

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 4 September 2023 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber

In the Chair: Councillor V Harte

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor D Finn
Councillor A Finnegan	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor R Howell	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor T Kelly
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor A McMurray	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Savage	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale	

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor L McEvoy	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor J Tinnelly	

Officials in attendance in Chamber:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs L Dillon, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance via Teams:

Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Tourism, Culture and Events

C/160/2023

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Gibbons, S Murphy and Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services.

The Chairperson spoke of her pleasure at being at Wake The Giant and Eats and Beats Festivals over the past few weeks and congratulated everyone involved with these events for the excellent work in bringing them to the District. She added both events had attracted a large footfall to the area and it was great to see the crowds of people out and about once again after Covid.

The Chairperson congratulated all local Community Groups and Irish Summer Schools on the wonderful summer schemes and family fundays held over the Summer. She spoke of how these were hugely beneficial to Communities especially with the Cost of Living Crisis.

The Chairperson condemned the act carried out by a criminal gang in the Slieve Gullion area that day and sent best wishes on a speedy recovery to the victim.

The Chairperson referred to recent report in the press and social media regarding Newry City Park and asked the Chief Executive for an update.

Mrs Ward advised she had been working with officers and she would communicate with all Councillors the following day outlining Councils position with regards to Newry City Park prior to the closing date. She added the notice of motion (C/156/2023) was a matter for Council and had been deferred to the Strategy Resources Committee meeting on 14 September 2023.

Councillor Devlin commended everyone involved in the Eats and Beats Festival in Newcastle including the cleansing and events team from Council, Shin Dig Events, Mourne Larder and all the acts and vendors and congratulated them all on what was a phenomenal event.

Councillors Clarke, Reilly and Truesdale echoed the sentiments of Councillor Devlin in thanking all those involved in organising the Eats and Beats Festival and spoke of the importance of an event review taking place for evaluation and feedback. Mrs Ward confirmed reviews of Council events were carried out.

C/161/2023

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/162/2023 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 AUGUST 2023

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 7 August 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 August 2023 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Devlin.

C/163/2023 COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 AUGUST 2023

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 7 August 2023 (copy circulated).

C/156/2023: Notice of Motion, Newry City Park Funding Application

In welcoming the Chief Executive's assurance that clarification would be provided on the Council's position regarding the Peace Plus application for funding for Newry City Park, Councillor Savage stated it was important to clarify what criteria Council did not meet.

The Chief Executive confirmed the correspondence to be issued to Councillors would address the matter.

C/148/2023 -C/075/2023: Notice of Motion, Reduction in Minimum Voting Age

Councillor Andrews enquired if a response had been received from the political parties regarding the correspondence sent.

The Chief Executive confirmed she would check and come back to Councillor Andrews directly in relation to his query.

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 August 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Kearns.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/164/2023 MINUTES OF SPECIAL ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2023

Read: Minutes of Special Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 August 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Special Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 August 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on

the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Galbraith.

C/165/2023 MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 AUGUST 2023

Read: Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 August 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 August 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Galbraith.

C/166/2023 MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 AUGUST 2023

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

C/167/2023 MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 AUGUST 2023

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21 August 2023 (copy circulated).

AHC/200/2022: Newry Leisure Centre Swimming Pool

Councillors Reilly and Hanna voiced their concern at the unreliability of the opening hours at Kilkeel Swimming Pool and sought assurance that Senior Management Team were working to resolve the issues.

The Chief Executive advised she would ask that a report be tabled at the Active and Healthy Communities Committee in relation to Kilkeel Swimming Pool.

Agreed: The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21 August 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Howell.

C/168/2023

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 AUGUST 2023**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 22 August 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 22 August 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Andrews.**

C/169/2023

PLANNING SECTION

There were no issues arising.

CORRESPONDENCE

C/170/2023

**RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RE:
NOTICE OF MOTION C/133/2023 – STUDY OF LANGUAGES**

Read: Correspondence from the Department of Education regarding Study of languages dated 14 August 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor O'Hare voiced disappointment at the response received from the Permanent Secretary for Education, Dr Mark Browne, in relation to her motion on the study of languages.

Councillor O'Hare stated it was known in education systems worldwide that the study of languages should begin at primary level, and the fact that the study of languages was not compulsory at primary level was a matter of policy and the implications of that. She spoke of how school budgets were over stretched and funding was not being provided for the delivery of languages.

Councillor O'Hare referred to Dr Browne stating languages were compulsory at Key Stage 3 and said that in reality the amount of time allocated at Key Stage 3 for the study of languages was not stipulated in the curriculum and this meant languages might be offered for only one year and not all three. This policy decision had reduced the uptake of languages and at GCSE level, the study of languages was no longer compulsory. As a Council, Members had a responsibility to bring attention to education policy that contradicts acquired wisdom and common sense.

Councillor Byrne agreed with Councillor O'Hare and spoke at length about the importance of languages and how Primary School level was when to get people to fall in love with languages and how languages not being compulsory at GCSE level was also leading to a down turn.

Councillor Byrne voiced his disappointment at the response received and proposed Council write back to the Permanent Secretary for Education and request to know what action is being taken to improve the provision of languages. Councillor O'Hare seconded the proposal.

Councillors Reilly and Lee-Surginor supported Councillor O'Hare and Byrne in relation to the need for languages in education.

Councillor Reilly took the opportunity to voice concern at seeing first-hand the deterioration in the state of Kilkeel High School.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Finn to note response from the Department of Education regarding Notice of Motion C/133/2023, Study of Languages.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor O'Hare that Council write back to the Permanent Secretary for Education and request to know what action was being taken to improve the provision of languages.

C/171/2023 **RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/158/2023 – YOUNG CARERS**

Read: Correspondence from the Department of Health regarding young carers dated 24 August 2023. (Copy circulated)

In referring to the response received from the Department of Health, Councillor Devlin stated it confirmed what she had suspected in that there was a continuing shift of state responsibility to the charitable sector. The Department funded in part Action for Children and Barnardos and expected these groups to plug the hole and fund the shortfall.

Councillor Devlin referred to NI Census figures showing there were around 8,000 carers in Northern Ireland.

Councillor Devlin proposed Council write back to the Department of Health and request what the exact amount of funding from the Department was provided to young carers within Northern Ireland. Councillor McEvoy seconded the proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Finn to note the correspondence received from the Department of Health regarding Notice of Motion C/158/2023, Young Carers.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor McEvoy to request what the

exact amount of funding from the Department was provided to young carers within Northern Ireland.

C/172/2023 RESPONSE FROM HOME OFFICE RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/137/2023 – SEASONAL WORKERS

Read: Correspondence from the Home Office regarding seasonal workers dated 7 August 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Hanlon highlighted the reasoning for the motion was to address the impact on mushroom farmers in the north of Ireland and voiced her disappointment that the response received from the Home Office had not addressed that.

Councillor Byrne spoke in support of comments made by Councillor Hanlon and agreed that Council asked to be added to the Shortage Occupational list because of the issue of the 6 month visas. He added this needed to be addressed given that companies bordered the Republic of Ireland which operated under EU rules in terms of visas, and without it, the mushroom industry was being pushed to the brink of collapse.

Councillor Hanlon proposed Council write to the Mr Steve Baker, the under-secretary of state and request that mushroom workers be put on the Shortage Occupational List. Councillor Byrne seconded the proposal.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Finn to note the correspondence received from the Home Office regarding Notice of Motion C/137/2023, Seasonal Workers.

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Byrne to write to the Mr Steve Baker, the under-secretary of state and request that mushroom workers be put on the Shortage Occupational List.

The following motion was received from Councillor Andrews:

"Noting that former Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon had progressed the Ballynahinch By Pass project to the Direction Order that was made in April 2021 with only funding and a contractor now required; expressing deep concern that due to the lack of an Executive and budget, the Department has paused preliminary works on a number of major road schemes, including the much needed Ballynahinch By Pass and expressing our solidarity with local ratepayers and residents for decades over stop start politics that have had a major impact on projects such as this by pass.

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council reaffirms our total support for the Ballynahinch By Pass also agreeing to write to the Department for Infrastructure to determine firstly why the Ballynahinch By Pass has been halted when it is so advanced? Secondly what is the criteria for Road Schemes that will be prioritised?

Also acknowledging the need for political reform to restore the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and calls on the DUP to end its policy of abstentionism and return to Stormont to deliver the best outcomes for ALL the people of Northern Ireland."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Brennan.

In presenting the motion Councillor Andrews spoke at length about the history of the Ballynahinch By Pass as far back as 1960 when the scheme was very much on the agenda. He spoke of how elsewhere in Northern Ireland there had been roads opened, existing roads duelled and improved vastly, including the Dungiven bypass and others that had opened.

Councillor Andrews spoke of how the SDLP and other parties were totally committed to the A5 upgrade and other schemes and would endeavour to get from planning to full implementation and delivery. He added that Ballynahinch was crying out for the bypass as the existing infrastructure could not cope with the ever increasing traffic and that it was long overdue.

Councillor Andrews referred to the success of the bypass at Comber and how Ballynahinch would benefit from the bypass and called upon the Department to make it happen.

In moving the motion Councillor Andrews urged Members to back the call for the Ballynahinch bypass to be progressed for the benefit of the town and surrounding areas that constitute the gateway to the Mournes.

Councillor Brennan confirmed that Sinn Féin as a party recognised the urgent need for the Ballynahinch bypass and asked for clarity as to what was meant by the wording of stop start politics within the motion and what was meant by reforming the institutions.

Councillor Andrews replied that since the 1960s when the bypass was muted, there had been periods of stop and go, which was frustrating and the motion was to move the project forward. He added that reforming the institutions meant there was a need to look at a way to get the Assembly working for the benefit of everyone.

Councillor Brennan stated the recent announcement from the Department for Infrastructure, which put the Ballynahinch bypass under threat was a hammer blow to communities, campaigners and ratepayers. It was another stark reminder of the impact that Tory cuts were having on infrastructure and public services and the continued boycott of the DUP only facilitated this.

Councillor Brennan added the long standing campaign and the collective efforts to get the Ballynahinch bypass to shovel ready position must not be squandered and elected representatives must work together and send a message from Newry Mourne & Down District Council that any more delay on this vital project was unacceptable.

Councillor Jackson stated DUP was disgusted the Ballynahinch bypass had been put to the bottom of the pile and not to be progressed at any level as it was a lifeline for local people and visitors to boost tourism potential and the local economy. He added the lack of strategic vision for the project within the Department had been evident for decades and it was disappointing that it was as far away as ever before.

Councillor Taylor said it was very clear there was a lot of disappointment with the announcement and that Ballynahinch had failed to meet the criteria. As a party the UUP recognised the importance of the project from an economical and environmental perspective and the need for it to take place was a matter of urgency. In terms of the motion itself however the call for a wholesale political reform meant he would have to abstain.

Councillor Lee-Surginor on behalf of the Alliance party voiced support for the motion and his disappointment that it was not going ahead and that there needed to be political reform and restoration of the Executive as soon as possible.

Councillor Bowsie echoed Councillor Jackson in expressing his party's disappointment that the Ballynahinch bypass was being paused. He added the announcement was a bit of a red herring, because procurement for the bypass had stalled when there had been infrastructure ministers and spoke at length outlining the sequences of events to date.

Councillor Bowsie stated to blame DUP because there had not been an Infrastructure Minister in post for the last 10 months was ridiculous. Councillor Bowsie stated that whilst DUP supported the frustration expressed in the motion towards the 'pausing' of the Ballynahinch bypass it was not going to support a motion that contradicted the position on restoring the Executive and voiced his disappointment for including that.

Councillor Clarke stated the Ballynahinch Bypass was too serious an issue and a Council wide issue which all party's had continually campaigned. He spoke of how it was not only for the people of Ballynahinch but for commuters and investors who needed quality road infrastructure and that funding for this strategic project and this Council area needed to be put in place.

Councillor Kelly voiced support for the motion and spoke of how there should be a Minister in place to make the decision, and not put on a Permanent Secretary, for the benefit of the people of Ballynahinch and the wider District.

Councillor Andrews thanked everyone for their input and those who supported the motion.

The Chairperson then put the Motion to a vote by way of a show of hands, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	32
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	5

The Motion was carried.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Brennan to note that former Minister for Infrastructure, Nichola Mallon had progressed the Ballynahinch By Pass project to the Direction Order that was made in April 2021 with only funding and a contractor now required; expressing deep concern that due to the lack of an Executive and budget, the Department has paused preliminary works on a number of major road schemes, including the much needed Ballynahinch By Pass and expressing our solidarity with local ratepayers and residents for decades over stop start politics that have had a major impact on projects such as this by pass. Newry, Mourne and Down District Council reaffirms our total support for the Ballynahinch By Pass also agreeing to write to the Department for Infrastructure to determine firstly why the Ballynahinch By Pass has been halted when it is so advanced? Secondly what is the criteria for Road Schemes that will be prioritised? Also acknowledging the need for political reform to restore the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive and calls on the DUP to end its policy of abstentionism and return to Stormont to deliver the best outcomes for ALL the people of Northern Ireland.**

Councillor Reilly left the meeting at this stage – 7.02pm

C/174/2023 NOTICE OF MOTION – WARRENPOINT BATHS

The following motion was received from Councillor Ruane:

"That this Council regrets that Warrenpoint Baths continues to fall into a state of disrepair and has now become an eyesore on what is one of the most scenic views in Ireland. Welcomes the effort made by Council and local Councillors, who worked hard to ensure planning permission for the redevelopment of Warrenpoint Baths was retained in 2022. Expresses its disappointment that a recent funding application to the British Government's Levelling Up Fund to redevelop the Baths site was unsuccessful. Recognises the construction of Narrow Water Bridge is due to commence in early Summer 2024, and with it will come increased tourism and economic opportunities for the wider Warrenpoint and South Down region.

Further agrees that a viable and innovative project like Warrenpoint Baths will complement the much-anticipated Narrow Water Bridge. This will help to increase tourist numbers to Warrenpoint and drive the local economy.

Agrees that Newry Mourne and Down Council should make the redevelopment of Warrenpoint Baths a flagship Council project in the new term. Commits to actively seeking alternative funding for the project through avenues such as the Irish Government's Shared Island Fund."

The motion was seconded by Councillor K Murphy.

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

The Chairperson explained that due to an oversight the following motion would be referred to the Sustainability and Environment Committee and invited Councillor Clarke to read the motion.

C/175/2023 NOTICE OF MOTION – DISABLED USERS FORUM

The following motion was received from Councillor Clarke:

"That this Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the district's tourist attractions, services and products are fully accessible for all. Will establish a disabled users forum to proactively engage with local residents & organisations who experience accessibility issues in the district to hear first hand how they experience council facilities and local attractions. All Council facilities and promotional material will clearly display a list of local changing places and accessible facilities in the district. All Council employees will be made aware of changing places, units and accessible features within council facilities. Furthermore when an event is applied for that it includes the use of portable toilet facilities a mobile changing places unit must be provided also".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Sustainability and Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

C/176/2023 NOTICE OF MOTION – RESTOCKING OF QUOILE RIVER

The following motion was received from Councillor Enright:

"Council recognises the importance of Coarse Fishing at the Quoile River and its positive impact on tourism, local economy, health, wellbeing and sports. Council recognises concerns of local angling and conservation groups over the diversity and quantity of the fish stock in the Quoile and the decline of native species. Council will request DAERA to restock the Quoile, prioritising a population increase for Pike, Roach, Rudd and Bream to a sustainable level".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Campbell.

In presenting the motion Councillor Enright spoke of how in past decades the Quoile Estuary was a key attraction for East Down with international coarse fishing had been being held on the river. The river was famous for rudd, pike, perch, eels and bream and on the NI Direct website the Quoile Basin was the only coarse fishery advertised in County Down.

Councillor Enright explained that repeated mismanagement over decades had damaged the fishery to the point that re-stocking was needed to bring the fishery back. Prior to sewerage works being upgraded in the Quoile Catchment area, repeated spills by NI Water over 15 years had turned the river floor at the lower end of the estuary into what the Departments of Environments Rivers website describes as a toxic sludge.

Councillor Enright advised in recent years the Quoile barrier had not been repaired properly and seals entering from Strangford Lough and over a period of years had devoured all large pike, perch, eels and bream and severely diminished the shoals of rudd. It took 9 years of canvassing DAERA by elected representatives to have the barrier fixed in 2021/2.

Councillor Enright pointed out the fishery on the Quoile was one of the key components in the Quoile River Park that was envisaged by old Down Council. A project that seemed to have been shelved. Other aspects of this project included;

- Having NI River and DAERA upgrade the barrier on the Quoile in the same manner as the Lagan to restore navigation and create workable fish-passes to allow salmon up the river again.
- To extend the Quoile River Walk from Downpatrick to the Barrier and link Delamont Park and Killyleagh to Strangford and Castle Ward.

- To create boardwalks around the Cathedral linking Inch Abbey and the Grove at the Cathedral.

Members were informed the restocking of the river did not need to await any long-term plan for the Quoile before restoring the fishery as there were dozens of Council and DAERA supported fishing platforms along the river.

Councillor Enright stated that whilst he understood the Departments usual policy that fisheries should be allowed to recover naturally, too much damage has been done to the Quoile fishery over too many years and a managed restocking of the river was needed over a 3 to 5 year period until it returned to its former glory.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Campbell spoke of the importance of the Quoile to local anglers and its positive impact on health and well-being, the local economy and tourism. He added it was important to work together to ensure it was top destination in Downpatrick.

Councillor Campbell stated Sinn Féin were committed to the responsible and sustainable enhancement of facilities at the Quoile and would continue to work to see concerns of local groups addressed and delivered for local residents and visitors alike.

Councillor Lewis on behalf of DUP voiced support for the motion and spoke of the tourism potential and benefit it would bring. He spoke of how the Departments position was that the Quoile should be self-sustained, however the damage to the seal gate that was left unrepaired for years could not be overlooked, and that it was necessary that the Department take every possible step to move forward and restock the Quoile.

In supporting the motion, Councillor Galbraith proposed an addition in that Council call for a plan for the restocking of the Quoile and request additional facilities for anglers.

Councillor Enright agreed to the addition to the motion.

Councillors Hanlon welcomed the motion and the call for improving facilities at the Quoile and spoke of the importance of Council supporting local fishermen and making improvements to transform the Quoile.

Councillor Taylor said the lack of action from the Department was concerning and voiced support for the motion.

Councillor Lewis reiterated this was an ongoing issue for a long period of time and urged Council to request an urgent reply to this matter.

In summing up Councillor Enright thanked Members for their support.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Campbell that Council recognises the importance of Coarse Fishing at the Quoile River and its positive impact on tourism, local economy, health, wellbeing and sports. Council recognises concerns of local angling and conservation groups over the diversity and

quantity of the fish stock in the Quoile and the decline of native species. Council will request DAERA to restock the Quoile, prioritising a population increase for Pike, Roach, Rudd and Bream to a sustainable level.

It was also agreed that Council call for a plan for the restocking of the Quoile and request additional facilities for the angler.

Councillor Taylor left the meeting at this stage -7.23pm.

C/177/2023 NOTICE OF MOTION – RECENT BLOOMS OF ALGAE, ESTABLISHMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

The following motion was received from Councillor McMurray:

"This Council is concerned by the recent blooms of blue-green algae in our waters; notes the detrimental impact these blooms have had on local businesses; asks the Department of Agricultural, Environment and Rural Affairs to swiftly convene a cross party meeting between affected Council areas to discuss the issue & to develop an action plan to address it; and calls for the establishment of an independent Environmental Protection Agency in line with New Decade, New Approach commitments".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

In presenting the motion, Councillor McMurray advised whilst reference was made to recent algal blooms, they had been affecting areas within Slieve Croob for a number of years and affecting Northern Ireland, and the whole of the island.

He spoke at length of his own experiences at Castlewellan lake as an instructor of water based activities, as well as an individual taking part in recreation where for years and that he had not been aware of blue/green algae as being an issue. However, from at least 2019 there had been yearly outbreaks. Members were advised providers had contacted him regarding the lake and the implications it had for their operations with having to relocate to alternative sites and turn people away from their business and with an associated loss of earnings.

Councillor McMurray advised the issue of blue/green algae went beyond the restriction of recreation as it could have serious health implications for both humans and animals, as well as being an indicator of the poor and deteriorating state of waters.

Councillor McMurray took the opportunity to thank Council for the work undertaken in testing the waters along with other agencies.

Reference was made to the Bloomin' Algae App which could be found on the UK Centre for Ecology and Hydrology to record its prevalence and Members were asked to do so

and that Council Officers also, on learning of an instance of Blue/Green Algae, share this site via its social media.

Councillor McMurray pointed out the matter went beyond the boundaries of the district and given the nature of the environmental and climate emergencies being faced, it was something to be expected and required a unity of effort in order to address.

Councillor McMurray asked that Council send a clear message that an independent Environmental Protection Agency must be set up as a matter of urgency with preventative measures introduced, as well as legislative powers to ensure that the water quality in the district was enhanced. He added it went beyond the issue of blue/green algae with the closing of some areas of water to the public due to pollution this summer.

Council should be doing all it could to ensure that there was safe and clean water for citizens and visitors in which to enjoy recreation as well as ensuring a habitat fit the natural world and ensure that the message of environmental concern is passed on from this Council.

Councillors Devlin supported and thanked Councillor McMurray for bringing the motion and articulating the impact it had on water based activities and the potential toxic nature of what it was. She added it was a sensible approach to be taken across Northern Ireland to deal with it. Reference was also made to the issues which arose at the Newcastle Harbour in June/ July and the impact of that had on business and the tourism product.

Councillor Howell voiced support for the motion on behalf of Sinn Féin and the importance of Council taking action and reporting on it via social media.

The motion was unanimously supported.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McMurray, seconded by Councillor Truesdale that this Council is concerned by the recent blooms of blue-green algae in our waters; notes the detrimental impact these blooms have had on local businesses; asks the Department of Agricultural, Environment and Rural Affairs to swiftly convene a cross party meeting between affected Council areas to discuss the issue & to develop an action plan to address it; and calls for the establishment of an independent Environmental Protection Agency in line with New Decade, New Approach commitments.

The following motion was received from Councillor Finnegan:

"This Council calls on the Department of Health to investigate the possibility of replicating the PRSI scheme in the South for those suffering from medical hair loss here in the north.

While the Council does acknowledge the immense financial pressure facing public services, including our health service, brought about by a decade of savage tory austerity, it also recognises the devastating impact that medical hair loss can have on a person's confidence, mental health and overall quality of life and believes that people living in the north should have access to the same dignity and quality of care that is offered to those in the South so that they can live their lives comfortably and confidently.

Therefore, this council will write to the Department of Health and urge them to look into the possibility of introducing this scheme for people in the north and also calls on the DUP to end their boycott of the Assembly and Executive which is exacerbating the current pressure on our public services, including our vital Health service".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Howell.

Councillor Finnegan advised she had brought forward the motion after hearing of work done by one of her constituents in helping those dealing with the challenges of medical hair loss, and the inequality that existed between patients North and South.

Members were advised that in the South, a person suffering from medical conditions such as alopecia or hair loss brought about by chemotherapy for example would have their GP sign off on a PRSI health certificate, allowing them to claim up to €500 towards the cost of a high quality wig, hair piece or scalp treatment with their chosen specialist.

Councillor Finnegan stated the motion called on the Council to write to the Department of Health, asking them to investigate the possibility of replicating the PRSI scheme on offer in the South, and whilst we are all aware of the financial challenges facing public services here, it was important to do all we could to support those suffering from the devastating impact that medical hair loss had on a person's confidence, mental health and overall quality of life.

Councillor Finnegan stated an Executive needed to be formed now, with all parties working together to invest in the health service and urged the DUP to end its blockade of the Executive, which was exacerbating the current pressure on our public services, including our vital health service.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Howell spoke of how people known to her had suffered from alopecia and the huge impact it had on their daily lives and how they had to financially support themselves and a scheme like this being made available to everyone would be most welcome.

Councillor Truesdale voiced support for the motion and spoke of a personal experience through a friend and family member who had to fund their hair piece and she was astounded at the prices being quoted.

Councillor Byrne welcomed the motion on behalf of SDLP and spoke at length at the differences in the schemes and support provided between the north and south and how there was a need for a unified approach. He spoke of the difficulty putting forward an excellent motion like this, with the non-functioning Executive and the Department of Health's issues with budget, and that there needed to be collaboration across the island on support schemes such as this one.

Councillor Hanna stated it was an excellent motion, however for DUP to support the motion he proposed an amendment that the last paragraph be removed.

Councillor Jackson seconded the proposed amendment.

The proposed amended motion read as follows:

"This Council calls on the Department of Health to investigate the possibility of replicating the PRSI scheme in the South for those suffering from medical hair loss here in the north.

While the Council does acknowledge the immense financial pressure facing public services, including our health service, brought about by a decade of savage tory austerity, it also recognises the devastating impact that medical hair loss can have on a person's confidence, mental health and overall quality of life and believes that people living in the north should have access to the same dignity and quality of care that is offered to those in the South so that they can live their lives comfortably and confidently.

Therefore, this Council will write to the Department of Health and urge them to look into the possibility of introducing this scheme for people in the north."

Councillor Finnegan did not accept Councillor Hanna's proposed amendment.

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

FOR:	4
AGAINST:	31
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The proposal was lost.

The Chairperson then put Councillor Finnegan's Motion to a vote by way of a show of hands, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	31
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	4

The Motion was carried.

Councillor Finnegan thanked Members for their support and said as someone who lived and worked in a border community, it further highlighted those patients living minutes away from each other could not access the same quality of healthcare. She added it was important that men and women in the north had same access and quality of care that is offered to those in the South so that they could still live their lives comfortably and confidently.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finnegan, seconded by Councillor Howell that Council calls on the Department of Health to Investigate the possibility of replicating the PRSI scheme in the South for those suffering from medical hair loss here in the north.

While the Council does acknowledge the immense financial pressure facing public services, including our health service, brought about by a decade of savage tory austerity, it also recognises the devastating impact that medical hair loss can have on a person's confidence, mental health and overall quality of life and believes that people living in the north should have access to the same dignity and quality of care that is offered to those in the South so that they can live their lives comfortably and confidently.

Therefore, this Council will write to the Department of Health and urge them to look into the possibility of introducing this scheme for people in the north and also calls on the DUP to end their boycott of the Assembly and Executive which is exacerbating the current pressure on our public services, including our vital Health service.

The following motion was received from Councillor Savage:

"Council recognises the challenges in securing funding for landmark capital and community projects across the district and agrees to establish a Standing Sub-Committee of Council Officers and nominated Councillors tasked with overseeing the identification of funding streams relevant to Council capital and community projects and the timely delivery of funding applications.

The Sub-Committee will meet monthly and report to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee which will agree the Terms of Reference of the Standing Sub-Committee in October 2023 for approval at the November 2023 Full Council Meeting".

Councillor Savage voiced his disappointment that the motion was not being heard by Council.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Finn.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

The Chief Executive 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).

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

FOR:	30
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	4

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

**EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – RECENT CLOSURE OF
IMAGINARIUM IN STICKY FINGERS**

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

"Newry, Mourne and Down District Council notes with sadness the recent closure of Imaginarium in Sticky Fingers, which provided a facility for countless families and young people across the District. The Council commits to working with the Department of Communities, the Executive office and the relevant Council officers to protect arts provision across the District"

The motion was seconded by Councillor Savage.

Councillor Finn thanked Members for enabling the motion to be heard and voiced concern for the loss of facilities provided at the Imaginarium. She spoke of Newry having a rich and vibrant arts offering and the loss of the Imaginarium would be felt by numerous households across the entire district and that it was incredibly important for Council to recognise the contribution that all arts organisations made.

Councillor Finn took the opportunity to welcome the appointment of a new arts officer within the Council, who would work with herself and other councillors with the spirit of the motion to ensure that that arts and cultural offerings and services were enhanced and decimated no further.

In welcoming the motion on behalf of Sinn Féin Councillor Kearns proposed an amendment to include the following:

"That the Arts Council NI meet with Sticky Fingers to outline the reasons why funding application had not been successful and Council write to the Department for Communities Permanent Secretary to request officials meet with the group to discuss funding options".

Councillor Finn agreed to Councillor Kearns's amendment.

Councillor McMurray voiced support for the motion.

The motion was unanimously agreed.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Savage that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council notes with sadness the recent closure of Imaginarium in Sticky Fingers, which provided a facility for countless families and young people across the District. The Council commits to working with the Department of Communities, the Executive office and the relevant Council officers to protect arts provision across the District. It was also agreed the the Arts Council NI meet with Sticky Fingers to outline the reasons why funding application had not been successful and Council write to the Department**

for Communities Permanent Secretary to request officials meet with the group to discuss funding options.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.52pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 October 2023.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 04/09/23

VENUE: Downshire/ MS Teams

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Suspend Standing Order – Emergency Notice of Motion: Recent Closure of recent closure of Imaginarium in Sticky Fingers

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	6			1
C Enright				
D Finn	7			
A Finnegan	8			
C Galbraith	9			
M Gibbons				2
O Hanlon	10			
G Hanna			2	
V Harte	11			
R Howell	12			
J Jackson			3	
G Kearns	13			
T Kelly	14			
C King	15			
M Larkin	16			
D Lee-Surginor	17			
A Lewis			4	
O Magennis	18			
A Mathers	19			
D McAteer	20			
L McEvoy	21			
A McMurray	22			
S O'Hare	23			
D Murphy	24			
K Murphy	25			
S Murphy				3
A Quinn				4
H Reilly				5
M Rice	26			
M Ruane	27			
M Savage	28			
G Sharvin				6
D Taylor				7
J Tinnelly	29			
J Truesdale	30			
TOTALS	30	-	4	7