

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 15
February 2018 at 5.00pm in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre,
Downpatrick.**

In the Chair: Councillor T Hearty

In Attendance: Councillor R Burgess Councillor P Byrne
Councillor M Carr Councillor S Doran
Councillor C Enright Councillor O McMahon
Councillor A McMurray Councillor M Murnin
Councillor B Ó Muirí Councillor M Ruane
Councillor M Savage Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor W Walker

Also in Attendance: Councillor T Andrews

Officials in Attendance: Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director, Corporate Planning & Policy
Mr C Mallon, Assistant Director, Estates & Project
Management
Mr K Montgomery, Assistant Director of Finance & Systems
Mr A Beggs, Head of Evidence and Research
Ms V Keegan, Head of Marketing
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/018/2018 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

There were no apologies received.

SPR/019/2018 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Savage declared an interest in item 5 – Review of Advertising.

SPR/020/2018 ACTION SHEET OF THE STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2018

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources (SPR) Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2018 (circulated).

Councillor Burgess raised the issue of the disabled toilets in Saintfield and asked for an update on when these were going to be fixed.

Mrs Carville advised she would refer the matter to the Director of RTS and ask him to contact the Councillor on the matter.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that the Action Sheet of 18 January 2018 be noted.

CORPORATE PLANNING AND POLICY

SPR/021/2018 POLICY ON GIFTS

Read: Report from Ms L Moore, Head of Legal Administration, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Guidelines and associated procedure on the offer and acceptance of gifts to Council (copy circulated).

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Sharvin to adopt the circulated guidelines and associated procedure in relation to the offer and acceptance of gifts to Council, with review by SP&R Committee six monthly and DEA Councillors advised of gifts being offered for information.

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SPR/022/2018 REVIEW OF ADVERTISING

Read: Report from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Review of Advertising (copy circulated)

Councillor Sharvin proposed to reject the officer's recommendation as he felt it discriminated against those in rural areas without broadband connectivity as well as the generation that still purchases a local newspaper each week.

Councillor Burgess seconded this proposal.

Members spoke in support of the proposal stating the figures quoted in the report do not reflect the local population, especially in rural areas.

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Burgess to reject the officer's recommendation to review advertising practices in view of findings and implementation of the Corporate Digital Communications Strategy and move to placing advertisement where possible online.

SPR/023/2018

SCÉIM SPARÁNACHTAÍ NA GAELIGE/IRISH LANGUAGE BURSARY SCHEME

Read: Report from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy and Ms U Mhic An tSaoir, Irish Language Development Officer, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Irish Language Bursary Scheme (copy circulated)

Councillor Ó Muirí proposed to accept the officer's recommendation regarding implementation of the Council's Irish Language Bursary Scheme stating it had the potential to raise the profile and interest in the Irish Language and also to support families who would otherwise struggle.

Councillor Sharvin seconded the proposal and asked if 3rd level University students with Irish in their course would be eligible for the bursary.

Mrs Mackin advised that courses had to be completed in the current financial year and applicants should not be receiving scholarship from any other funds which would include university grants so those people would not be eligible to apply.

Councillors Enright, Savage and Byrne spoke in support of the proposal with Councillor Byrne querying whether there would be precedence given to those people next year if they were not successful in the current year and Councillor Savage asking if there could be arrangements put in place that a letter of offer be sufficient in order for costs to be covered upfront.

Councillor Ó Muirí, as a member of the Irish Language Working Group, stated the semantics of the scheme had been debated and it was agreed that due to Council's financial arrangements the young person would attend the course with the payment window of four weeks after completion.

Ms Mackin advised the list would only relate to applicants applying this year and if oversubscribed there may be opportunities to offer places due to drop-offs etc. She stated this was very much a learning curve as it was the first year of the scheme and it would be reviewed in 6 months time to ascertain the level of take-up in the scheme and address any issues.

Councillors Burgess and Walker stated they were not opposed to the Irish Language however did not agree with this bursary as Council was once again pumping money into the Irish Language whereas the Unionist community have received nothing since the new Council came into existence.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, the proposed process regarding implementation of the Council's Irish Language Bursary Scheme was agreed.**

SPR/024/2018

TÉARMA TAGARTHA NUASHONRAITHE – GRÚPA OIBRE TRASPÁIRTÍ UM STRAITÉIS NA GAELIGE/TERMS OF REFERENCE – IRISH LANGUAGE WORKING GROUP

Read: Report from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy and Ms U Mhic An tSaoir, Updated Terms of Reference - Irish Language Development Officer, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group (copy circulated)

Councillor Byrne stated training in Irish Language had started for Council staff but he wanted to know whether something would be established for Councillors also. Mrs Mackin agreed to follow up on this and advise Councillor Byrne.

Councillors Burgess and Walker stated they were not in agreement with the updated Terms of Reference.

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí to accept the updated Terms of Reference for the Irish Language Working Group.

CORPORATE SERVICES – DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SPR/025/2018 AUDIO RECORDING OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Read: Report from Mrs E McParland, Democratic Services Manager, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Proposal for Review of Arrangements for Audio Recording of Planning Committee Meetings (copy circulated)

Mrs Carville advised there was no legislative requirement for Councils to record their Planning Committee, however Council had agreed to commence recording in January and express consent was needed from members of the public. She advised that two agents have now stated they do not consent to having their presentations recorded and a revised protocol was recommended for Members to consider, having been agreed by Planning Committee members.

Councillor McMurray stated he was concerned at the recommendation 3.1.1 – “In respect of those planning applications for which consent is not given by any member of the public, including Agents, no recording be made of the entire planning application.” He asked whether Councillors would be culpable legally and constrained under the Data Protection legislation.

Councillor Ruane proposed to accept the officer’s recommendation stating the Planning Committee Members had discussed the issue along with receiving advice from the Solicitor that attends the Planning Committee meetings. This was seconded by Councillor Walker.

Councillors Carr, Enright, Murnin and Sharvin raised their concerns stating if Agents weren’t happy to be recorded should they attend the Planning Committee Meeting at all and that there were benefits on both sides for recording the proceedings.

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

FOR: 6
AGAINST: 7

The proposal was LOST.

Councillor McMurray left the meeting at this stage – 6.23pm
Councillor Andrews entered the meeting at this stage – 6.23pm

CORPORATE SERVICES – FINANCE

SPR/026/2018 ACCOUNTS PAYABLE POLICY

Read: Report from Mr K Montgomery, Assistant Director of Finance, dated 15 February 2018 regarding NMDDC Payment Policy and Procedure (copy circulated).

Councillor Enright stated he was worried about the effect the policy would have on smaller businesses and asked why the proviso was being put in place.

Councillor Savage stated cashflow was the lifeblood of any small business and Council needed to ensure service providers and suppliers were paid on time. He asked was there an average time that suppliers were being paid and would it continue to be monitored on a regular basis.

Mr Montgomery advised in the last week £1.8m had been paid out to suppliers with the average being 90% paid within 30 days. The average time taken is under 30 days and to pay suppliers quicker would reduce cash flow of over £1m which would mean Council having to take out loans sooner than they currently do.

Councillor Murnin proposed to accept the officer's recommendation. This was seconded by Councillor Doran

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Murnin, seconded by Councillor Doran, it was agreed to approve the revised policy in relation to payments within the Council.

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SPR/027/2018 STAKEHOLDER SURVEYS

Read: Report from Mr A Beggs, Head of Evidence and Research, dated 15 February 2018 regarding Stakeholder Surveys (copy circulated).

Mr Beggs advised that following the last Committee Meeting, Members had expressed concerns in relation to the approach and methodology along with the overall costs involved in the commissioning of a residents' survey. He stated the revised arrangements as presented should address the concerns raised.

Councillors asked the following questions:

- How would the telephone survey be carried out? Would it be cold-calling.
- How would the 700 people be selected?
- How useful would the information coming from telephone surveys be to the Council?
- What cost savings would be achieved through collaboration with other Councils?

Mr Beggs responded to the queries as follows:

- The telephone survey would be targeted and the baseline of this survey would lead to multi-basis analysis. This would mean people being engaged who would traditionally not be engaged through other survey channels.
- The people would be targeted from a range of sectors with the DEA assisting.
- The DEA would build on the information gained through the telephone survey.
- At present the savings on collaboration with other Councils wasn't known.

Members spoke of the benefits of using the internet for surveying over telephone interviews.

Members were not happy to accept the officer's recommendation and asked that further work be carried out to bring back detailed costings on collaboration savings with other Councils and to look at industry best practice in relation to telephone surveying.

AGREED: It was agreed that officers complete further work to look at industry best practice in relation to surveying methods, to include telephone surveying.

SPR/028/2018 **REQUEST TO GIFT THE LUSITANIA DAVIT TO LUSITANIA MUSEUM IN KINSALE**

Read: Report from Mr L Hannaway, Chief Executive, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Request to Gift the Lusitania Davit to Lusitania Museum in Kinsale (copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Doran, seconded by Councillor Ruane to gift the Lusitania Davit to Lusitania Museum in Kinsale with the cost of removal and transport being attributed to Visitor Centre and Museum in Kinsale.

FOR NOTING

SPR/029/2018 **MINUTES OF SPWG HELD ON TUESDAY 12 DECEMBER 2017**

Read: Minutes of Strategic Projects Working Group Meeting held on Tuesday 12 December 2017 (copy circulated).

NOTED: The minutes were noted.

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

SPR/030/2018 HARMONY WAY CONTRACT

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Doran, 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 this item of business.

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Assistant Director of Estates and Project Management, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Harmony Way/Windmill Street Resurfacing - Ballynahinch (copy circulated).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: When the Committee came out of closed session, the Chairperson advised that it had been agreed on the proposal of Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Burgess, to approve the appointment of Whitemountain Quarries to complete drainage and re-surfacing works at Harmony Way/Windmill Street, Ballynahinch at an estimated cost outlined in para.3.1 of the Officer's Report – the quotation having been obtained through a Central Government Framework Agreement.

SPR/031/2018 MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO 31ST DECEMBER 2017

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Doran, 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 this item of business.

Read: Report from Mr K Montgomery, Assistant Director of Finance, dated 15 February 2018, regarding Management Accounts to 31st December 2017 (copy circulated).

**Noted: It was agreed to note the Management Accounts to 31st
December 2017.**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.11pm.

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on 5 March 2018.

**Signed: Councillor Terry Hearty
Chairperson**

**Signed: Dorinnia Carville
Director of Corporate Services**