NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2026

Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 19 October 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers, Downshire Civic Centre

Chairperson: Councillor T Howie

In attendance in Chamber:
Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Campbell
Councillor A King
Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor A Lewis

Committee Members in attendance via Teams:
Councillor D Finn
Councillor R Howell
Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers
Councillor K Murphy

Officials in Chamber:
Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development
Mr R Geary, Sports Development Manager
Ms D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

AHC/074/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Galbraith and Jackson.

The Chairperson expressed her condolences for former councillor, Councillor Dermot Curran and that all condolences would be formally acknowledged at full Council and passed on thoughts and prayers to his family, friends and colleagues from the SDLP.

AHC/075/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AHC/076/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2026

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 21 September 2026. (Copy circulated).

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 21 September 2026.**

AHC/077/2026: **DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on the District Electoral Area Forums. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the report and approve the actions in the Action Sheets attached for:**

- **Mournes DEA Forum Meeting held on 22 September 2026**
- **Slieve Croob DEA Forum Meeting held on 22 September 2026**

AHC/078/2026: **RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE LEVELS IN SPORT**

Read: Report from Conor Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding proposed revisions to the Council's Recognition of Achievement for High Performance Levels in Sport criteria and processing procedures. (Copy circulated)

Mr Haughey explained the programme had been running for a number of years and changes were required, in particular applications received between the period of 1st of October to 31st March and 1st April to 30th September.

Mr Geary then provided an overview of how modernising the scheme would strengthen governance, improve administration and provide greater transparency for applicants, officers and Members.

The following key points were highlighted:

- The changes would help strengthen audit and verification arrangements of the scheme and the eligibility of applicants with evidence requirements.
- The scheme would be more transparent in how it was administered.
- Currently, there were limitations with the scheme as it was paper-based however the applications would also be made available online.
- Guidance would be shared and cap of awards made clearer.

- As there were retrospective payments of the scheme it would be Council-led with assessment boards after each of the six months to score the retrospective applications as well.
- Assessment boards would be held the week after the assessment period closed.
- The existing budget would be retained as follows:
  - For individuals competing at a provincial level or an individual level it was £200, at international level £300 and for world level it was £400.
  - For a club or team going to a national level competition it was £300, international was £400 and world level was £500.
- The process of submitting applications would be simplified with Sports and Leisure receiving applications with a confirmation receipt e-mail sent to the applicant along with a timeline. Officers would then prepare applications for the assessment board.
- There would be an eligibility check, a request for documentation and for example, if it was an individual athlete they would need to keep receipts from the tournament or the competition attended.
- The assessment board would then carry out a final check and either approve or send queries back to the applicant which would then be processed quickly with the athlete or the team receiving communication of the award.
- The new process would be simpler and quicker.

In referring to the updated guidelines, Councillor Campbell enquired whether any consideration had been given to conflict of interest and asked had consideration been given to removing Council officials from making decisions with the introduction of an independent body or representatives from another Council to review applications.

Mr Haughey responded by saying there had never been a conflict of interest as most, if not all applications were found to be successful. He explained this was a process from a diligence point of view to ensure that those applicants, whether from an individual or a club, submitted all required documentation. He advised the main problem faced in the past was applicants not submitting information such as the letter of support from their governing body and retrospective receipts etc.

Mr Haughey stated it that although it had not been an issue in the past, it was something officers could investigate.

Councillor Lewis welcomed the updated process which would be more streamlined with Mr Haughey stating the new electronic system would allow applications to be fast tracked.

In reply to a query from Councillor Lewis, Mr Haughey confirmed financial support could only be provided to elite athletes within the District from recognised governed sports with individuals or clubs being recommended for the support by their governing bodies.

Councillor A King enquired if there was an online training session for those who had issues filling out applications. Mr Haughey confirmed that once the online system was introduced various road shows would be carried out. He advised that staff would be available to deal with any queries around the application process.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to approve the following:**

- **The revised Recognition of Achievement for High Performance Levels in Sport Criteria and Processing Procedures attached at Appendix 1 of the officer's report;**
- **The revised application and assessment arrangements as outlined within the officer's report; and**
- **Implementation of the revised scheme from 1 October 2026.**

FOR NOTING

AHC/079/2026: **NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development regarding the Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Lawlor it was agreed to note the officer's report and the attached Minutes of the Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Meeting held on 24 June 2026, approved at the Newry NRP Meeting held on 16 September 2026.**

AHC/080/2026: **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS FUNDING AND INVESTMENT**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development regarding correspondence from the Department for Communities in relation to SEN funding and investment. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Lawlor it was agreed to note the correspondence from the Department for Communities.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.15pm.

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

Signed: _____
Councillor T Howie
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities