

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 21 February 2024 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, District Council Offices, Monaghan Row, Newry and via MS Teams.

Chair: Councillor T Andrews (Chamber)

In Attendance in Chamber:

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor D Taylor

In Attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor M Rice
Councillor J Truesdale	

Non-Committee Members in Attendance via teams:

Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor A McMurray
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Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment
Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Environment
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

Officials in attendance via teams:

Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SE/016/2024: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor McEvoy.

SE/017/2024: DECLARATIONS OF "CONFLICTS OF INTEREST"

There were no declarations of interest.

FOR DECISION

SE/018/2024: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2024

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 December 2023.**

SE/019/2024: REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – CLIMATE CHANGE

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding a report on Notice of Motion – Climate Change. **(Copy circulated)**

On presenting his motion, Councillor McMurray noted his concern at Council being ranked 8 out of 11 on the Northern Ireland Councils on Climate action Scorecards, as compiled by Climate Emergency UK. He recognised that Council previously acknowledged that climate breakdown was real however stated that action needed to be ongoing and updated, with targets set around actions.

Councillor McMurray called for Council to act with clear demonstratable examples in areas where it had authority to take action and to further act as an enabler for external agencies and providers in areas where it did not. He called for Council to set targets by which they could track progress, and stated these targets needed to be easily understandable and accessible.

In relation to the political instability element of his motion, Councillor McMurray noted that while it did go beyond the remit of this Council, he believed it was relevant as Stormont needed to be running effectively to affect positive climate change action and should not be able to be stymied by any party.

He recommended four action points as follows:

- That Council engage with the Climate Action Scorecards and Climate Action UK to ascertain what works had been undertaken but not noted
- Identified opportunities for future improvements in areas of sustainability and the environment and placed targets upon them
- Place targets on the 9 aspects of sustainability considerations as discussed during the rates setting process
- Write to the Irish and UK Government expressing support that a review and reform of the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement commence with the objective of stabilising devolved Government from Stormont.

Councillor Reilly noted that the UK was responsible for less than 1% of greenhouse gas emissions and stated that climate change activists wanted to penalise the people of the European Union (EU) and the UK by cutting back on their quality of life for this small percentage of emissions. He stated that India and China had opened two new coal fired power stations per month, alongside the increased sale of combustion engine cars.

Councillor Reilly commended Sir Jeffrey Donaldson's actions that had resulted in an agreement with the UK Government and the EU, to obtain a better deal for the community in relation to funding and trade. He stated this motion penalised the community for no reason and advised that the DUP Party would not be supporting the motion.

Councillor Taylor noted that all Partys were involved in discussions around the recent financial package, not just the DUP. He stated that Council could not be accused of not taking climate change seriously, but noted there could be financial implications in meeting any targets that were set. He expressed his concern over to the political nature of the motion, and therefore could not support the motion as it read

Councillor Clarke stated that climate emergency had happened and that it was easy to blame other countries. In relation to Council actions, he requested a benchmark paper be brought back to Committee in relation to how Council was progressing against past actions, as well as short, medium- and long-term future targets. He referenced several actions that had been ongoing recently, such as the tree strategy, the work ongoing in relation to carbon storage and the re-wetting of peatlands.

Councillor Clarke proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:

“That this Council acknowledges the work done to date to help address the climate emergency; reaffirms previous motions regarding the degenerating global situation; and again, reiterates that the crisis is the biggest threat posed to our constituents, our district, and our planet.

Further acknowledges, however, that recent data collated by Climate Emergency UK ranks NMDDC 8th out of the 11 Councils within NI; and thus, pledges to include ambitious targets in the forthcoming Sustainability and Climate Strategies and Action Plans to expedite implementation ”

Following a request from the Chair, Councillor McMurray advised he did not accept Councillor Clarke’s amendment as above. A roll call vote was taken, and the results were as follows:

FOR:	7
AGAINST:	5
ABSTENTIONS:	2

The motion was declared carried.

Councillor Enright requested that Councillors who had knowledge of the green economy shine a light on any misinformation that had been shared. He referenced item 11 on the agenda, at which stage the Chair advised the Member that the item was in committee and was not to be discussed in open session.

Councillor Enright stated that China had recently opened the largest PV and battery farm in the world as it was building its future economy on the green economy because it provided cheaper energy prices. He stated that the green economy would provide better prices for consumers, better atmosphere for breathing, and that money would be kept local as energy would be bought from local farmers.

Councillor Finn commended the work carried out by Council to date on mitigating climate change. She encouraged Members to look at their own actions in relation to climate change and noted the impact that the instability of Government had on Members ability to take concrete action on climate change. She proposed an amendment to section 2.3 part 3 of the Officer’s Report as follows:

“Will write to the office of The First and Deputy First Minister to ask in light of the climate emergency and the need for political stability that they will commit to not collapsing the institutions and will write to DAERA, DFI and Economy Ministers for a steer on best practice for councils to addressing the climate emergency”

A further roll call vote was taken in relation to Councillor Finn’s amendment, which Councillor Clarke did not accept.

FOR:	5
AGAINST:	8
ABSTENTIONS:	1

The motion was lost.

Councillor Truesdale called for Members to be mindful of the information they were sharing and noted that the UK was the 5th biggest historic emitter in the world, largely due to the industrial revolution.

In summing up, Councillor McMurray noted that it was disappointing Stormont was so unstable as it had an impact on elected Members being able to deliver concrete change on combating climate change but acknowledged the accepted amendment of the motion.

Following the debate, Mr Cassells wanted to note that Sustainable Northern Ireland facilitated the interchangeability of information between Councils in relation to climate change, and the forum met quarterly with officers from every Council in attendance.

He advised that the climate action score cards referenced information taken from 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2023. He noted actions that had been taken since, such as the biodiversity action plan and a draft sustainability strategy and advised that these should have a positive impact on future score cards.

In response to a comment made by Councillor Enright, he advised that a draft paper was being prepared for March Committee meeting, and it detailed the possible use of two former landfill sites for PV farms and battery storage.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed that this Council acknowledges the work done to date to help address the climate emergency; reaffirms previous motions regarding the degenerating global situation; and again, reiterates that the crisis is the biggest threat posed to our constituents, our district, and our planet.

Further acknowledges, however, that recent data collated by Climate Emergency UK ranks NMDDC 8th out of the 11 Councils within NI; and thus, pledges to include ambitious targets in the forthcoming Sustainability and Climate Strategies and Action Plans to expedite implementation.

It was also agreed that a benchmark report would be brought back to Committee regarding Council actions and progress to mitigating climate change impact.

Councillors McMurray and Enright left the meeting at this stage – 6.50pm

SE/020/2024: PRIVATE TENANCIES ACT 2022 – FIXED PENALTY NOTICES

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Private Tenancies Act 2022 – Fixed Penalty Notices. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Murphy outlined the new legislative powers to be enforced by Council in relation to the rented private sector. She also noted that there were resource implications with the new regulations, specifically in relation to the workload that officers would have to implement without any additional funding.

Councillor Clarke stated that this would only work to make homes safer for families, and it was to be welcomed. He further noted the lead in period, which he advised would allow landlords to prepare.

Councillor Murphy also welcomed the changes and noted her own feedback and that of her constituents regarding private landlords.

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly, Ms Murphy advised that there were no fixed penalty notices regarding mould in rented accommodation but advised that the issue could be reported to environmental health, and an officer could assess the issue, and work through the regulations with the landlord and tenant.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to note the new legislative powers to be enforced by Council's in relation to the private rented sector regarding:**

- **The Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations (NI)**
- **The Electrical Safety Standards Regulations (NI)**

It was further agreed to approve the proposed level for the fixed penalty fine for the offence created under the Smoke, Heat and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Regulations (NI) as outlined in section 2.5 of the officer's report.

SE/021/2024: HOME TO HOSPITAL SCHEMES

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Environment regarding Home to Hospital Schemes for Mourne and Slieve Gullion DEAs. **(copy circulated)**

Councillor Larkin welcomed the continued support from Council to the service and queried if some aspects of the service were not well known and referenced other services available as outlined in the Officer's Report, section 2.3. He noted the cost implications on the NHS in relation to missed hospital appointments and stressed how important it was for Council help as much as possible.

Councillor Reilly welcomed the valued service and noted the difficulty some of the more vulnerable members of the community had experienced in getting to hospitals. He stressed the importance of highlighting the service, so those who needed it would know how to avail of it.

Councillor Feehan also welcomed the report and referenced the hidden cost of missed hospital appointments to the NHS. He queried the disparity in the uptake of the service between Slieve Gullion and the Mourne, and whether this was solely related to awareness of the service.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Rice, to approve the continued funding for Mourne and Slieve Gullion Home to Hospital Volunteer driver schemes from 1 April 2024.**
It was also agreed that Council seek Expressions of Interest from suitable Community/Voluntary sector organisations to administer the Schemes subject to funding being identified.

SE/022/2024: REFUSE COLLECTION AND HRC ARRANGEMENTS FOR PUBLIC HOLIDAYS 2024/25

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Environment, regarding Refuse Collection and HRC arrangements for Public Holidays 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Cassells advised Members that this proposed schedule had been agreed with the trade unions.

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, to approve the alternative refuse collection services and opening arrangements for Household Recycling Centres on Public Holidays applying to the 2024/25 financial year.

SE/023/2024: WASTE AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH CHARGES 2024/25

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Mrs S Murphy, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Waste and Environmental Health Charges 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Truesdale queried whether Council had considered a possible increase in illegal dumping in relation to the outlined cost increase and what plans were in place for this. She also queried the return of the blue bin recycler of the month reward.

Ms Murphy advised that Council would continue with all enforcement action and were currently engaged in an enforcement improvement strategy. She also noted that the recycling reward scheme was being addressed.

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Magennis, to approve the proposed Waste Management Services Scale of Charges 2024/25 as set out in Appendix 1 and the Ship Sanitation inspection charges in section 2.2 of the Officer's Report.

SE/024/2024: REVISION OF FACILITIES MANAGEMENT CHARGES FOR FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability, regarding the Revision of Facilities Management charges for Financial Year 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

Following a query from Councillor Finn regarding the Newry Market Rates and feedback received from retailers, Mr Sage advised that he would respond to the Member directly.

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Murphy, to adopt the Facilities Management Charges as set out in Appendices 1 and 2 for the financial year 2024/25.

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Larkin, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 10 to 16, 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 Finn, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

SE/025/2024: BUSINESS CASE FOR MINOR CONSTRUCTION WORKS

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability, regarding a Business Case for Minor Construction Works **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Clarke, to note the content of the officer's report, and to accept the conclusion of the Business Case that the Council proceed with Option 3, which will see the appointment of 2 minor construction works contractor to complete minor works contracts across the Council for a three year period, or up to the maximum value of the overall contract. The service to be procured through tender or through the use of a suitable Framework**

SE/026/2024: BUSINESS CASE FOR UPGRADE TO FUEL PUMPS AND VEHICLE WASH AT GREENBANK DEPOT

Read: Report dated 22 February 2024 from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability, regarding a Business Case for Upgrade works at Greenbank Depot, Newry **(Copy circulated)**

On a point of clarification, Mr Cassells advised that the existing fuel pumps were no longer compliant with existing legislation, having been installed 40 years ago, and therefore were no longer fit for purpose as they posed a health and safety risk.

In relation to a statement made by Councillor Enright regarding charging facilities for electric vehicles, he noted that there was a current charger located at Greenbank depot. He stressed that the electricity infrastructure would have an impact on the availability of electric charging for vehicles.

AGREED: **It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Murphy, to note the content of the officer's report, and that Committee approve the recommendations contained within the attached business case.**

SE/027/2024: SINGLE TENDER ACTION EXTENSION

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Environment, regarding Single Tender Action Extensions. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Murphy, to approve the extension of the STAs as outlined in the officer's report.

SE/028/2024: STA FOR ADDITIONAL REPAIRS TO CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability, regarding Remedial repairs on Christmas Illuminations 2023 – STA Extension.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Larkin, to approve a second STA to cover all outstanding costs associated with Christmas Illuminations 2023.

SE/029/2024: RECYCLING OF PAPER AT HOUSEHOLD RECYCLING CENTRES

Read: Report dated 21 February 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Environment, regarding Recycling of Paper at Household Recycling Centres.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Magennis, that Council avail of the Bring Bank Servicing contract – Lot 3: Mixed Paper via arc21 at Downpatrick, Newry, Warrenpoint, Kilkeel, Camlough, Crossmaglen and Newtownhamilton HRCs from 1st April 2024.

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

SE/030/2024: ACTION SHEET AND PRESENTATION FROM THE CLEANSING AND REFUSE TASK GROUP ON 24 JANUARY 2024

Read: Action sheet and presentation from the Cleansing and Refuse Task Group Meeting held on 24 January 2024
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Finn, to note the action sheet and presentation from the Cleansing and Refuse Task Force.

SE/031/2024: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 25 JANUARY 2024 AND IN COMMITTEE MINUTES OF TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2023

Read: ARC21 – Joint Committee Members' Monthly bulletin of meeting held 25 January 2024, and "in committee" minutes of meeting held 5 December 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Finn, to note the arc21 Joint Committee Members' Monthly bulletin of meeting held 25 January 2024, and "in committee" minutes of meeting held 5 December 2023.

FOR NOTING

SE/032/2024: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF TUESDAY 5 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting In Committee Minutes of Tuesday 5 December 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Magennis, to note the minutes of the arc21 Joint Committee meeting of Tuesday 5 December 2023.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 07.35pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 4 March 2024.

Signed: **Councillor Terry Andrews**
Chairperson

Signed: **Mr Andrew Cassells**
Director of Sustainability & Environment