NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2026

Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 21 October 2026 at 6pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chair:	Councillor M Ruane	
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor M Hearty
	Councillor D Murphy	
Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:	Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
	Councillor H Reilly	Councillor D Taylor
	Councillor J Truesdale	
Non-Committee Members In Attendance via Teams:	Councillor A Lewis	
Officials in Chamber:	Mrs S Murphy, Director, Sustainability and Environment	
	Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability	
	Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment	
Officials in attendance Via Teams:	Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer	
Also in Attendance via Teams:	Mr K Bloomfield, HMO Manager, Belfast City Council	

SE/118/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Campbell, O'Hare, K Murphy and Young.

The Chairperson expressed condolences to family, friends and colleagues from the SDLP following the passing of former councillor, Dermot Curran.

SE/119/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/120/2026: **ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

SE/004/2024 – Report on Notice of Motion – Flood Defences
Councillor Truesdale noted that residents were anxious about potential flooding as winter approached and stressed the importance of ongoing communication and coordination between the Council and relevant agencies.

SE/034/2025 – Officer Report on NOM – Street Lighting
In response to a query from Councillor Finn regarding an update on above item, Mr Sage advised that he would discuss with officers involved and would revert to Councillor Finn outside the meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2026.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/121/2026: **NMDDC DRAFT OFF-STREET PARKING (PUBLIC CAR PARKS) ORDER**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding NMDDC Draft Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage presented the report, which provided an update on the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2026 and sought approval of the Order in advance of its enactment. He advised that six consultation responses had been received, with views divided and the greatest level of support relating to the proposed closure process. He noted that three respondents had opposed all proposals and that, although equality and rural implications had been raised, the limited number of responses meant the findings were not considered representative of wider public opinion.

Councillor Andrews expressed disappointment at the low number of consultation responses.

In response to a query from Councillor Truesdale regarding whether leisure centres would fall within the scope of the proposed Order, Mr Sage confirmed that they would, but advised that enforcement could not commence until the Order had been enacted. There are no plans to charge for car parking at Leisure facilities.

Councillor Finn also noted the low level of consultation responses, highlighted the potential impact on businesses and queried whether further steps could be taken to improve engagement with businesses and residents.

Mr Sage advised that the Council's consultation process had been followed, with details published on the Council website and promoted through social media channels. He noted that the consultation had concluded and was unaware of any further actions that could be taken at this stage.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to ratify the new Newry Mourne & Down District Council Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2026, in preparation for enactment, upon revocation / amendment of the current Off-Street Parking (Northern Ireland) order as amended.**

SE/122/2026: **BUSINESS CASE FOR SUMMER AND WINTER BEDDING PLANTS**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Summer and Winter Bedding Plants. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage outlined the report, which sought approval of the business case detailed at Appendix 1 and authorisation to commence procurement for the supply of bedding plants for the period 2027 to 2031. He advised that the preferred option identified within the business case was to retain seasonal bedding displays at key locations while further rationalising provision in line with sustainable landscape principles, with any savings achieved being reinvested in permanent sustainable landscape improvements.

Councillor Andrews proposed to accept the recommendations and placed on record his thanks to Council staff for their work in maintaining the District as an attractive place to visit.

Councillor Truesdale queried whether more sustainable alternatives to annual bedding plants, including perennial or mixed planting schemes, had been considered and whether any assessment had been undertaken of sites that could be converted to more sustainable planting arrangements.

Mr Sage advised that he did not have details of the number of bedding sites that could potentially be converted to perennial planting but would seek clarification from the relevant officer and report back to Councillor Truesdale outside the meeting. He noted that the matter aligned with actions contained within the Council's Biodiversity Strategy and would be considered as part of the associated action plan.

Councillor Truesdale also raised concerns regarding the condition of the award sign at the Shimna Road/Bryansford Road junction, noting that it had deteriorated and was potentially

hazardous. Mr Sage requested that further details be forwarded to him and confirmed that the matter would be followed up.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, it was agreed to approve the recommendations of the Business Case and authorise the commencement of the procurement process for the supply of seasonal bedding plants for the period 2027-2031.**

SE/123/2026: **CHRISTMAS 2026 CAR PARKING CHARGES**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Christmas Parking Arrangements. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage outlined the report, which sought Members' consideration of parking arrangements in Council-operated charged off-street car parks in the period leading up to Christmas 2026. He advised that free weekend parking had been introduced ahead of Christmas 2025 following approval of a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kearns.

He noted that, while the initiative had supported town centre businesses, it had resulted in a loss of parking revenue and reduced parking turnover during peak trading periods. He advised that three options had been identified for 2026 and confirmed that officers recommended the continuation of free parking on the three weekends immediately preceding Christmas 2026.

Councillor D Murphy proposed acceptance of the officers' recommendation (Option 3) for free Saturday parking on the three weekends immediately preceding Christmas 2026. He acknowledged concerns regarding all-day parking reducing availability for shoppers but considered the initiative to have been beneficial and noted that feedback from local businesses had generally been positive.

Councillor Truesdale expressed support for the recommendation, noting that the initiative had appeared successful. She suggested that it be reviewed before Christmas 2027, given the associated loss of revenue and concerns regarding misuse of the free parking provision.

Councillor Andrews supported the recommendation and highlighted the importance of measures to encourage footfall in town centres. He suggested that feedback be sought from businesses, traders and consumers to inform future consideration of the initiative.

Councillor Finn welcomed the initiative and noted its popularity during the previous Christmas period. She emphasised the importance of supporting town centre businesses and suggested engagement with BID organisations, trade groups and local businesses to better understand the impact of the scheme and identify potential improvements.

Mr Sage advised that, subject to the Committee's decision, an evaluation process would be undertaken and engagement would take place with local businesses to obtain feedback. He

added that further assessment could also be carried out to examine traffic congestion, traffic flow and parking turnover to support a more comprehensive review of the scheme's effectiveness.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to approve the provision of free parking for the three weekends immediately preceding Christmas 2026 within Council-operated charged off-street car parks.**

SE/124/2026: **DAERA CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT CLEAN AIR STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TO 2032**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding DAERA consultation on the Draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor presented the report, which sought Members' approval of the Council's response to the DAERA consultation on the Draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland 2032. She advised that the consultation remained open until 27 October 2026 and that the strategy set out an ambition to improve air quality by 2032.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the Council's response, noting that it supported the aims and objectives of the draft strategy. She welcomed the references to fuel poverty, a just transition and the application of similar measures to commercial premises, and considered the response to be constructive and balanced.

Councillor Reilly raised concerns regarding the potential enforcement implications of the proposed measures and their impact on households experiencing fuel poverty. He highlighted continued reliance on oil, coal and solid fuels, particularly in rural areas, and expressed opposition to any approach that could be perceived as monitoring or penalising residents in relation to domestic heating choices.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to approve the consultation response to DAERA on the Draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032 at detailed in Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

SE/125/2026: **NOTICE OF MOTION - PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLIC DRINKING LAWS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Notice of Motion – Public Drinking Laws. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor advised that the purpose of the report was to facilitate consideration of the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Truesdale, which had been deferred from the Council meeting held on 7 September 2026. She noted that the report recommended that officers engage with the PSNI through the PCSP Network to gain a detailed understanding of the challenges associated with enforcement of the legislation and to identify how the Council could support this work while ensuring the health and safety of Council officers.

In speaking to her Motion, Councillor Truesdale welcomed the comprehensive report and emphasised the importance of the proposed legislation, noting that it was a joint initiative between the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department of Justice. She highlighted concerns regarding the potential disproportionate impact on homeless individuals and those with alcohol dependency issues, particularly given existing pressures within the homelessness sector.

She stressed the importance of adequate resources and training for Council officers, including personal safety, de-escalation techniques and signposting to appropriate support services. She also noted the need for exemptions for private gardens, events and festivals to ensure normal social drinking was not inadvertently affected and welcomed the potential reduction in litter and broken glass across parks, beaches and woodland areas.

Councillor Andrews acknowledged the cross-departmental work being undertaken and emphasised the need for additional resources and support from Stormont to assist Councils in implementing proposed legislation.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to consider both the Motion and the recommendations contained within the Notice of Motion. It was also agreed to engage with the PSNI through the PCSP Network to obtain a detailed understanding of the issues faced in enforcing the legislation and how Council could support this work while protecting the health and safety of Council officers.**

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following items, which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local /Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the**

financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

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

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

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

SE/126/2026: **HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY – HMO UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Houses in Multiple Occupancy – HMO Update Report. (Copy circulated)

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

- **The public access to the online facility containing entries from the HMO register is not reinstated at this time but shall be reviewed annually.**
- **The HMO application online consultation register is reinstated on the 1 December 2026, having particular regard to the significant weight that must be attributed to Councils' statutory obligations under The Houses in Multiple Occupation (Notice of Application) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and the opportunity for applicants to make specific requests to be exempted from the requirements of same.**

SE/127/2026: **WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Waste Management Contracts. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to approve the contract extensions and price uplift as detailed in sections 2.2, 2.3 and Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

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

SE/128/2026: **ACTION SHEET AND PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING OF 23 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Action Sheet And Presentations from The Sustainability and Environment Working Group Meeting of 23 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to note the documents.**

SE/129/2026: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN-COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026 & JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting In-Committee Minutes of Friday 28 August 2026 & Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin Held On 24 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to note the documents.**

FOR NOTING

SE/130/2026: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting No 108 Minutes Friday 28 August 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the document.**

SE/131/2026: **CHRISTMAS REFUSE COLLECTIONS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Christmas Holiday Arrangements for Refuse Collection and Household Recycling Centres. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Lewis noted that bin collections in Slieve Croob were split between the Downpatrick and Newry collection teams and sought assurance that Christmas collection stickers would clearly identify the relevant collection route.

Mrs Trainor confirmed that route-specific stickers would be issued to residents, clearly advising of any alternative collection dates, and advised that arrangements were being finalised to ensure their timely distribution.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the report.**

SE/132/2026: **CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS UPDATE**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Christmas Illuminations Update. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Hearty noted that the Christmas illuminations contract was due to expire and that the forthcoming procurement exercise presented an opportunity to review the Council's approach, particularly in light of requests for provision in smaller towns and villages.

Mr Sage advised that the principal challenge was financial, with increasing costs and overspends in recent years. He noted that any review would need to consider available funding and existing provision.

Mrs Murphy advised that officers would also review support provided through the Financial Assistance programme and confirmed that these matters would be considered as part of the business case accompanying the procurement exercise.

Councillor Finn raised concerns regarding previous lighting issues at Merchants Quay, which had resulted in periods of darkness, and sought an update on whether the matter had been resolved with DfI.

Mr Sage advised that officers had worked with the DfI to undertake testing and complete remedial works, which had resolved the issue, and confirmed that no similar problems had arisen during the most recent Christmas season.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the report.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.53pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 November 2026.

Signed: _____

Councillor M Ruane
Chairperson

Signed: _____

Mrs Sinead Murphy
Director of Sustainability & Environment