

## **NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Ref: AHC/2026

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### **Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 15 June 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers, Downshire Civic Centre**

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**Chairperson:** Councillor T Howie

**In attendance in  
Chamber:**

Councillor P Campbell	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor A King
Councillor N Lawlor	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor K Murphy	

**Committee Members in  
attendance via Teams:**

Councillor J Brennan	Councillor D Finn
Councillor M Gibbons	Councillor R Howell

**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  
Mrs M Flynn, Head of Community Engagement & Relations  
Ms D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer  
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

**Non-Committee Members  
in Chamber:**

Councillor T Andrews

**Non-Committee Members  
in attendance via team:**

Councillor G Hanna  
Councillor H Reilly

**Also in attendance  
in Chamber:**

Mr K Whitson, PGA Master Professional

**AHC/039/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

An apology was received from Councillor Magennis.

Councillor Howie said she looked forward to Chairing the Committee for the year.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to condemn the attack on Stephen Ogilvie and said thoughts were with him and his family. She voiced condemnation at the subsequent violence that took place across Belfast and within the District.

**AHC/040/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**AHC/041/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2026**

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 18 May 2026. **(Copy circulated)**.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 18 May 2026.**

**AHC/042/2026: START TIMES FOR ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE FOR 2026/27**

Read: Proposed Start Times for Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meetings for 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Campbell, the start times of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee for 2026/27 were agreed.**

**AHC/043/2026: PRESENTATION ON PARK GOLF**

Read: Presentation from Mr K Whitson, PGA Master Professional regarding Park Golf. **(Copy attached)**

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Whitson and invited him to make his presentation.

Mr Whitson thanked Members for the opportunity to meet and provided a detailed overview of the presentation highlighting all that Park Golf had to offer in Newcastle. Members were advised this was an opportunity to build a highly accessible and modern Facility, strengthening local connection and access to the sport.

Following the presentation, the Chairperson thanked Mr Whitson for his presentation and invited questions and comments from Members.

Comments and questions from Members were as follows:

- In conjunction with Council officials and/or other Golf Clubs such as Crossgar or Ardglass would there be plans to develop this into other DEAs?
- Council would be entering into a lease agreement with Royal County Down for the for the upkeep and maintenance costs. Were there any additional costs foreseen for Council?
- The proposal had the potential to be really positive and build upon the legacy of the Irish Open in 2024. There were great things about sport at any level that delivered much more than just physical benefits including public health benefits, benefits for mental health and wellbeing and social connection within communities.

- The emphasis on accessibility for all with this project was so important and whether that was for young people looking for something fun and affordable to do, to older residents looking for a manageable way to stay active, this facility had the potential to bring wider benefits to the area.
- Was the proposed layout similar to the old pitch and putt layout?
- Was there any indication as to whether there would be any trees removed as part of the process?
- With the emphasis on accessibility being so important, would the booking process reflect that and be open to people of all ages and all abilities?
- In terms of booking, how would people collect the golf equipment to play?
- Would the park still be accessible to the public to use and walk through with their families and dogs as they did currently?
- It was a great initiative with potential for the tourism industry.
- Would it be an all year-round facility?
- To enable inclusiveness and accessibility there would need to be value for money for users.
- Were there other Park Golf Projects?
- How safe was it to play?

Responses to points raised included the following:

- Council was very fortunate to have the opportunity to be working alongside Royal County Down and the agencies listed regarding the project which lent itself well to the setting in Newcastle.
- Council officials were keen to get approval from Council and develop the project over the next year and use it as a pilot project.
- The upkeep of the likes of the greens and tee boxes would be undertaken alongside Royal County Down (RCD) green keepers because that was the type of skill set that lent itself to that and there would be a license agreement to allow those works to happen.
- It would however still be a Council facility and Council would still be responsible for the overall maintenance of the site.
- There was a large number of green staff at Royal County Down. RCD had interns from all over the world including Augusta, Chicago Golf Club and England and that was something the club would like to develop over the years. Park Golf would give a young greenkeeper the opportunity to hone their skills and this facility would provide the opportunity to learn those skills.
- The intention was to develop Park Golf on the footprint of the former nine-hole pitch and putt course.
- A remedial inspection had been carried out details of which were contained within the report, including some works required to reduce flooding in certain areas but there was no intention to remove trees within the parkland. The remedial work was for drainage and landscaping of the fairways.
- The project team had not finalised the booking system arrangements as yet, however it will be a facility where families could come together and play it as they found it so there is no intention to have a booking system as such.
- It was different from golf where you are naturally hitting a golf ball, so it was safe for families and dog walkers to still to use the park.
- In regard to the clubs and balls required to play the course itself, it was the intention to use the partner that delivered the summer schemes and activities in Castle Park each year, who would hold the equipment so that people could receive and return equipment after use on site. Costs and hire charges had not yet been finalised.

- The duration of opening throughout the year is yet to be finalised but it was likely to be seasonal access for general visitors, with schools and other groups utilising it out of season.
- Council were not doing this for profit and like all other centres it was to be open to all and therefore equipment hire would be kept at low cost to enable people to use the facility.
- There were a significant number of pitch and putt facilities on the island of Ireland, but this would be the first Park Golf facility.
- This could be something that golf clubs in their own right may wish to bolt onto their own golf courses and that this form of golf would gain momentum.
- Nothing was 100% safe and if there was a golf club involved there was a small risk however it was absolutely the safest form of golf. The ball did not fly high and was very light, similar to a tennis ball. There was also only one golf club used meaning only one person could use it at any given time.
- It was envisaged Council would oversee the maintenance of the general area of the park, with RCD bringing the expertise of the green staff to prepare the finer surfaces such as the tees, fairways and the greens.

Mr Patterson stated Council officials were very much looking to progress the project over the next year and whilst there was a lot of work to do, it was hoped the site would be operational by next summer.

In welcoming the project, the Chairperson said it was very important that it be marketed and advertised as it was a very unique selling point that Council was bringing forward.

**Councillor Howell left the meeting during the presentation – 6.30pm**

**AHC/044/2026: PARK GOLF NEWCASTLE**

Read: Report from Conor Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding Park Golf, Newcastle. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to approve the development of a Park Golf facility at Island Park, Newcastle, in partnership with Royal County Down Golf Club, as set out within the officer's report and approve to procure and appoint contractors to undertake the necessary site works.**

**AHC/045/2025: ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLAN**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding Directorate Business Plans for Active and Healthy Communities. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from the Chairperson regarding the PARs Programme and a target having not been met due to a vacancy, Mr Haughey confirmed a postholder had been appointed.

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Campbell it was agreed to approve the Assessment of the AHC Directorate Business Plan 2025-26 and the AHC Directorate Business Plan 2026-27.

**AHC/046/2026: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUM UPDATE**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development delivered by Mrs M Flynn regarding District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums Update. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Lawlor, it was agreed to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheets attached for:

- Slieve Gullion Forum Meeting held on 12 May 2026
- Mournes DEA Forum Meeting on 19 May 2026
- Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 21 May 2026

Councillor Brennan left the meeting at this point – 6.43pm.

**AHC/047/2026: SLIEVE GULLION MULTI-SPORTS HUB REVIEW**

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding a review of the Slieve Gullion Multi-Sports Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the updated Multi-Sports Facilities Review for Slieve Gullion DEA. It was also agreed to approve Council to enter a partnership agreement with Camlough Community Association, to progress the development of the new Community Centre with multi-sports hall at Camlough Village, utilising the allocated Sports Facility Capital Budget for the Slieve Gullion DEA.

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

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Mathers, 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 Act (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 Campbell, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

**AHC/048/2026: FUNDED PROGRAMME DELIVERY**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, delivered by Mrs M Flynn regarding Funded Programme Delivery. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Finn it was agreed to urgently write to First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Communities Minister, Justice Minister, Finance Minister and Departmental officials for urgent delivery of all the funding referenced within the officers report.

On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor A King it was agreed to continue with delivery of the funded programmes as detailed in this report to the end of September 2026, pending receipt of Letters of Offer from the Programme Funders (Department for Communities, Department of Justice and The Executive Office).

**AHC/049/2026: COMMUNITY SUPPORT PROGRAMME – SOCIAL SUPERMARKET**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, delivered by Mrs M Flynn regarding Community Support Programme, Social Supermarket. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to proceed with delivery of the Community Support Programme - Social Supermarket Funding as set out in Section 2.2 of the officer's report.

**AHC/050/2026: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST – MEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, regarding Expression of Interest – Meigh Community Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed note the contents of the officer's report and that Expressions of Interest for land at the rear of Meigh Community Centre,

**Dromintee Road, Meigh, Newry - Appendix 1, progress to stage 3 of the Sport and Leasing Policy 2016.**

**FOR NOTING**

**AHC/051/2026: PCSP & NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP UPDATE**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development regarding an update on PCSP and Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor it was agreed to note the following:**

- **Minutes of the Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Meeting held on 2 February 2026 and approved on 12 May 2026;**
- **Minutes of the Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Meeting held on 18 February 2026 and approved on 20 May 2026;**
- **Minutes of the Policing Committee & PCSP Meeting held on 31 March 2026, approved at the Policing Committee & PCSP Meeting on 26 May 2026.**

**AHC/052/2026: SUMMER ACTIVITY PROGRAMME**

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding the Summer Activity Programme. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Galbraith referred to £1 summer promotions at designated centres stating there was quite a lot of information contained within the brochure and asked if that information could be put out in a simpler format? He also enquired if it was being promoted through social media.

Mr Haughey acknowledged there was a lot being provided right across the District for the five-week period for the summer activity programme including the £1 promotions and that officers could break that down into week by week sections on the Be Active App.

Mr Haughey confirmed it was being promoted.

In response to a query from Councillor Galbraith, Mr Haughey confirmed the £1 swim session promotion applied to those autism swim sessions also.

The Chairperson enquired if those sessions were clearly labelled on the Be Active app as specifically for autism swim sessions. Mr Haughey confirmed they identified as specifically neurodivergent or autism swimming lessons and whilst Council did not process children, they were advertised and booked with coaches and the swim team managing that.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor it was agreed to note the planned Summer Activity Programme for July and August 2026.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.04pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 6 July 2026.

**Signed:**

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**Councillor T Howie**  
**Chairperson**

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Andrew Patterson**  
**Director Active and Healthy Communities**



# PARK GOLF

NEWCASTLE, CO. DOW N

PRESENTED BY KEVAN WHITSON  
PGA MASTER PROFESSIONAL

## AGENDA

- OVERVIEW
- VISION AND OBJECTIVES
- EVIDENCE OF DEMAND
- WHAT IS PARK GOLF?
- COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
- Q&A



# OVERVIEW

Newcastle is lucky to have one of the finest golf courses in the world, however, the sport has a high barrier to entry for our community and local tourists.

**An opportunity exists to build a new, highly accessible and modern facility which strengthens local connection and access to the sport.**



# VISION AND OBJECTIVES

## Drive Participation

Make golf easily accessible to all in the hometown of the #1 course in the World

## Community Cohesion

Provide a welcoming facility which promotes health, skill development and connects communities

## Reinvigorate Council Land

Build on the foundations of the pitch and putt legacy and Newcastle Tennis Club next door

## Boost Tourism

A first of its kind facility in the country and a great addition to Newcastle's bustling amenities

## Access for all

Work with schools, retirement homes and other local groups. Provide volunteering opportunities

# DEMAND



## 'OFF COURSE' GOLF IS GROWING FAST

Golf is booming again, fuelled by the rampant growth in easy to access formats. More people play golf off course than on-course in the US



## LACK OF LOW-COST GOLF IN THE AREA

The area isn't short of great golf courses but it is short of easy to access facilities. It is difficult to 'try' golf as green fees outprice the majority



## SHORTER FORMAT SPORT FOR BUSY LIVES

Other sports like padel have seen a huge surge in popularity (fastest growing sport in the world) due to accessibility and relative time to play



## REMOVES INTIMIDATION

Golf can be a difficult sport to start due to the traditions and rules, so many decide not to bother



## WHAT IS PARK GOLF?



### Invented in Japan

First invented due to a chronic shortage of land, most courses are 9 holes with each hole rarely longer than 100 yards.



### One club for all shots

Referred to as a 'single' the club is used from tee to green, from tee shots right through to putting. Simplifying the game and accessibility overall.



### Bigger, lighter ball

This allows for easier contact with the ball and reduces the distance that the ball travels.



### Compact courses

Often found in relatively small strips of land and incorporate artificial surfaces to minimise maintenance required.



### Eco friendly and sustainable

Courses are designed to benefit the local area and wildlife - to co-exist and better the area vs taking anything away.



### Accessible for all ages

Due to the simplicity of the game, it is ideal for players of all backgrounds and abilities

# WHAT IS PARK GOLF?



## ENVIRONMENTAL

BIODIVERSITY

WETLAND AREAS

DOG WALKING ACCESS

WILDING AREAS



# OPERATIONAL TEAM

PART TIME FACILITY MANAGER (COUNCIL OPERATED)

STEERING GROUP (VOLUNTEERS)

COUNCIL TEAM

ROYAL COUNTY DOWN GREENSTAFF ASSISTANCE

COACHING FROM PGA TEAM AT ROYAL COUNTY DOWN

# SUPPORTING PARTNERS



GREENKEEPING EXPERTISE  
TRAINING FACILITY (TBC)  
SUPPORT GRANT



DUNNIKER COMMUNITY GOLF  
(MARK CHRISTIE)  
INFORMATION, INSIGHTS AND  
ADVICE FROM EXISTING FACILITY  
COMMUNITY PATHWAYS AND  
PROGRAMS



SITE VISITS AND ONGOING  
SUPPORT  
FUNDING ADVICE  
FUTURE FUNDING ACCESS

**THANK YOU**