

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2024

**Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on
Wednesday 22 May 2024 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Monaghan Row, Newry**

Chair: Councillor T Andrews

**Committee Members
in Attendance:**

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

Officials in Attendance: Mrs S Murphy, Director Sustainability and Environment
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability
Ms S Trainor, Assistant Director Environment
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs N Stranney, Democratic Services Officer

SE/054/2024: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Enright, Feehan and McEvoy.

The Chairperson congratulated Sinead Trainor on her appointment as Assistant Director.

SE/055/2024: DECLARATIONS OF "CONFLICTS OF INTEREST"

There were no declarations of interest.

**SE/056/2024: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2024**

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

SE/046/2024: Notice of Motion – Newry Market:

Councillor Finn queried cleansing at Newry Market during the revitalisation work that was being carried out at present. Mrs Murphy advised that she would respond to the Member outside of the meeting.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Brennan, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2024.

FOR DECISION

SE/057/2024: WORKING GROUPS AND FORUMS

Read: Report dated 22 May 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Director: Sustainability and Environment, regarding Working Group and Forum. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Murphy provided some background stating a review into working groups had been undertaken in October 2022 and it had been agreed to amalgamate former working groups into the Sustainability & Environment Working Group. She requested feedback from Members as to the requirement and frequency of meeting of the Health Fora.

Councillor Taylor proposed the recommendations with an addition that the Health Fora should meet every six months as a minimum with other meetings convened if emerging issues regarding hospitals etc that require immediate action or response arise. This was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the following was agreed:

- **Sustainability and Environment Working Group to be held Quarterly prior to Sustainability and Environment Committee meetings, commencing in June 2024.**
- **Cleansing and Refuse Task Group meetings to be held in a hybrid format, quarterly prior to the Sustainability and Environment Committee meetings.**
- **It was further proposed that the Health Fora should meet every six months as a minimum, with other meetings convened if emerging issues regarding hospitals etc that require immediate action or response arise.**

SE/058/2024: REPORT ON TREATMENT OF INVASIVE SPECIES ON COUNCIL ESTATE

Read: Report dated 22 May 2024 from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability, regarding the Treatment of Invasive Species on Council Estate. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage provided some background to the usage of treatments for invasive species on Council estate. He advised that since it had been agreed in March 2020 to phase out the use of herbicides containing glyphosate, this was having a significant impact on the ability of Council to manage invasive species, particularly at Albert Basin.

Councillor Larkin asked whether the report was specifically regarding the Albert Basin site and whether Council already address invasive species in other areas.

Mr Sage confirmed that Council's first priority was dealing with the risk at the Albert Basin, where there had been an increased spread of giant hogweed within the last year. He advised an invasive species management plan would then be established. He stated that high risk areas were known and dealt with on a risk-based approach however the issue at Albert Basin was due to the spread of giant hogweed in particular.

Councillor Truesdale stated there had been a hard won battle by Alliance over the reduction of glyphosate and the Newry City Park therefore was disappointed to hear them pitted against each other within the report. She acknowledged a commendable 75% reduction since the target

was set in 2020 to phase it out within 3 years, however expressed concern about its ongoing application. She asked the following questions:

- Was there an issue with Council sticking to the original target of 100% reduction in the use of glyphosate?
- How many grounds maintenance staff did Council employ, and where were the allocation area numbers?
- Where was the data regarding the alternative methods that had been explored?
- How had the site allowed to get out of control with giant hogweed?
- Had the Council permitted hogweed seeds to drift into the adjacent watercourse with possibly spread to Carlingford Lough and other water bodies since they acquired the site?
- Had Council considered hiring a specialist contractor for digging and disposing of hogweed and why had this not been costed?
- Why had the Council resumed spraying around Newcastle tennis courts and Ballyhornan beach, with no invasive species present?

Mr Sage responded to the queries as follows:

- Council was still operating with 25% of the original 500 litres as the volume was extended in March 2023 at the Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting.
- He would respond to the Member on the allocation and distribution of grounds maintenance staff numbers throughout the Council.
- Alternative means had been explored, and in situations where manual removal was feasible, it would be acceptable if dealing with single or small numbers of invasive species. However, in the Albert Basin the use of machinery was not feasible, therefore the chemical option would be the most advantageous in this respect.
- The area had been treated in October 2023, however, this was limited due to the reductions in usage of glyphosate. He stated it could be a 5-yr programme to eradicate invasive species with a monitoring period of 7 years afterwards.
- There was a specific type of glyphosate that was safe and approved for use near watercourses, which was what would be utilised for use at the Albert Basin.
- Regarding the use of glyphosate in low-risk areas around Newcastle, Mr Sage reassured Councillor Truesdale that he would investigate why alternative methods were not used and chemical treatments prioritised for invasive species.

Councillor Finn expressed concern over the use of glyphosate and also noted that it wasn't just the Alliance Party, but also colleagues from across the chamber and cross-Parties who could take credit for Newry City Park. She inquired about the immediate risk to the park project and whether the ongoing eradication of giant hogweed posed a concern for its progress.

Mr Sage stated the proliferation of the invasive species throughout the site posed a risk to the contractor from an environmental point of view when they mobilised on site. He stated the removal and disposal of hogweed was treated as contaminated waste and had to be carried out by licensed contractors. He advised that stem injections had been utilised along with targeted application using particular applicators to limit the use of glyphosate.

Councillor Reilly stated that only systemic herbicides such as glyphosate that would kill plants that had very deep root structures, and without the option it would be difficult to control these invasive species. He stated members of the public should not be afraid as after 24 hours of spraying a field, there was virtually no residue present.

Councillor Brennan asked what the potential dangers or adverse health risks from glyphosate would be. Mr Sage advised he would revert to the Member on this query.

Councillor Clarke stated the officers and grounds maintenance staff were stating this was a requirement to eradicate the problem. It had been agreed to reduce the use of glyphosate, and anything that could be done to ensure Council were using less of this was to be encouraged. He

stated there had been an eradication programme for Japanese Knotwood in Newcastle which took around 5 years and given the potential risk to children walking along waterways, Council did need to eradicate the issue, and he felt the recommendations within the report outlined the way forward for officers. He highlighted that a lot of these invasive species had come from ornamental gardens in stately homes however Council should continue to utilise alternative methods as much as possible.

Mrs Murphy assured Members that any areas being treated within the Albert Basin site would be cordoned off to public access.

As there was dissent within the chamber, the matter was put to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	10
AGAINST:	1
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The proposal was agreed.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the content of the report and approve the use of herbicides containing glyphosate for controlling invasive species at Albert Basin outside of the current allocation for normal weed control and the development of an Invasive Species Management Plan for the Council Estate.

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters, 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 Kearns, 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/059/2024: **REPORT ON SUSTAINABILITY & ENVIRONMENT SINGLE TENDER ACTION**

Read: Report dated 22 May 2024 Ms S Murphy, Director: Sustainability and Environment, regarding Single Tender Actions. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the Single Tender Actions as contained within Appendices 1 and 2 of the officer's report.

SE/060/2024: BUSINESS CASE FOR THE OCCASIONAL HIRE OF HOOK LIFT AND DRIVER

Read: Report dated 22 May 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Director: Sustainability and Environment, regarding the Business case for the Occasional Hire of Hook Lift and Driver. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to approve the business case to procure a contract for the Occasional Hire of Hook Lift Vehicle and Driver.

SE/061/2024: WASTE MANAGEMENT – CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

Read: Report dated 22 May 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Director Sustainability & Environment, regarding Waste Management – Contract extensions. **(copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to approve the extension of waste collection and processing contracts listed in Appendix 1 in line with the extension end date in the table and rate increases in line with CPI.

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

SE/062/2024: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 25 APRIL 2024

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin held on 25 April 2024 **(copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Kearns, to note the document.

SE/063/2024: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2024

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee In Committee Minutes of Thursday 29 February 2024 **(copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Kearns, to note the document.

FOR NOTING

SE/064/2024: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF THURSDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2024

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting Minutes of Thursday 29 February 2024
(copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale,
seconded by Councillor Brennan, to note the minutes.

SE/065/2024: **REPORT ON NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT FORUM 2024**

Read: Report by Councillor Enright on attendance at Northern Ireland
Environment Forum 2024. (copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale,
seconded by Councillor Brennan, to note the Councillor's
conference update.

As this was his final Committee Meeting, the Chairperson thanked the Committee and officers
for their support during his time as Chairperson.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 07:15pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3rd June 2024.

Signed: Councillor Terry Andrews
Chairperson

Signed: Ms Sinead Murphy
Director of Sustainability & Environment