

## **NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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### **Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 September 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 C Enright Councillor R Howell Councillor A Mathers	Councillor P Byrne Councillor O Hanlon Councillor A Lewis Councillor G Sharvin
<b>In Attendance via Teams:</b>	Councillor T Kelly Councillor A Quinn	Councillor S O'Hare Councillor D Taylor
<b>Non-Members:</b>	Councillor G Hanna (via Teams) Councillor D Lee-Surginor (Chamber) Councillor M Rice (via Teams) Councillor J Truesdale (via Teams)	
<b>Officials in Attendance:</b>	Mrs J Kelly, Director: Corporate Services Mr A Cassells, Director: Sustainability & Environment Mr C Mallon, Director: Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director: Capital Projects and Procurement Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance & Performance Mr C Moffett, Assistant Director: Corporate Planning and Policy (Acting) Mr P Rooney, Legal Advisor Ms C Hughes, Data Analyst Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer	
<b>Officials in Attendance via Teams:</b>	Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director: Leisure & Sports Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director: Tourism Culture & Events Ms C Hughes, Data Analyst Mr G Scott, Safeguarding Coordinator	

#### **SPR/118/2023: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillor McAteer, Reilly and M Ward, Chief Executive.

Councillor Enright expressed concerns regarding Governance and transparency around the Mourne and Gateway Project, stating Members were being asked to approve recommendations by noting the document which was at odds with the Motion put forward by the Alliance Party and amended by Sein Féin in June.

The Chair clarified that the item was not for decision it was for noting and once the Committee reached the said item on the agenda a full discussion would be had.

**SPR/119/2023:                    DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Taylor declared an interest in item 4 - Newry City Park – Peace Plus Funding.

**SPR/120/2023:                    ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 17 AUGUST 2023**

**Read:**                                    Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 17 August 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:**                                **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, to approve the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2023.**

**NOTICES OF MOTION**

**SPR/121/2023                    NEWRY CITY PARK – PEACE PLUS FUNDING**

**Read:**                                    Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr C Mallon, Director Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism, regarding Newry City Park – Peace Plus Funding **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Lee-Surginor presented the motion stating that he was disappointed that the motion had not been heard at August Strategy Policy and Resources Committee or Council meeting as the deadline had now passed regardless of criteria. Pointing out there were clear benefits of the project and its close alignment with the aims of the Peace Programme. Stating further clarity should have been sought if there was any flexibility regarding timelines around planning permission etc. suggesting it would be helpful if going forward Peace Plus could engage with Council regarding flexibility of criteria.

Councillor Enright proposed the following amendment to motion:

‘That Council writes formally to Peace Plus, apologising for their self-inflicted delays in enquiring, presenting the Park Project as a funding possibility for the programme, and asking whether Peace Plus would be willing to engage with the Council to allow a post-deadline application for the Park’.

This was seconded by Councillor Kelly.

On a point of information Councillor Sharvin asked could Council still go back to Peace Plus at this stage when the Member who moved the motion clearly stated that the application did not meet the criteria of the grant, to further ask, ‘we didn’t submit before the deadline can we submit post deadline where the application still will not meet the criteria’?

Councillor Hanlon queried would all projects be given the same treatment and attention going forward as focus seemed to be on one project more than others, even though Peace Plus would be able to fund many projects across the District. She added that Elected Members all had had the opportunity to raise issues through the relevant Forums and

Committees.

Mr Mallon advised that it would be a matter for the Members to determine whether to write back to Peace Plus as proposed in the amendment by Councillor Enright.

Councillor Enright's amendment was then put to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

**FOR: 2**  
**AGAINST: 10**  
**ABSTENTIONS: 0**

The proposal was lost.

Councillor Byrne stated that it was clear that the criteria for Peace Plus funding was not met for a number of reasons and the SDLP party was not interested in grabbing headlines, only interested in progressing the project. It was the determination of Council to deliver the project in phases and there was buy in from all stakeholders and parties. If it was the will of Council to develop other phases in conjunction with phase one then the work needed to be done through Newry City Centre Regeneration Group and bring the recommendations through Strategy Policy and Resources Committee. Time and effort should be spent on ensuring Council does meet future criteria and pre-requisites for future funding bids.

Councillor Byrne proposed the following amendment:

'To ask that NCCR investigate submitting a full planning application for the Newry City Plan masterplan so that we satisfy all pre-requisites for future funding bids to develop further phases in parallel with Council delivering phase 1'

This was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

Councillor Byrne's amendment was then put to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

**FOR: 12**  
**AGAINST: 0**  
**ABSTENTIONS: 0**

The proposal was carried.

**Agreed:**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, to approve the following recommendations:**

- **Council officers continue to work with the Department to secure the Department of Finance funding approval and work with all stakeholders and partners to deliver the project under the direction of the NCCR Programme board.**
- **Council officers will continue to investigate potential funding sources for all projects within the Council Capital Plan and progress the development of projects to a stage where they are eligible for submission to the relevant fund.**

- **Council to ask that NCCR to investigate submitting a full planning application for the Newry City Plan masterplan so that we satisfy all pre-requisites for future funding bids to develop further phases in parallel with council delivering phase 1’.**

**SPR/122/2023**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – FUNDING OF PROJECTS**

**Read:** Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services, regarding Notice of Motion – Funding of Projects **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Byrne stated the members knew the good work being done by officer’s and the Strategic Finance Working Group was the right forum for these discussions to be taking place and giving regular updates on certain Capital Projects was key going forward.

In response to query raised by Councillor Enright, Mrs Kelly noted to consider any projects that didn’t currently have funding to be considered if funding opportunities arose.

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, that SPR Committee consider and agree the proposal to add identification of funding streams to SFWG agendas.**

**FOR CONSIDERATION/DECISION**

**SPR/123/2023:**

**EQUALITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2027 AND DISABILITY ACTION PLAN 2023-2027**

**Read:** Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding Equality Action Plan 2023-2027 and Disability Action Plan 2023 – 2027 **(Copy circulated)**

In response to queries from Councillor Kelly and Byrne, Mr Moffett advised that the consultation was undertaken through the ‘Living well together Engagement Platform’ and Council continue to engage with the Cedar Group on an ongoing basis. Within the Equality Action Plan they were looking to review and refresh the Councils consultation and engagement framework.

A meeting had taken place on 5 September 2023 with Equality and Diversity section of Local Government and Staff Commission regarding the Diversity Ambassadors and their role. It was noted there was a real difference across all the 11 Council’s, further work was planned to try to promote the programme.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to consider the consultation analyses and approve the Disability Action Plan 2023-2027 and the Equality Action Plan 2023-2027.**

**SPR/124/2023:**

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED DRAFT STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS AND FOUNDATIONAL ACTION PLAN**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr G Scott, Safeguarding Coordinator, regarding Public Consultation on the proposed draft Strategic Framework to end violence against Women and Girls and Foundational Action Plan. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Scott highlighted that it was important to note that within the actual themes the key emphasis for the strategic framework sat on the theme of 'Prevention'.

Members spoke in support of the framework highlighting some of the statistics where shocking. There was a duty as Councillors to help drive responses before the deadline in October and it would be good idea to engage with the 'Women's Working Group'.

Mr Scott advised he would be happy to meet with any members of the 'Women's Working Group' should they wish to do so.

**Agreed:**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Howell, to approve the consultation response on the draft Strategic Framework to End Violence Against Women and Girls and Foundational Action Plan (Appendix 1).**

**SPR/125/2023:**

**ASSESSMENT PERFORMANCE 2022-23**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance and Performance, regarding Assessment of Performance 2022-23 **(Copy circulated)**

Members raised the following points:

- 187 new jobs created was down in terms of previous report and disappointing giving the economic situation at present.
- Cleanliness was one of the biggest issues Councillors receive complaints on, how was this going to improve going forward?
- Planning System – It was hoped this would improve going forward with the restructuring of the Department and no longer be the worst in the North. Was there a timeline when we could expect to see an improvement?
- When measures were put in place to try and turn a trend, Members needed to ensure that they were having an effect.
- Need to do better as a Council going forward in all departments.
- Seasonal staff recruitment seemed to be a problem. What was Council's plan in terms of advertising seasonal jobs to make them more attractive going forward?
- Why was blue bins mixed recycling and yet if brought to recycling centre it had to be separated?

- Statistics showed Leisure Centres were not returned to a level they were at pre-covid, was there something that could be done on a promotional side to increase that figure in the future?
- Was there a timeline for the new Play Park Strategy 2023 – 2028?
- Had Free Play initiatives been replaced by something else?
- Was there an update on the Circular Economy Plan?
- Could a mobile app for reporting waste be rolled out to Councillors?
- Councillor Byrne highlighted that keeping as much information in open session kept people informed and felt that were able to have their say on matters.

Officer's responded as follows:

- Mr Byrne clarified that the target had been met on jobs this year. A lot of jobs had previously been created through funded programmes and the downward trend could be attributed to less funding received than previous years.
- Mr Cassells advised the blue bin was a kerbside service, materials were shipped to Regen and separated through their material reclamation facility. At the recycling centres there was more opportunity to get the public to separate the material resulting in a better quality of material achieving a better price. Both approaches were applicable and suitable.
- Significant difficulties had been had in recruiting Seasonal staff which may have been a function of the employment market at present. Looking to see if there was a way to amalgamate some of those posts and make them permanent posts, which would be more attractive to apply for, work was ongoing and would be brought back to the Sustainability and Environment Committee.
- Mr Mallon advised that the challenges faced by Planning was across all Councils. Newry Mourne and Down received the most Planning applications, made the most decisions on applications and the second highest in issuing approvals of all 11 Councils. Some of the challenges had been around the introduction of the new planning portal and recruitment.
- Planning targets were statutory targets set by the Department.
- A recruitment campaign had commenced and 2 new Senior Planners had been recently appointed with another vacancy out for recruitment to fill the third, as well as a current campaign for vacancies for 4 Planning Assistants. Within the Planning Department looking to prioritise the areas where the pressures exist and introducing efficiency measures and processes across the management team. There would be monitoring going forward to highlight any areas and to encourage performance improvement.
- Leisure Centres - Mr Tamati advised there was a lag time in results and the statistics of the first 5 months of this year were back to pre-covid membership levels and in some places exceeding those levels.
- Play Strategy – Consultation dates expected to be rolled out shortly and will bring back a report in the coming months.
- Mr Cassells advised NI Environment Agency were currently reviewing their Waste Management Strategy which would hopefully be out by the end of the year, this would allow Council to align local actions with what was proposed Regionally.
- Mr Cassells to come back outside of the meeting to Councillor Byrne regarding establishing an app for Newry Mourne and Down waste collection services.
- Mr Tamati agreed to go back Councillor Byrne on an update on Free Play initiatives.

**Agreed:**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to approve the following recommendations:**

- **The Assessment of Performance 2022-23, including the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward'**
- **That the Assessment of Performance 2022-23 is published by 30 September 2023, before full Council ratification, in order to meet the statutory deadline.**

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

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 9-18 which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local /Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

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

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

**SPR/126/2023: MOBILE DEVICE, VOICE AND DATA SERVICES CONTRACTS**

**Read:** Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director: Corporate Services, regarding Mobile Device, Voice and Data Services Contracts **(Copy circulated)**.

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to consider the contents of the report and approve the procurement of mobile device, voice and data services through Lot 1 of the CCS RM6261 Framework Agreement.

**SPR/127/2023: LEASE OF LANDS AT BARCROFT COMMUNITY CENTRE, NEWRY**

**Read:** Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding lease of lands at Barcroft Community Centre, Newry **(Copy circulated)**.

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members approve to lease the lands shaded purple on the map attached in the officer's report to the Tenants for the

**residue of the term of the 2018 Lease (15 years from 1st January 2017) at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental consent.**

**SPR/128/2023:**

**LEASE OF THE OLD GASWORKS SITE, NEWRY**

**Read:**

Report dated 17 August 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding Lease of The Old Gasworks Site, Newry **(Copy circulated)**.

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed that Elected Members approve to enter into a new lease in respect of the Unit to the party noted in the report for a term of 5 years from the 1st of December 2022 subject to market value rent as determined by Council's valuer.**

**SPR/129/2023:**

**KILKEEL LEISURE CENTRE – CAPITAL BUILD PROJECT**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director: Leisure and Sport, regarding Kilkeel Leisure Centre – Capital Build Project **(Copy circulated)**.

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed Elected Members approve the following recommendations:**

- **'Essential and Enhancement Works' for the Kilkeel Leisure Centre Capital project at a revised cost as outlined in section 4.1 of the report.**
- **Commence the procurement process to appoint a contractor and commence construction delivery in accordance with Northern Ireland Public Procurement Policy (NIPPP) via the central government consultant's framework agreement.**



**SPR/130/2023:**

**IFA/DCMS – FUNDING – KILKEEL TRAINING PITCH**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director: Leisure and Sport, regarding IFA/DCMS – Funding – Kilkeel Training Pitch (**Copy circulated**).

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, it was agreed Elected Members approve for 50% match funding to develop a Multi-Use Games Area at Kilkeel Leisure Centre at a cost outlined in section 4.1 of this report.**

**SPR/131/2023:**

**SURPLUS ASSETS UPDATE**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director Estates and Capital Projects, regarding Surplus Assets Update. (**Copy circulated**)

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed Elected Members approve the following recommendations:**

- **To remove the Former Kearns and Murtagh site from disposal process and retain site.**
- **To withdraw the D1 Application made by Sir Hans Sloane Centre at this stage as the timescales within the process have not been met and there are still outstanding issues that need to be addressed prior to disposal. This will allow the issues that have arisen to be explored further before next steps are considered. A report will be brought back in due course to the Committee.**
- **To note the current lack of interest in the site at Patrick Street and that Officers will look at the options available and report back to the Committee in due course.**

**SPR/132/2023:**

**TYRELLA BEACH AMENITY BUILDING**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Tourism Culture and Events, regarding Tyrella Beach Amenity Building. (**Copy circulated**)

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed Elected Members approve to appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team and contractor to deliver the Tyrella Beach Amenity Building project as detailed in the project business case and to**

**approve inclusion of funding within section 4 of the Capital Plan.**

**SPR/133/2023:**

**DOWNPATRICK REGENERATION PROJECTS**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Tourism Culture and Events, regarding Downpatrick Regeneration Projects. **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed Elected Members approve to procure and appoint a consultancy team to progress regeneration projects for DeCourcy Place & Church Street in Downpatrick as aligned with the new Living High Streets Masterplan for the town and detailed in the project business case and approve inclusion of funding within section 4 of the of the Capital Plan.**

**SPR/134/2023:**

**ANIMAL WELFARE FUNDING**

**Read:**

Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment, regarding Animal Welfare Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed Elected Members approve the instructing of Belfast City Council Legal Service to draft a Pre Action-Protocol letter on behalf of the 11 District Councils with a view to same being issued by the Chief Executive of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council on behalf of the 11 Councils and to receive further reports on the matter as the developments take place.**

**FOR NOTING – The following items are deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the October 2022 Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014**

**SPR/135/2023:**

**STRATEGIC FINANCE WORKING GROUPS ACTION SHEET – 7 SEPTEMBER 2023**

**Read:**

Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet – 7 September 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet – 7 September 2023.**

## **FOR NOTING**

**SPR/136/2023:**

### **SUSTAINABILITY SECTION UPDATE**

**Read:** Report dated 17 August 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director: Sustainability and Environment regarding Sustainability Section Update (**Copy circulated**)

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to note the update on areas of work being carried out by the Sustainability Section.**

**SPR/137/2023:**

### **MOURNES GATEWAY PROJECT**

**Read:** Report dated 14 September 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director: Tourism Culture and Events, regarding Mournes Gateway Project (**Copy circulated**)

Councillor Enright commented that actions had not been taken forward from the Motion in June. The key actions in the Motion were a full Public Consultation on the Mournes Gateway Project and secondly consideration of alternative projects.

He further added that at 2.2 of the officer's report it suggested a consultation had taken place, no Public Consultation had occurred, a stakeholder analysis and information day had been held. Council previously advised that a consultation took place in 2017, this was in fact cancelled last minute and never rescheduled. Questions put forward at the information day had never been replied to and there was no formal meaningful way for the public to feed into those plans by way of consultation. He suggested the report should be amended to correctly reflect the June amended motion to include the 2 key actions as stated.

Mr Mallon responded that the intent of the amendment of the previous motion was as follows – that Council would revisit the stakeholder engagement process and undertake a robust consultation on the project with residents, workers and businesses within the district via the project board for approval.

Councillor Kelly stated she concurred with Councillor Enright's comments that no full Public Consultation had taken place with residents, workers and businesses and agreed that the two key actions should be included within the report with a timeframe of delivery.

Councillor Hanlon, Byrne and Sharvin spoke at length stating that the report was rightly before the committee for noting, this was a significant investment in the District, any concerns should be addressed via the Project Board as had been done with similar projects i.e. Castlewellan Forest Park and Newry City Centre Regeneration and then reported back to Council. If an element of the project was not the right thing to do for the area then that money was gone and could not be used to fund another project.

Mr Mallon advised the report provided at tonight's meeting was an update on the status of the project so far as previously agreed. The project that was in front of BRCD was the project in its current form which was the basis for its approval. Any significant change of scope or scale of that project would subject to further consideration by the department through the

relevant processes.

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to note the contents of the report and associated background documents that can be made available on request.

**SPR/138/2023:** **MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROJECT BOARD MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 30<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2023**

**Read:** Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Project Board Meeting held on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:** On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Project Board Meeting held on Friday 30<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 8.05pm.

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

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

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