

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/AGM/

Minutes of Annual Meeting of Council held on Monday 1 June 2026 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Campbell 5.00pm – 5.22pm
Councillor G Hanna 5.22pm – 5.46pm

In attendance: **(Councillors)**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor V Harte	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor T Howie	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor A King	Councillor C King
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor J Truesdale

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor M Rice	Councillor H Young

(Officials)
Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

AGM/001/2026

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Howell, Jackson and Ruane.

In his outgoing speech as Chairperson of Council, Councillor Campbell reflected on a year that he described as both an honour and a privilege. He spoke of travelling throughout the District, meeting residents and witnessing first hand the dedication of individuals and organisations working to improve local communities. He paid tribute to Council staff, acknowledging their commitment to delivering initiatives that strengthen communities, protect the environment and support economic growth. He highlighted the Chairperson's Awards as one of the standout achievements of his term, noting the success of opening

nominations to the public and expressing his gratitude to the Democratic Services team for helping deliver a memorable and inclusive event.

Councillor Campbell also praised the young people of Newry, Mourne and Down, citing his involvement in Local Democracy Week, school visits, the Youth Council, sports programmes and environmental projects, stating that their enthusiasm, knowledge and leadership potential gave him great confidence for the future of the District.

Offering advice to his successor, he encouraged him to embrace the role, enjoy the opportunities it presented and always remember that the position exists to serve the people of the District.

In closing, Councillor Campbell thanked his wife and family for their unwavering support throughout his year in office and expressed his appreciation to everyone who had supported him during what he described as the experience of a lifetime.

Councillor Kearns, in her outgoing remarks as Vice Chairperson of Council, expressed her gratitude for the opportunity to serve and described the role as both a privilege and a rewarding experience. She reflected on representing the community, engaging with residents and local groups, and supporting a wide range of community initiatives throughout her term.

Councillor Kearns stated that she had sought to contribute positively to making Newry, Mourne and Down a better place to live and work, noting that meeting a variety of groups and individuals had demonstrated the Council's commitment to recognising and valuing the contributions made by local communities. She acknowledged that the role had involved a busy schedule and described the experience as an important learning opportunity. Among the engagements that had particularly impacted her were visits to the Active Group, T.A.G., young adults with learning difficulties, Ballyholland Downs Day, the Down's Syndrome Group, the Gateway Choir in Dominican College and the Albert Basin Fun Day.

Councillor Kearns thanked Sinn Féin for nominating her to the position and expressed her appreciation to the Chairperson, fellow Councillors and Council staff for their support throughout the year. She concluded by wishing the incoming Chairperson and Vice Chairperson every success in their term of office.

Councillor Byrne offered his thanks to Councillors Campbell and Kearns, noting that having held the role previously he knew what an emotional end to the term it could be. He noted that the role had allowed them to give back to the people of the District and thanked them both on behalf of the SDLP for their dedication and commitment to their roles.

Councillor Hanna thanked both Councillor Campbell and Councillor Kearns for their hard work over the year, noting that he had been advised that it could be a lonely role given the size of the District and the travelling that was involved.

Councillor Truesdale, on behalf of the Alliance Party, thanked Councillor Campbell for his enthusiastic leadership and representation of the District throughout his term as Chairperson, noting that he had carried out the role with dedication and wishing him a well-deserved break. She also commended Councillor Kearns for the enthusiasm and enjoyment she had shown during her engagements as Deputy Chairperson.

Councillor D Murphy, on behalf of Sinn Féin, thanked the outgoing Councillor Campbell and Councillor Kearns for their work, noting that he had the pleasure of their company at various events and they had always been warm and welcoming to everyone at every event.

Councillor Taylor also offered his thanks to Councillors Campbell and Kearns, noting that given the size of the District they were able to be present at a number of events, see a wide variety of roles and responsibilities across the District and wished them well for the future.

Mrs Ward, on behalf of Council and the Senior Management Team (SMT), thanked Councillor Campbell and Councillor Kearns, for all the work carried out over the last year, noting that it could be a challenging but enjoyable role with a big time commitment given the size of the District and wished them a well deserved rest.

AGM/002/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AGM/003/2026 APPOINTMENT OF STATUTORY POSITIONS OF RESPONSIBILITY

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

Mrs Ward called upon Councillor Hanna as nominating officer for DUP to nominate a Councillor for the position of Chairperson of Council for Year 4, 2026/27.

Councillor Hanna nominated himself for the position of Chairperson. This was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

Councillor Hanna was duly nominated as Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the year 2026/27.

Mrs Ward called upon Councillor Byrne as nominating officer for SDLP to nominate a Councillor for the position of Deputy Chairperson of Council for Year 4, 2026/27.

Councillor Byrne nominated Councillor Finn for the position of Deputy Chairperson. This was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

Councillor Finn was duly nominated as Deputy Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the year 2026/27.

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 Feehan
Proposed by Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Devlin

Deputy Chair of ERT Councillor S Murphy
Proposed by Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor D Murphy

Describing himself as a proud Ulster Scot and Mourne man, he noted that his family had worked, farmed, fished and lived in the area for many generations, which sparked his decision to run for election, reaffirming his commitment to serving local people and emphasised the importance of councillors working together to deliver high-quality services and improve outcomes for residents.

Councillor Hanna announced that his chosen charities for the year would be Mourne Stimulus Day Centre, which supported adults with physical and learning disabilities, and Heartbeat NI, which supported children living with heart conditions and their families. Looking ahead to his year in office, he pledged to support local businesses, advocate for improved healthcare facilities and services, and continue to campaign for better roads and essential infrastructure. He also expressed his desire to see greater recognition and respect for minority traditions, including Ulster-Scots culture.

In closing, Councillor Hanna affirmed his commitment to carrying out the duties of Chairperson with integrity and respect for all residents across the District and said he looked forward to leading the Council during the year ahead.

Councillor Finn congratulated Councillor Hanna on his election as Chairperson and expressed her appreciation to Councillor Kearns for her successful year as Deputy Chairperson, acknowledging the contribution of women in public life and local government.

Councillor Finn described her appointment as a privilege and reflected on her election to Council in 2023, thanking those who had supported her and expressing her determination to represent them to the best of her ability. She noted that throughout her time on Council she had sought to advocate for local people and issues affecting communities, including support for local businesses and community organisations, opportunities for young people, and the promotion of the arts and cultural sector. She said she believed politics should focus on improving people's everyday lives and helping communities realise their full potential.

Councillor Finn praised the District's strong creative and community spirit, recognising the contributions of artists, musicians, volunteers and grassroots organisations. She welcomed the establishment of a dedicated Arts Working Group within Council and stated her intention to use her role to champion the arts and ensure greater recognition for the contribution of the creative sector. She also highlighted her commitment to supporting young people and encouraging confidence in their future, while stressing the importance of political leadership that was caring, inspiring and forward-looking. In addition, she identified climate change as a key challenge for current and future generations and pledged to promote the District's natural environment and support efforts to protect it.

Councillor Finn emphasised that she would represent all residents across the District, regardless of background or community, and looked forward to serving in her new role. She concluded by thanking her family, friends and partner for their support, and paid tribute to her SDLP colleagues for their encouragement and dedication to their constituents.

Councillor Lewis, on behalf of the DUP, welcomed Councillor Hanna and Councillor Finn to their new roles and expressed confidence that they would carry out their duties to the best of their abilities. He thanked the public for entrusting them with the responsibility of their respective positions and wished them well for the year ahead.

Councillor D Murphy, on behalf of Sinn Féin, congratulated Councillor Hanna and Councillor Finn on their appointments. He acknowledged that, despite differing political views on some

fundamental issues, this would not prevent constructive collaboration during the coming year. He also noted the challenges faced by those entering public life, particularly women, and expressed confidence that Councillor Finn would perform her role effectively.

Councillor Taylor congratulated Councillor Hanna and Councillor Finn on their appointments and noted that the occasion was a proud moment for the Unionist community. He acknowledged Councillor Finn's enthusiasm and wished both Members every success during their term.

Councillor Byrne, on behalf of the SDLP, wished Councillor Hanna and Councillor Finn well in their respective roles. He encouraged them to enjoy the experience and noted their ability to engage positively with people at public events. He also welcomed the increasing number of female elected representatives and emphasised the importance of elected members advocating on behalf of their constituents.

Councillor Truesdale, on behalf of the Alliance Party, congratulated Councillor Hanna and Councillor Finn on their appointments. She noted that the coming year would be an interesting one for the Council and expressed confidence in their commitment to serving their constituents.

Councillor Tinnelly congratulated Councillor Hanna, describing him as both a colleague and friend, and wished him every success in the role. He also wished Councillor Finn well and acknowledged her enthusiasm for public service.

Councillor Reilly expressed his delight at Councillor Hanna's appointment as Chairperson, noting the significance of the role for the Mournes area and the Unionist community. He described Councillor Hanna as a diligent and hardworking individual who would seek to represent all residents across the District.

Councillors Hanna and Finn thanked Members for their kind words and support.

Mrs Ward, on behalf of the Senior Management Team and Democratic Services, welcomed Councillor Hanna and Councillor Finn to their new roles. She acknowledged the significant commitment involved, particularly with an election due to take place during their term of office and assured them that officers would provide support and guidance throughout the year.

AGM/005/2026 APPOINTMENTS TO STATUTORY COMMITTEES 2026/27

Read: List of Committee picks 2026/27 (**Copy circulated**)

Mrs Ward advised that, at the Annual Meeting of Council held on 5 June 2023, Council had agreed, by qualified majority vote and in accordance with Part 4, Schedule 2 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, to use the default quota of greatest remainder method for the appointment of positions on committees, with the remaining seven positions to be allocated using the d'Hondt method.

She advised that the seven positions available for allocation were one position on the Active and Healthy Communities Committee, one on the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee, one on the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, one on the Sustainability

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to approve the Schedule of Meetings for the year 2026/27.**

AGM/008/2026 **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 Harte, seconded by Councillor Reilly, 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 5.46pm

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

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive