people can participate within the democratic institutions.

Council had also written to the governments of the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and Scotland and the Scottish Government have replied in support of the motion stating it has been found that young people in Scotland who were able to vote at age 16 were more likely to vote in later years, compared to those that began at 18.

Voting at 16 is not uncommon in other parts of the British Isles and the Welsh Senedd expanded their franchise in 2021 to promote young participation in democracy as part of other policies.

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

**Marie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**

**Oifig an Iúir  
Newry Office**  
O'Hagan House  
Monaghan Row  
Newry BT35 8DJ

**Oifig Dhún Pádraig  
Downpatrick Office**  
Downshire Civic Centre  
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road  
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

0330 137 4000 (Council)  
[council@nmandd.org](mailto:council@nmandd.org)  
[www.newrymournedown.org](http://www.newrymournedown.org)

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agus Ard Mhacha Theas  
Serving Down  
and South Armagh**

Fwd: Fw: Notice of Motion - Voting Age Reduction - Message (HTML)

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Set a flag to remind you to follow-up on this item later.

### Fwd: Fw: Notice of Motion - Voting Age Reduction



Correspondence Mailbox <correspondence@nio.gov.uk>  
To: Starkey, Donna

Reply Reply All Forward

Mon 26/06/2023 10:58

If there are problems with how this message is displayed, click here to view it in a web browser.

- C.075.2023 Letter to Sec of State.pdf .pdf File
- C.075.2023 Response to Sec of State.docx .docx File

- Letter from Minister of State for NI re C.075.2023 Reducing Minimum Voting Age to 16.pdf .pdf File

Good morning

Thank you for your email. The position in our previous correspondence remains unchanged.

Kind regards  
Shannon

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**From:** Starkey, Donna <Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org>  
**Sent:** 19 June 2023 16:41  
**To:** HEATON-HARRIS, Chris <chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk>  
**Subject:** Notice of Motion - Voting Age Reduction

Good afternoon

Please find attached correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for your attention.

Windows taskbar with icons for File Explorer, Word, Chrome, Edge, and Outlook. System tray shows 20°C, T-storms, 15:17, and 26/06/2023.

**Marie Ward**  
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn  
agus an Dúin**  
**Newry, Mourne  
and Down**  
District Council

56

Our ref: C/075/2023  
Your ref: MC/23/125

14 June 2023

The Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP  
Secretary of State for N. Ireland  
Erskine House  
20 - 32 Chichester Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4GF

Email: [chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:chris.heatonharris.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Secretary of State

**Re: Notice of Motion: Voting Age Reduction**

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 5 June 2023 Members considered your response to correspondence sent following a motion passed at Council regarding a reduction in the voting age (see copy attached).

Members voiced their disappointment at the response received and asked we as a Council write to you again to strongly support the call for the right to vote for 16 year old plus to be extended. Member also spoke in support of the proposal highlighting that a better process should be authorised to allow younger people to vote and to be able to input on matters affect them.

It was agreed that Council would write to the governments of the Isle of Man, Jersey, Guernsey and Scotland to build a stronger case of why young people should be afforded the right to vote and participate within the democratic institution.

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

**Marie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**

**Oifig an Iúir  
Newry Office**  
O'Hagan House  
Monaghan Row  
Newry BT35 8DJ

**Oifig Dhún Pádraig  
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0330 137 4000 (Council)  
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[www.newrymournedown.org](http://www.newrymournedown.org)

**Ag freastal ar an Dún  
agus Ard Mhacha Theas  
Serving Down  
and South Armagh**





Northern  
Ireland  
Office

**Steve Baker MP**  
Minister of State for Northern  
Ireland

1 Horse Guards Road  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

Erskine House  
20-32 Chichester St  
Belfast  
BT1 4GF

E: [correspondence@nio.gov.uk](mailto:correspondence@nio.gov.uk)  
[www.gov.uk/nio](http://www.gov.uk/nio)  
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**Marie Ward**

Chief Executive of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
By email: [aisling.murray@nmandd.org](mailto:aisling.murray@nmandd.org)

21 April 2023

Our reference: MC/23/125

Your Reference: C/075/2023

Dear Marie,

Thank you for your letter dated 15 March 2023 bringing to the attention of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland the Council's motion on reducing the minimum voting age to sixteen. As the Minister with responsibility for elections, I have been asked to respond.

The Government recognises and hugely values the contribution young people make to society, however, the Government has no plans to lower the voting age, having been elected on a manifesto commitment to maintain the current franchise at 18.

The age of 18 is recognised in the vast majority of democratic countries as the age at which an individual becomes an adult. Accordingly, the vast majority of liberal democracies worldwide consider 18 the right age to enfranchise young people. This includes the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and almost all European Union countries.

I hope this helps explain the position of the Government.

Yours sincerely,

**STEVE BAKER MP**  
**MINISTER OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND**

**Marie Ward**  
Chief Executive



Comhairle Ceantair  
**an Iúir, Mhúrn  
agus an Dúin**  
**Newry, Mourne  
and Down**  
District Council

59

Our ref: C/075/2023

15 March 2023

The Rt Hon Chris Heaton-Harris MP  
Secretary of State for N. Ireland  
Erskine House  
20 - 32 Chichester Street  
Belfast  
BT1 4GF

Dear Secretary of State

**Re: Notice of Motion: Voting Age Reduction**

At a Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 6 March 2023 the following motion was agreed:

*"Newry Mourne and Down District Council calls for the voting age of 18 to be reduced to 16 and if this motion is adopted seeks the support of the remaining councils in Northern Ireland to write to the Secretary of State calling him to amend the necessary legislation to enable 16-year olds and upwards to vote."*

On speaking to the motion, many Members agreed this would be a positive way forward and would encourage young people, who are the future, to engage more fully in political life.

I would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and I look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

**Marie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**

**Oifig an Iúir**  
**Newry Office**  
O'Hagan House  
Monaghan Row  
Newry BT35 8DJ

**Oifig Dhún Pádraig**  
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Minister for Parliamentary Business  
Ministear airson Gnothaichean na Pàrlamaid  
George Adam MSP/BPA



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

60

T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Donna.Starkey  
Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org

Our Reference: 202300363860  
Your Reference: -

3 July 2023

Dear Marie Ward,

Thank you for your letter of 14 June 2023 to the First Minister. As voting rights and elections fall within my Ministerial portfolio, I have been asked to respond.

I was pleased to see that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have recognised that young people should be given the opportunity to fully engage with our political systems by having the right to vote. You may already be aware that in Scotland, 16- and 17-year olds have been included in the franchise since 2014 for referendums, and since 2015 for Scottish Parliament and local government elections.

In [a recent study](#) conducted by the University of Edinburgh and University of Sheffield, it was found that young people in Scotland who were able to vote at age 16 were more likely to vote in later years when compared to those who could vote for the first time at 18. The Scottish Government is proud to see the positive impact this policy has had on our young people.

As you point out in your letter, voting at 16 is not uncommon in other parts of the British Isles, with legislatures in the Isle of Man, Jersey and Guernsey endorsing this right. Our colleagues in the Welsh Senedd also expanded their franchise in 2021, and like the Scottish Government are promoting youth participation in democracy as part of other policies.

Among our European neighbours, both Malta and Austria allow 16 year olds to cast their ballots in all elections, while this age group can also vote in certain types of elections in countries like Germany, Estonia and Belgium. You also may be interested to note that in 2022, the European Parliament [passed a resolution](#) in support of the principle (without prejudice to existing constitutional arrangements in

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1  
3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



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member states) that all European Union citizens should be able to vote in European Parliament elections from age 16.

61

I am proud of the positive impact lowering the voting age to 16 has had on young people in Scotland, and I hope Scotland and our colleagues in other devolved legislatures that have promoted voting rights continue to set a positive example in helping young people participate in politics.

I thank you for your interest in engaging with the Scottish Government on voting franchise, and wish Newry, Mourne and Down District Council well in advancing the voting rights of young people.

Kind regards



**GEORGE ADAM**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

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3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



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From the Permanent Secretary  
Dr Julie Harrison

Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry Mourne and Down District Council  
15 Trevor Hill  
NEWRY  
BT34 1DN

Room 701  
Clarence Court  
10-18 Adelaide Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 8GB  
Telephone: (028) 9054 1175  
Email: [perm.sec@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:perm.sec@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)

Via email:  
[Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)

Your reference: C/084/2023  
Our reference: SCORR-0311-2023  
14 July 2023

Dear Marie

### **EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – FIXED BRIDGE DESIGN FOR NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD**

Thank you for your letter dated 7 July 2023 regarding the decision by the Department for Infrastructure to adopt a non-opening 50-metre fixed bridge as its preference for the Newry Southern Relief Road.

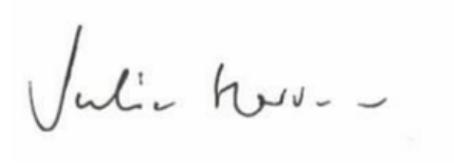
It is my understanding from your letter that Newry Mourne and Down District Council has suggested that the Department engage with the Shared Island Unit. Departmental colleagues will continue to advance the project, however, any contribution or support for any project from the Irish Government would be a matter for them to consider.

To be clear again, the Department explored all engineering options for the crossing of Newry Canal. These included a lock gate option which would have necessitated extensive engineering works to achieve the additional 25m clearance required, significantly impacting on the Scheduled Monument. The cost of this option was estimated to exceed £50m. Operation of the lock would have required a significant volume of water (75,000m<sup>3</sup>) to be pumped in and out for one vessel which would have taken a full day to achieve.

Any supported span less than 50m adversely impacts on the scheduled monument of Newry Canal. Unsupported spans opening less than 10m, that would accommodate a mast, were also considered. Designs included a short mid-span opening or sliding section. However, experience confirms that cost savings in construction would be outweighed by the implications of operation and maintenance. These forms of openings settle over time, because of their function and traffic loading making them inappropriate for the loading imposed by a strategic road of this significance.

I would also note that any change to the design of the bridge at this stage would ultimately delay the delivery of the scheme. The period of delay would be subject to the level of amendments required.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Julie Harrison". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

**JULIE HARRISON**

**From the Permanent Secretary  
Mark Browne**

Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry Mourne and Down District Council

C/O Sarah Taggart  
[Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)



Rathgael House  
43 Balloo Road  
Rathgill  
BANGOR  
BT19 7PR

Tel: 028 9127 9309

Email: [mark.browne@education-ni.gov.uk](mailto:mark.browne@education-ni.gov.uk)

Our Ref: SCORR-0403-2023  
Your Ref: C/132/2023  
17 July 2023

Dear Marie,

Thank you for your letter of 7 July in relation to the School Sports Programme.

At the outset, I would make clear that I share your support for PE in schools and appreciate the obvious benefits it brings to children and young people. PE is a compulsory Area of Learning within the curriculum from Foundation Stage and from this early age, children and young people have the opportunity to engage in games, athletics, dance and gymnastics and from Key Stage 2, swimming.

The budget for 2023-24 for NI Departments was announced by the Secretary of State in a Written Ministerial Statement to Parliament on 27 April 2023.

Based on this budget allocation, there remains an estimated funding gap in education of c£360m in order just to stand still in 2023-24. The Secretary of State also announced that any further in-year Barnett consequentials will be used to repay the £297m overspend/borrowing from the 2022-23 Budget. This will severely limit the possibility of additional in-year funding being made available through monitoring rounds.

The Department therefore has had no choice but to take a number of very difficult decisions in regard to the funding of a range of initiatives, including the Schools Sports Programme. As you may be aware, an initial £90K was allocated to the providers for the 2023- 24 year and funding ceased on 31 May 2023.

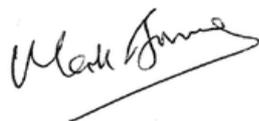
It is important to note that the programme, which was been funded by the Department for a number of years, did not replace curricular PE; rather it was designed to support it and those teachers that teach PE each day. The end of funding for the Programme does not change the Department's recommendation that pupils should receive two hours of quality curricular PE each week.

I, recognise how disappointing these decisions have been for everyone involved in the delivery of these initiatives and for the young people who have benefitted from them but they were necessary in light of the financial constraints within which we are required to operate.

For your information, an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) was launched on 19 June 2023 and sets out the Department's assessment of the impact of the Budget on services across the whole education sector. The Department welcomes views on any aspects of the document and will use any comments received to inform future decision making. Interested parties are asked to respond by 13 August 2023 – please see attached link to the press release:

[Consultation launched on Education budget allocation | Department of Education \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/consultation-launched-on-education-budget-allocation)

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Browne', with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the signature.

**MARK BROWNE (Dr)**



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66

Your ref: C/136/2023

Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Via email: [Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)

10<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Dear Ms Ward

I note your letter of 7<sup>th</sup> July 2023.

Please be assured that, following the implementation of robust mitigations, all Ulster University graduates who were eligible to graduate have done so on time, with their degree classification.

It is disappointing that a fact check had not been enacted before this motion was raised. Moving forward, I would encourage Council Officials to engage directly with us on such matters.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'P. Bartholomew'.

**Professor Paul Bartholomew**  
**Vice-Chancellor & President**



**FROM THE PERMANENT SECRETARY  
RICHARD PENGELLY CB**

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via email: [Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)

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

Your ref: C/138/2023  
Our ref: TOF-0339-2023

17 July 2023

Dear Marie,

### **NOTICE OF MOTION – CONVERSION THERAPY**

Thank you for your letter of 7 July and for drawing my attention to the Notice of Motion agreed by the Council on 3 July.

As you may know, the principal responsibility for this area of policy lies with the Department for Communities (DfC), though as a cross-cutting issue any decisions regarding a proposed ban on conversion therapy practices would require the agreement of the Northern Ireland Executive.

I understand that work is ongoing within DfC, supported by engagement with stakeholders, in order to bring forward policy proposals for future Ministers as part of the development of a new Sexual Orientation Strategy. My Department remains committed to working collaboratively with DfC and others on this issue, with a particular focus on providing advice on whether any proposed offences or penalties are proportionate and consistent with existing criminal law for Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely

**RICHARD PENGELLY CB**



Department for  
**Communities**  
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

An Roinn  
**Pobal**

Department for  
**Commonities**

68

**From: Beverley Wall on behalf of  
Colum Boyle  
Permanent Secretary**

**Level 9  
Causeway Exchange  
1-7 Bedford Street  
BELFAST  
BT2 7EG**

**Telephone: 028) 9051 2662  
E-mail: [colum.boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:colum.boyle@communities-ni.gov.uk)  
Our Ref: PSC 0537.23  
Date: 19 July 2023**

Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry Mourne and Down District Council

Via email: [sarah-louise.taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:sarah-louise.taggart@nmandd.org)

Dear Ms Ward

## **NOTICE OF MOTION – CONVERSION THERAPY**

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2023 to Colum Boyle on the above matter. As Deputy Secretary for Strategic Policy and Professional Services, I have been asked to respond to you.

The absence of Ministers has meant that work on the formulation of policy to ban conversion therapy practices has been unavoidably constrained. In addition, consultation on, and finalisation of, any proposals will require Executive approval and the introduction of legislation cannot take place in the absence of the Assembly. Next steps, therefore, will be for the consideration of an incoming Minister.

Yours sincerely,

**Beverley Wall  
Deputy Secretary**

**From the Permanent Secretary  
and HSC Chief Executive**



Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
[Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org](mailto:Sarah-Louise.Taggart@nmandd.org)

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Email: [peter.may@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:peter.may@health-ni.gov.uk)

Your Ref: C/138/2023

Our ref: SCORR-0835-2023

Date: 26 July 2023

Dear Marie

Thank you for your letter dated 7 July regarding the practice of conversion therapy in Northern Ireland.

The Department of Health does not fund any organisation to carry out conversion therapy, nor do any statutory services within Health and Social Care prescribe conversion therapy. The Department for Communities (DfC) lead on policy related to conversion therapy and next steps in relation to this would be the decision of any future Minister for Communities.

Following the passing of a Motion in the NI Assembly in 2021, calling for the ban on conversion therapy, Department of Health (DoH) officials have engaged with colleagues in DfC to work collaboratively and ensure any health-related matters are considered as part of any policy progression. This is however a complex, cross cutting matter and in the lack of a functioning Executive progress has been unavoidably limited.

Officials in my Department continue to work closely with their counterparts in DfC and other departments regarding this. From a health perspective, officials seek to carry out some exploratory work on HSC impacts of any upcoming legislation to prepare for the implementation of such a ban in advance of the return of a functioning Executive.

I hope that this addresses the matters raised in your letter.

Yours sincerely



**Peter May**

From **the Permanent Secretary**  
Dr Denis McMahon



**Our Reference: SCORR-0217-2023**

Ms Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry, Mourne and Down  
District Council

Email:  
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25 July 2023

Dear Ms Ward

### **EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – GLEBE HOUSE, KILCLIEF**

Thank you for your letter of 7 July 2023, on behalf of Glebe House/Harmony Community Trust. I am aware of the significant role that Glebe House/Harmony Community Trust makes in helping build Good Relations as well as the valuable contribution to the local economy and to health and well-being of participants.

Glebe House/Harmony Community Trust has applied for funding to The Executive Office's Central Good Relations Fund (CGRF). This is an annual, competitive process, with applications assessed and prioritised on the basis of merit, and there is never a guarantee of funding. The CGRF is substantially oversubscribed, and funding sought always exceeds available resources. In 2023/24 we received 201 applications seeking total funding of £7.36m. Consequently, it has not been possible to support all worthwhile projects. While this is the case in any year, the issue is particularly acute in 2023/24 given the well-publicised financial pressures on the Executive, and the consequent reductions in resources available to Departments.

Given the challenging budget position across The Executive Office, we are in a position where difficult decisions have had to be made. To inform our decision-making process on how we allocate our budget, we conducted an Equality Impact Assessment. Our consultation document explained the detail of the financial pressures TEO was facing; the steps we had taken to cut administration and internal budgets; and the reductions which we still had to find.

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The personal information (e.g., name, personal email/home postal address) included in your correspondence, which the Executive Office now holds, will be handled in accordance with data protection legislation. It will be kept secure and only shared with relevant officials for the purpose of providing a response. This information will be retained for no longer than is necessary, and in line with the Department's retention and disposal schedule.

Initial feedback received through the EQIA public consultation has now been considered and I can confirm an allocation of £1.4m for the CGRF. Regrettably this is not sufficient to fund the Glebe House application nor many other well-established projects. The outcomes of Phase 1 of the consultation process, summarising the progress and comments received to date, have been published at:

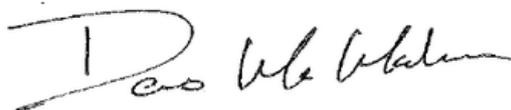
[Consultation on The Executive Office Budget Allocation for 2023-2024 - Equality Impact Assessment | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

Phase 2 remains open until 2 August should you wish to provide feedback to be taken into consideration for any in-year reallocations.

If helpful, there may also be potential to apply for funding under the Community Relations Cultural Diversity grant scheme that is delivered by the Community Relations Council, and we have highlighted this opportunity to Harmony Community Trust.

I recognise that the outcomes of this year's allocation will have a substantial impact on Glebe House/Harmony Community Trust. While we do not have flexibility within the current budget allocation to take any other approach, my colleague Gareth Johnston has written to the Chair of Glebe House agreeing to a meeting with the charity and political representatives, where these issues can be further discussed.

Yours sincerely



**DR DENIS McMAHON**  
TEO Permanent Secretary

cc: Gareth Johnston  
Anne Tohill  
Gavin King  
Angharad Moore  
Charlene Sharkey  
Michael Withers  
Mark Maher  
EIS Team  
TEO Good Relations Team  
TEO Permanent Secretary's Office

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The personal information (e.g., name, personal email/home postal address) included in your correspondence, which the Executive Office now holds, will be handled in accordance with data protection legislation. It will be kept secure and only shared with relevant officials for the purpose of providing a response. This information will be retained for no longer than is necessary, and in line with the Department's retention and disposal schedule.



**From the Permanent Secretary  
Dr Julie Harrison**

Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
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Your reference: C/135/2023  
Our reference: SCORR-0309-2023  
26 July 2023

Dear Marie

## **NOTICE OF MOTION – ELECTRONIC COPIES OF VALID INSURANCE**

Thank you for your email of 7 July 2023, requesting consideration to allow the acceptance of electronic copies of valid motor insurance when taxing a vehicle at the Post Office.

The introduction of The Motor Vehicles (Electronic Communication of Certificates of Insurance) Order 2010 provided insurers with the necessary legislation to enable them to supply policyholders with valid electronic copies of their insurance certificate or cover note. During policy development, discussions were held with a number of stakeholders including the Police and the Post Office about the requirements needed to facilitate the acceptance of this proof.

Post Office management at the time specifically requested that the regulations only allow for a legible **printed** copy of the electronically communicated certificate to be produced at Post Office counters when applying for vehicle excise duty. Post Office management advised that this is the only practical way in which counter staff can deal with electronic certificates.

The removal of the requirement to provide vehicle insurance proof at the time of purchase in GB is a byproduct of the merger of insurance and car registration databases, and the GB Police National Computer, currently called 'Tutelage'.

Tutelage is a joint initiative between the GB Police Service, DVLA and the Motor Insurers' Bureau (MIB) and is aimed at reducing the number of uninsured vehicles on our roads. The MIB estimates around one million of the 40m drivers in the UK are currently using their cars without insurance.

Tutelage utilises automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) technology to quickly cross reference car registrations with insurance data on the MID. In addition, regular checks are carried out under the scheme to identify vehicles that have not been declared 'off the road' and do not have valid insurance cover in place.

The owners of identified uninsured vehicles are sent a letter advising them to remedy the situation before further action is taken. These checks make the reliance on a certificate as proof of insurance unnecessary, similar to the abolition of the need to display a vehicle tax disc in October 2014.

A week-long pilot of Tutelage was held in October 2020 by the PSNI, but due to budgetary constraints, the scheme could not be extended further.

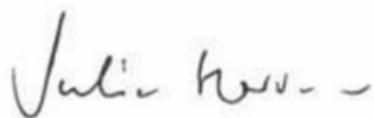
Until further funding is secured to introduce the scheme on a permanent basis, the small number of motorists who try to purchase Vehicle Excise Duty for the first time online on the same day they take out insurance on that vehicle, will continue to be directed to visit their nearest Post Office along with a printed copy of their insurance cover.

All other motorists, including those who purchase new vehicles but insure them in advance of pick up, can continue to purchase Vehicle Excise Duty online without the requirement to provide proof of insurance, as has been the case since July 2014 in both GB and NI.

In the meantime, the Department has no plans to legislate to allow electronic copies of valid insurance cover to be presented at the Post Office.

I hope this response clarifies the situation.

Yours sincerely



**JULIE HARRISON**