

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/AGM/

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Council held on Monday 2 June 2025 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne 5.00pm – 5.36pm
Councillor G Kearns 5.36pm – 5.45pm

In attendance:

(Councillors)

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor C Enright
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte	Councillor T Howie
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor C King
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor H Young

(Officials)

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

AGM/001/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell, McEvoy, Ruane and Truesdale and Mr. A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities.

Outgoing Chairperson Councillor Byrne advised that he was concluding his year as Chairperson full of gratitude, pride and a deep humility, noting that his theme for the year had not only been of inclusion and diversity, but as a call to action to help shine a light on the many groups and individuals across the District who quietly and powerfully made a difference in ensuring that everyone had a safe place to grow, belong and thrive.

Councillor Byrne spoke of meeting various groups that supported children with additional needs, such as SNAP Kids, Amazing Abilities, The Active Group, Mourne Stimulus and Dramability noting that their joy and creativity was a reminder that every child deserved to be seen and celebrated. He spoke of his time with the Brain Injury Foundation and Head Injury Support who walked with those living with the life changing impacts of brain injuries, highlighting their bravery, resilience and love. He also spoke of his time at The Haven,

highlighting it as a place of refuge and creativity for those who felt vulnerable, giving them the space to heal and be heard through music, writing, art and storytelling. He stated that he was honoured to not just share in all of these stories, but also to be able to share his own, noting that these stories would stay with him forever.

Councillor Byrne stated that the highlight of his year had been leading Newry Pride 2024, stressing that it was something he would not miss as the first LGBTQ+ Chairperson of the District, highlighting the fact that he left a family wedding in Spain early to be able to attend the event. He stressed that his theme of inclusion meant reaching across the District to all of its communities, stating that every identity and tradition in the District deserved respect and recognition, referencing his pride at marking the VE Day in Kilkeel and the opportunity to host civic receptions for Upper Crossgar Pipe Band and the Orangefield Flute Band.

Councillor Byrne further recognised the achievements of those within the District, such as Warrenpoint FC's promotion to the Championship, St Vincent de Paul's 180 years of service and the RNLI's 200th anniversary, alongside the many schools and youth clubs he had the pleasure of welcoming to the Chamber. He reiterated his pride at hosting a joint reception with Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council in recognition of Armagh winning the All-Ireland Championship, stressing that it was a true celebration of unity and pride.

Councillor Byrne confirmed that he choose not host a Chairman's Ball at the end of his term, but rather choose to shine a light on the real champions of the District, namely the volunteers, community leaders and those who gave their time to those who needed it, stressing that they were the backbone and heroes of society, and offering his thanks for all their work.

Councillor Byrne took the opportunity to thank Council officers and staff, especially Miss Taggart and Ms Kieran who he stated were outstanding at their jobs and their calm guidance and good humour meant the world to him during his time in office. He further thanked Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, and the Directors for their leadership, highlighting that they worked tirelessly to serve every community across the District. He stated that it was often easy to criticise officers but stressed that Councillors had a duty to conduct themselves with respect, honesty and collaboration as officers and Members had the same goal of ensuring the best for the District's communities. He gave a special word of thanks to Deputy Chairperson Councillor Lee-Surginor, stating that his professionalism and support were invaluable over the course of the past year.

Councillor Byrne noted that he had chosen one charity for the year, which was Cuan Mhuire, stating that it was a personal choice as they had not just supported his family but had saved it. He noted that he used his platform to not only raise money for the charity, but to raise awareness and to break the stigma still surrounding addiction and help give back to Cuan Mhuire.

Councillor Byrne spoke of the honour of having been selected as Chairperson but also spoke of the sacrifice of time with family and friends and the time spent travelling given the size and scale of the District, further taking the opportunity to wish the incoming Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson all the best in their new roles.

Councillor Byrne ended by stating that the work of inclusion, compassion and community never stopped and stated it was something he would always strive to continue.

Outgoing Deputy Chairperson Councillor Lee-Surginor spoke of a year that had been filled with unforgettable moments, meaningful encounters and had left him with a renewed appreciation for the strength, resilience and spirit of the District's communities. He stated that one of the privileges of his role had been the opportunity to meet so many people across

the District, from school halls to community centres, highlighting that the passion, generosity and unwavering dedication to making the District a better place was truly the heartbeat of Newry, Mourne and Down.

Councillor Lee-Surginor stated that local businesses, from the small family run shop to the medium and larger enterprises that continued to innovate and expand, were testament to the entrepreneurial spirit of the District, noting that it had been a pleasure to see businesses grow, adapt and contribute to the local economy and identity. He stated that it had been inspiring to be given the opportunity to meet the young people who called the District their home, stressing that these children and young people were not only the future, but the present, highlighting their creativity, kindness and determination.

Councillor Lee-Surginor mentioned two highlights of his term, one of which was the honour and opportunity to meet former Irish President Mary McAleese who reminded him of the importance of leadership grounded in empathy, inclusion and courage. He also spoke of the momentous opportunity to lead Newry Pride alongside Councillor Byrne as members of the LGBT+ community, also stating that it had been an immense honour and privilege to see the diversity and richness of the District's residents celebrating St Patrick's day together.

Councillor Lee-Surginor ended by offering his best wishes to the incoming Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and thanking Council Officers and staff who had supported him over the year.

Mrs Ward thanked Councillor Byrne and Councillor Lee-Surginor for all the work they carried out throughout the year.

Councillor Sharvin noted that Councillor Byrne's theme of his year had been inclusion and diversity, stressing that over 350 events were a testament to his commitment to his role as Chairperson and that his Party colleagues could not be more proud of Councillor Byrne given his hard work over the year.

Councillor Sharvin congratulated Councillor Lee-Surginor on his work as Deputy Chairperson, noting that it could be difficult to attend events at short notice, but commended Ms Taggart and Mrs Kieran for their hard work in ensuring that both Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were fully aware of their requirements for each event.

Councillor Hanlon, on behalf of the Sinn Féin Party grouping, thanked both the Chair and Deputy Chair for a successful year, stating that Councillor Byrne did live up to his commitment of inclusivity and diversity.

Councillor Jackson, on behalf of the DUP Party grouping, congratulated both the Chair and Deputy Chair on their excellent year and commended their interest shown in all groups across the District.

Councillors Reilly, Lewis and Hanna echoed Councillor Jackson's sentiments, taking the opportunity to also thank Councillors Byrne and Lee-Surginor for their hard work over the year, expressing the positive feedback they had received following each event.

Councillor Young, on behalf of the Alliance Party grouping, congratulated and thanked both the Chair and Deputy Chair for their engaging and empathetic events and wished them a peaceful break.

Councillor Taylor congratulated both the Chair and Deputy Chair on their roles, stating that they had supported every request that had been made of them.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AGM/003/2025

APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

Read: Appointment to Statutory Positions of Responsibility Year 3. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Ward called upon Councillor Hanlon as nominating officer for Sinn Féin to nominate a Councillor for the position of Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of Council for Year 3, 2025/26.

Councillor Hanlon nominated Councillor Philip Campbell for the position of Chairperson and Councillor Geraldine Kearns for the position of Deputy-Chairperson of Council for 2025/26.

Councillor Campbell and Councillor Kearns were duly nominated as Chairperson and Deputy-Chairperson respectively of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the year 2025/26.

Mrs Ward then called upon the nominating officers of each of the parties to nominate to the following statutory positions of responsibility and the following nominations were made by the respective nominating officers and formally accepted by the nominees:

Chair of ERT Councillor Lee-Surginor
Proposed by Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Young

Deputy Chair of ERT Councillor Feehan
Proposed by Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Devlin

Chair of AHC Councillor Bowsie
Proposed by Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Hanna

Deputy Chair of AHC Councillor Gibbons
Proposed by Councillor Gibbons, seconded by Councillor Sharvin

Chair of S&E Councillor Magennis
Proposed by Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy

Deputy Chair of S&E Councillor Hearty
Proposed by Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy

Chair of SPR Councillor Hanlon
Proposed by Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy

Deputy Chair of SPR Councillor McAteer
Proposed by Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Andrews

Chair of Planning Councillor Larkin
Proposed by Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy

Deputy Chair of Planning Councillor Hanna
Proposed by Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Reilly

Mrs Ward noted Council's thanks to the outgoing Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson for their work over the year and invited them to step down.

**Councillors Byrne and Lee-Surginor vacated the Chair at this point in the meeting.
5.36pm**

As Councillor Campbell was an apology for the meeting, Councillor Kearns accepted the role of Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Kearns assumed the Deputy Chairperson roles at this point.

AGM/004/2025 NEWLY APPOINTED CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR ASSUME ROLES

Incoming Deputy Chairperson Councillor Kearns stated that she was delighted and honoured to have been selected to serve as the Deputy Chairperson, advising that she was looking forward to a year of promoting the best of the District to make Newry, Mourne and Down the best place to live, work, visit and invest in.

Councillor Kearns advised that she was looking forward to seeing progress on a number of issues that would enhance the quality of life for the residents of an already vibrant District filled with strong communities and dynamic businesses.

Councillor Kearns thanked her Party colleagues for their support in her nomination, and their continued support over the coming year.

Mrs Ward welcomed Councillor Kearns to the role of Deputy Chairperson on behalf of the Senior Management Team and Democratic Services.

AGM/005/2025 APPOINTMENTS TO STATUTORY COMMITTEES 2025/26

Read: List of Committee picks 2025/26 **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Ward advised it had been agreed to use the default method of Quota of Greatest Remainder for appointment to Committees, with the remaining 7 positions being allocated by the d'Hondt method.

The positions were confirmed as follows:

Sinn Féin	Planning
UUP	S&E
Councillor Gibbons	Active & Healthy Communities (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Tinnelly	ERT
UUP	SPR
Councillor Gibbons	Audit
Councillor Tinnelly	Planning

The Chief Executive advised that the remaining names for committee selection should be given to Democratic Services as soon as possible.

Agreed: It was agreed to approve the appointments to Committees using Quota of Greatest Remainder. (*Copy of Committee List 2025/26 appended to these Minutes*)

AGM/006/2024 **TO APPOINT REPRESENTATIVES TO EXTERNAL BODIES AND ORGANISATIONS (EXCLUDING STATUTORY POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY) AND INTERNAL BODIES AND FORUMS**

Read: List of External Bodies and Organisations 2025/26.
(Copy circulated)

Mrs Ward requested that appointees be forwarded to Democratic Services by the nominating officers as soon as possible.

Noted: It was agreed to note the External Bodies and Organisations List. (excluding Statutory Positions of Responsibility)

AGM/007/2024 **SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS FOR INCOMING YEAR**

Read: Schedule of Meetings for the year 2025/26.
(Copy circulated)

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to approve the Schedule of Meetings for the year 2025/26.

AGM/008/2023 **SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES PAYABLE TO COUNCILLORS**

Read: Newry Mourne & Down District Council Scheme of Allowances payable to Councillors. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to approve the Newry Mourne & Down District Council Scheme of Allowances payable to Councillors.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 5.45pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 July 2025.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Chief Executive