

May 26th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 1st June 2026** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre**.

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 5 May 2026

For Information

Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

4.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 May 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Council Minutes 2026-05-05.pdf

Page 1

5.0 Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28 April 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Special Council Minutes - 2026-04-28.pdf

Page 11

Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

6.0 Minutes of Audit Committee held 7 May 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Audit Committee Minute 2026-05-07.pdf

Page 17

7.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 May 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2026-05-11.pdf

Page 28

8.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 May 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2026-05-14.pdf

Page 35

9.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 May 2026

For Approval

10.0 Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 May 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Sustainability_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2026_05-20.pdf

Page 52

Planning

11.0 Planning Section

Correspondence

12.0 Correspondence Report

12.1 Correspondence from Health Minister re: NOM CAR T Therapy C/049/2026

For Information

Attachment: Minister for Health response NOM CAR T Therapy.pdf

Page 60

12.2 Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re: NOM Wastewater Infrastructure C/055/2026

For Information

Attachment: Minister for Infrastructure response COR-0370-2026 - NOTICE OF MOTION - WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE.pdf

Page 62

12.3 Correspondence from Finance Minister and Department for Communities re: NOM Basic Income for Artists C/052/2026

For Information

Attachment: Minister of Finance response - COR-0248-2026 - Newry Mourne and Down District Council CEO Marie Ward.pdf

Page 65

Attachment: Minister for Communities - Notice of Motion - Basic Income for Artists.pdf

Page 67

12.4 Correspondence from Communities Minister re NOM - Inadequacy of £17m Fund for NI Households C/057/2026)

Attachment: Minister for Communities response - COR-0272-2026 - Letter to Marie Ward - NOM Inadequacy of 17m Fund for NI Households.pdf

Page 68

13.0 Notice of Motion - Housing Associations

For Decision

The following Motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

"This Council notes:

That many tenants living in Housing Association properties across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council are required or strongly encouraged to obtain contents insurance as a condition associated with protecting their belongings within rented accommodation;

That tenants are increasingly experiencing property damage and loss arising not from tenant negligence, but from delayed, inadequate, or unresolved repairs by Housing Associations, including but not limited to water ingress, damp, mould, roofing failures, plumbing leaks, and structural defects;

That in many such cases, tenants are left financially liable for replacing damaged personal belongings through their own contents insurance policies, despite the root cause being a failure or delay by the landlord to carry out timely repairs;

That this situation places an unfair financial burden on tenants, many of whom are already facing significant cost-of-living pressures;

That Housing Associations have statutory and contractual responsibilities to maintain properties to a safe and habitable standard and should be accountable where avoidable delays in repairs result in damage to tenants' possessions.

This Council therefore calls on:

All Housing Associations operating within the District to review and amend their policies so that tenants are not unfairly required to rely solely on personal contents insurance where damage arises directly from Housing Association repair delays, negligence, or failure to act within reasonable timescales;

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department for Communities to introduce clear regional guidance requiring Housing Associations to accept liability and provide compensation where tenant belongings are damaged due to preventable delays in repairs;

Housing Associations to establish transparent compensation procedures for tenants affected by delayed maintenance issues, including accessible appeals mechanisms and clearly defined repair response times;

The Chief Executive of Council to write formally to all registered Housing Associations operating within the District, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Department for Communities outlining Council's position and requesting urgent engagement on this matter.

This Council further agrees to support efforts to strengthen tenant protections and improve accountability standards across the social housing sector."

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Mr Caolain Boyd

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Lorraine/Emma Burns/McParland

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Mrs Catherine Hanvey

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Aurla King

Ms Elaine Kirk

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Niall Lawlor

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Jonathan McGilly

Mr Martin McKibbin

Ms Tracie McLoughlin

Sinead Murphy
.....
Cllr Selina Murphy
.....
Cllr Kate Murphy
.....
Cllr Declan Murphy
.....
Ms Patricia Murtagh
.....
Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
.....
Mr Andy Patterson
.....
Cllr Áine Quinn
.....
Cllr Henry Reilly
.....
Cllr Michael Rice
.....
Ms Alison Robb
.....
Ms Maria Rogan
.....
Cllr Michael Ruane
.....
Mr Conor Sage
.....
Mrs Amanda Smyth
.....
Conor Smyth
.....
Donna Starkey
.....
Sarah Taggart
.....
Cllr David Taylor
.....
Mr David Telford
.....
Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
.....
Cllr Jill Truesdale
.....
Mrs Marie Ward
.....
Cllr Helena Young
.....

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Tuesday 5 May 2026 at 6.30pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Campbell

**In attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor M Hearty	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor A King	Councillor C King
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor H Young	

**In attendance
via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor D Taylor	

Officials in attendance: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Health Communities
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/064/2026

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Enright, Galbraith, Howell and Tinnelly.

The Chairperson on behalf of the entire Council extended sincere condolences to Councillor Jarlath Tinnelly and his family on the tragic loss of his daughter, Aoife.

The Chairperson expressed condolences to Councillor McAteer on the loss of his father.

C/065/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/066/2026 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2026

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 13 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 13 April 2026 was agreed.**

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/067/2026 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 APRIL 2026

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 13 April 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13 April 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/068/2026 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 APRIL 2026

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 April 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, the Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 April 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/069/2026 MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2026

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanna, 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 Paragraph 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).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to come out of closed session.

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

SPR/054/2026 - KILKEEL TOWN HALL

As there was dissent in the Chamber, the item was put to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows (copy attached):

FOR	5
AGAINST	28
ABSTENTION	1

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, the Minutes were agreed as presented.

SPR/053/2026 - DUNDRUM PITCHES

It was agreed at the request of Councillor Lewis that Mr Patterson would arrange for officers to meet with the teams that used the old pitches in Dundrum prior to any upgrade works taking place and ensure they were kept up to date.

C/070/2026 MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2026

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 27 April 2026 **(copy circulated).**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Lawlor, seconded by Councillor Magennis, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 27 April 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

C/071/2026

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2026**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2026 (**copy circulated**).

SE/030/2026 – Home to Hospital

Councillor Truesdale asked that it be placed on record that the home to hospital service did not cover Mourne and there had been a number of actionable points put in for the 26-27 year.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Ruane, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/072/2026

PLANNING SECTION

C/010/2026: Planning Section

Councillor Hanna enquired when the report would be made available on the Judicial Reviews. The Chief Executive confirmed a report would be presented at the May Planning Committee Meeting.

C/073/2026

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (**copy circulated**).

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor C King, to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:**

- **Correspondence from DAERA Minister Muir MLA re: Notice of Motion – Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill (C/054/2026)**

EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chairperson advised an Emergency Notice of Motion had been received, the wording of which had been emailed to all Councillors and to enable it to be heard, it would be necessary to suspend Standing Order 16.1 for which a qualified majority vote was required, no fewer than 80% of Members present and voting.

The Chairperson put the matter to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows: (copy attached)

FOR:	30
AGAINST:	4
ABSTENTIONS:	0

Miss Taggart confirmed a qualified majority had been reached.

The Chairperson advised that Standing Order 16.1 would be suspended by qualified majority vote to hear the motion.

C/074/2026: **EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – FIRES IN THE MOURNES**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

"This Council expressed deep concern at the devastating impact that fires have had on the Mourne, putting local communities in danger and destroying precious habitats; commends the heroic bravery of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and PSNI in bringing the fires under control and protecting communities; further commends Mourne Heritage Trust, the National Trust and Mourne Mountain Rescue for their role in managing the Mourne; urges anyone with information on those responsible for malicious wildfires in our countryside to pass on that information to the appropriate authorities; welcomes the appointment of the Pau Costa Foundation to undertake work on wildfire management and response plans; affirms the importance of a collaborative multi-agency response; welcomes the Wildfire Strategic Framework and Action Plan; and resolves to write to the Executive outlining the importance of adequate funding to support preparation, preparedness, response, recovery and enforcement."

Councillor Young seconded the Motion.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Truesdale said the devastating damage scarring the mountains was clear to see with major emergency response teams, hundreds of firefighters and partner agencies working around the clock. She highlighted the benefits of the rich habitat and the suffering when destroyed and how Newcastle residents watched as fire came to their doors with ash falling onto cars and homes with a huge number of people having their chest and asthma conditions worsen.

Councillor Truesdale spoke of how she had advocated for a dedicated ranger service across Mourne and how that piecemeal enforcement had been incredibly successful. Members were reminded that these fires were caused by human activity, whether through carelessness and inattention, out-of-season agricultural practices or malicious fire setting.

Councillor Truesdale thanked colleagues from SDLP and Sinn Fein who along with Alliance attended a meeting of Mourne stakeholders working through shared commonalities. At the meeting three immediate strategic priorities were agreed to include education, enforcement and funding as well as the need for multi agency action.

Councillor Devlin concurred with the sentiment of the motion commenting that unfortunately this had happened many times before with no real tangible results for the people of the Mournes. She stated that people wanted to see action by virtue of the Government stepping up and delivering as that had not happened to date and all the while the environment was being decimated.

Councillor Rice pointed out the Mourne Mountains were one of the most iconic and vulnerable natural assets and how for those who lived nearby it was not just scenery, but a definition of the community and identity, with visitor numbers reaching 500,000 each year. He spoke of how pressure on the landscape was growing fast and what angered people the most was not just the fires but the lack of consequences. The law that existed for enforcement was almost non-existent with those responsible rarely identified or prosecuted.

Councillor Rice went on to point out that whilst a Wildfire Strategy had been brought forward, funding to the Mourne Heritage had been simultaneously cut removing engagement rangers on the ground and that the landscape could not be protected by removing the people who actively protected it. He added the PSNI were not equipped to deal with environmental crime at that level.

Councillor Hanna pointed out that during his time at Council this had been seen regularly and that lessons had not been learnt. He commended the firemen for all their efforts however he felt there was a need for a more efficient way of fighting these fires with more facilities. He suggested the UK and the Republic of Ireland come together to form a unit of helicopters that could drop water onto fires and appropriate places to actually prevent fires from moving as quickly as they did.

Councillor Hanna said he did not attribute blame on any one Minister but pointed out the matter of these fires fell under the responsibility of the Health minister. He added there were little consequences on those causing the fires and spoke of the difficulties faced by the PSNI and how the community had to take some responsibility. He appealed to members of the public to report to PSNI if they saw anything at the earliest opportunity.

Councillor Reilly explained his Party had voted against the emergency Motion on the same grounds they had voted against a similar emergency Motion on potholes as it was not an emergency but rather something that was ongoing.

Councillor Reilly proposed an amendment to the emergency Motion as follows:

"That Council write to the RAF and the Irish Air Corps asking them to cooperate in the formation of a specialist unit to collaborate to put out gorse fires from the air using the rotary aircraft/helicopter."

Councillor Hanna seconded Councillor Reilly's proposed amendment.

Councillor Truesdale did not accept the amendment as her Motion was solely about funding.

The Chairperson requested a show of hands on Councillor Reilly's amendments the results of which were as follows:

FOR: 5
AGAINST: 29
ABSTENTIONS: 1

Councillor Taylor took the opportunity to voice his disappointment that once again Members were discussing the latest wildfires that had that caused devastation of the Mourne Mountains and offered his thanks to the fire service personnel and other statutory agencies involved in the entire operation and put in long hours to get fires under control and securing the safety of people. He pointed out this was becoming an annual pattern which could not continue and any support the Executive could give in respect to dealing with this issue had to be supported.

Councillor Clarke spoke of an earlier Motion he had brought and how there had not been progression since that. He said it was his opinion that DAERA, Department for Justice and the Department of Health needed to work through the Wildfire Strategy and Action Plan with all other stakeholders to bring forward recommendations to reduce the risk to habitat, carbon storage, wildlife and the tourism industry. He added that the Ministers needed to bring forward recommendations and business cases to request funding.

Councillor Clarke spoke of how these deliberate fires, not wildfires, were endangering human life particularly firefighters and everyone needed to be conscious of that.

He spoke of the heartbreak at the damage to the habitat that would take decades to recover and referred to a Wildfire Forum that had not met for two years and the need for collaboration. He added DAREA needed to carry out more outreach and target landowners in rural communities. The action plan needed to be progressed and meetings held regularly.

Councillor Clarke highlighted the need to prioritise the creation of fire breaks, carry out risk assessments with trustees and examination of areas most at risk along with landowners.

In referring to earlier comments about helicopters, Councillor Clarke advised it was currently up to the Health Minister that when there was a risk to life to call in a helicopter and how there were a number of these fires smouldering from early morning that could have been put out quickly saving resources and money. He added there was need to consider new technologies including drones and work with AI in identifying fires, outbreaks of fires, particularly once there was a wildfire warning and have all departments collaborating to prepare.

In response to comments made by Councillor Truesdale, Councillors Hanna and Reilly said their Party had not attended a meeting of Mourne stakeholders as they were not aware of it. Councillor Truesdale advised it was called by Forever Mourne and it pulled together all the Mourne stakeholders, Mourne Heritage Trust, National Trust, Councillors who had attended the previous one in September, MLAs, MPs and that everybody was invited to the meeting in Murlough House.

Councillor Taylor stated for the record a representative from the UUP Party had been in attendance at the event.

Councillor Truesdale thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

The Chairperson declared the Motion passed.

Councillor Devlin pointed out that as it had turned into a debate involving NIFRS that she was declaring an interest as a Member of the NIFRS Board.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Young that This Council expressed deep concern at the devastating impact that fires have had on the Mourne, putting local communities in danger and destroying precious habitats; commends the heroic bravery of the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and PSNI in bringing the fires under control and protecting communities; further commends Mourne Heritage Trust, the National Trust and Mourne Mountain Rescue for their role in managing the Mourne; urges anyone with information on those responsible for malicious wildfires in our countryside to pass on that information to the appropriate authorities; welcomes the appointment of the Pau Costa Foundation to undertake work on wildfire management and response plans; affirms the importance of a collaborative multi-agency response; welcomes the Wildfire Strategic Framework and Action Plan; and resolves to write to the Executive outlining the importance of adequate funding to support preparation, preparedness, response, recovery and enforcement.**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.21pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 05/05/2026

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Proposed amendment from Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanna.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews				1
C Bowsie	1			
J Brennan		1		
P Byrne		2		
P Campbell		3		
W Clarke		4		
L Devlin		5		
C Enright				2
K Feehan		6		
D Finn		7		
C Galbraith				3
M Gibbons		8		
O Hanlon		9		
G Hanna	2			
V Harte		10		
M Hearty		11		
R Howell				4
T Howie				5
J Jackson				6
G Kearns		12		
A King		13		
C King		14		
M Larkin		15		
N Lawlor		16		
D Lee-Surginor		17		
A Lewis	3			
O Magennis		18		
A Mathers		19		
D McAteer		20		
D Murphy		21		
K Murphy		22		
S Murphy		23		
S O'Hare		24		
A Quinn		25		
H Reilly	4			
M Rice			1	
M Ruane		26		
D Taylor	5			
J Tinnelly				7
J Truesdale		27		
H Young		28		
TOTALS	5	28	1	7

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 05/05/2026

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Qualified Majority Vote

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews				1
C Bowsie		1		
J Brennan	1			
P Byrne	2			
P Campbell	3			
W Clarke	4			
L Devlin	5			
C Enright				2
K Feehan	6			
D Finn	7			
C Galbraith				3
M Gibbons	8			
O Hanlon	9			
G Hanna		2		
V Harte	10			
M Hearty	11			
R Howell				4
T Howie				5
J Jackson				6
G Kearns	12			
A King	13			
C King	14			
M Larkin	15			
N Lawlor	16			
D Lee-Surginor	17			
A Lewis		3		
O Magennis	18			
A Mathers	19			
D McAteer	20			
D Murphy	21			
K Murphy	22			
S Murphy	23			
S O'Hare	24			
A Quinn	25			
H Reilly		4		
M Rice	26			
M Ruane	27			
D Taylor	28			
J Tinnelly				7
J Truesdale	29			
H Young	30			
TOTALS	30	4	-	7

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

**Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28 April 2026 at 6.00pm in
Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

In the Chair: Councillor P Campbell

In attendance in Chamber: Councillor T Andrews Councillor P Byrne
Councillor K Feehan Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor J Jackson Councillor H Reilly

In attendance via Teams: Councillor C Bowsie Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin Councillor M Larkin
Councillor A Lewis Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor A Quinn Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale Councillor H Young

In attendance in Chamber: Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
(Officials) Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

In attendance via Teams: Ms S Trainor, Assistant Director Environment
(Officials)

Also in attendance in Chamber: **SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST**
Ms R Coulter, Chief Executive
Ms V Cleland, Interim Director of Primary Care & Older People's Services

Also in attendance via Teams: **SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST**
Mr S Spoerry, Chief Executive
Mr B Beattie, Director of Adult Community Services
Ms E Wilson, Director of Planning, Performance & Informatics
Ms M Burke, Chief Operating Officer (Daisy Hill Hospital)

SC/001/2026 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Galbraith, Hearty, Kearns, A King, Lawlor, Magennis, Mathers, McAteer, S Murphy and Tinnelly.

It was noted that due to a roll-out of their Release to Rescue Plans, NIAS personnel were unable to attend the meeting. A further meeting would be arranged with representatives from the NIAS in due course.

SC/002/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Reilly and Young declared an interest, being members of the Area Integrated Partnership Board for the Southern Trust.

Councillors Campbell and Truesdale declared an interest, being members of the Area Integrated Partnership Board for the South Eastern Trust.

SC/003/2026 SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation and invited them to make their presentation.

Mrs Coulter thanked Members for the opportunity to provide an update on health and social care within the South Eastern Trust. She noted the importance of maintaining strong, ongoing partnerships with Councillors, emphasising the value of two-way engagement and long-established working relationships.

Mrs Coulter highlighted the appointment of a new Permanent Secretary for Health and Social Care, expressing confidence in his experience and leadership. She outlined the “reset plan” for health and social care in Northern Ireland, which focused on three main priorities: shifting care from hospitals to community settings, increasing the use of digital technology, and rebalancing resources towards prevention and wellbeing rather than solely treating illness. She explained that efforts were being made to support more care at home, particularly for older people, and to expand digital tools such as electronic health records and the My Care app. She also noted growing interest in the use of artificial intelligence to improve efficiency and outcomes.

Mrs Coulter stressed the importance of partnership working across councils, the community and voluntary sector, and service users, including initiatives such as those addressing cardiovascular disease and the development of a neighbourhood-based model of care. Addressing waiting lists, she reported significant progress in reducing long waits for appointments and procedures, while acknowledging that access to services remained a key challenge. She emphasised the high quality of care provided once patients accessed services and praised staff for their ongoing efforts despite pressures.

Mrs Coulter concluded by outlining the role of the Trust’s hospital network and highlighting positive performance and feedback from urgent care services, noting continued development and strong patient experience.

Ms Cleland detailed that she worked within primary care and older people’s services and outlined the work being undertaken in these areas, described how caseloads were managed and highlighted innovations introduced to support multidisciplinary teams and the development of the neighbourhood model. She noted that staff were being supported to adopt new ways of working to ensure available resources aligned more effectively with demand, referencing the inclusion of hospital-at-home services as part of this approach.

Following the presentation, the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members.

Comments and questions from Members were as follows:

- The delegation was thanked for their time and for the information provided.

- It was noted at the Health Working Group that public feedback had referenced individuals being placed on two waiting lists. Members asked whether there was capacity to undertake a scoping exercise to determine if any duplication of waiting lists exists.
- The potential scoping of the Downe Hospital for additional treatments was welcomed, and members expressed that the outcome of this exercise would be eagerly anticipated.
- Concerns were raised regarding the complaints process, with members highlighting reports from the public about lengthy delays in receiving responses. The delegation was asked to consider whether improvements could be made in how complaints were processed and addressed.
- While it was acknowledged that some complaints were complex and required additional time to resolve, it was emphasised that complainants are entitled to timely responses. Members noted that although addressing this may divert staff from frontline services, it was important to prevent ongoing issues in future.
- Concerns were also raised about delays between interview, feedback, and commencement of new roles. Members asked what measures could be introduced to reduce this time lag.
- In light of increasing mental health presentations, members asked what steps the Trust was taking to address difficulties in accessing GP appointments and the resulting pressure on emergency departments.
- Members also asked whether there was a timeline for the rollout of the Hospital at Home service across the full Trust area.

The delegation responded as follows:

- It was confirmed that duplication on waiting lists should no longer have occurred, following a period of validation work. Moving forward, the Trust had been moving toward a single waiting list model. For example, the SEHSCT operated within a single waiting list across the North for breast assessment, whereby patients were offered the next available appointment and could choose to accept it or wait for a nearer date.
- In relation to Downe Urgent Care, it was noted that while future training of staff was being considered, this had to be balanced with the best use of public sector funding to ensure delivery of all services. Ms Coulter highlighted increased service demand and cautioned Members that the Trust had to remain realistic in the context of available funding.
- A new complaints process had been introduced in January 2026 and would be shared with Members. Staff training on the new process was ongoing, with a target response time of 20 days. Ms Coulter advised that while the Trust was prioritising timely resolution of the majority of complaints, some cases were highly complex. Consideration also had to be given to the allocation of clinical staff time between complaints handling and direct patient care. She further emphasised that, given the financial climate, resources had to be prioritised to frontline service delivery.
- Recruitment processes were centralised through BSO, with the Trust focusing on anticipating workforce needs in advance. Ms Cleland advised that any specific concerns regarding recruitment in particular areas should be raised with the Trust for investigation.
- It was noted that BSO recruitment times were actively monitored and had reduced from 96 days to 60 days. While this remained a significant timeframe, it represented a substantial improvement.
- Regarding increased presentations of mental health crises in emergency departments, it was highlighted that the strategic focus had to shift toward community-based

support, with greater reliance on community and voluntary sector services to reduce pressures on emergency departments.

- Plans were outlined to support GP services through multi-disciplinary teams, ensuring patients were directed to the most appropriate healthcare professional, thereby reducing pressure on GP appointments.
- It was confirmed that the Hospital at Home service had been rolled out across the entire Trust area. The service was consultant-led and supported by pharmacy and Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). Consideration was also being given to the use of technology to further expand and enhance the service, which was recognised as highly beneficial for patients receiving care in their own homes. It was acknowledged that awareness of the service was not yet widespread among Members, and further efforts would be made to improve communication and visibility.

Councillors Lewis, Truesdale, D Murphy, Devlin and Bowsie left the meeting at 6.29pm, 6.34pm, 6.34pm, 6.35pm and 6.42pm respectively.

**The SEHSCT delegation left the chamber at 6.35pm
The SHSCT delegation joined the meeting at 6.35pm**

SC/004/2026 SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation and invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Spoerry introduced himself and his team, making use of a power point presentation to highlight their key address. (copy appended)

Mr Spoerry outlined that the Trust was progressing a five-year strategy focused on service improvement through collaboration, clearer care pathways, and patient engagement, alongside a strong emphasis on safety, quality and learning. He highlighted a challenging financial position, including budget reductions and further anticipated cuts, noting that savings measures, workforce controls and digital efficiencies were being pursued. He reported significant pressures in emergency departments, driven primarily by increased patient length of stay, and outlined actions to improve flow, discharge and community alternatives.

Ms Wilson reported that elective care investment had reduced long waits, with no patients waiting over four years for specified procedures by year-end. She noted ongoing efforts to sustain improvements through theatre efficiency and diagnostic recovery, alongside constrained capital funding. She confirmed that the Newry Community Treatment and Care Centre remained a priority but was dependent on future funding decisions, with interim alternatives under consideration.

Mr Beattie advised that home care services remained under significant pressure due to workforce shortages, despite ongoing recruitment efforts and a slight reduction in waiting lists. He outlined measures to improve capacity and efficiency, including multidisciplinary working, care package reviews, and enhanced coordination systems. He reported increased use of the "phone first" model, reducing pressure on emergency departments, and noted that GP out-of-hours services had been consolidated to maintain sustainability, with most contacts managed remotely. He added that stroke services followed regional protocols to ensure access to specialist care.

Following the presentation, the Chairperson invited comments and questions from Members.

Comments and questions from Members were as follows:

- The delegation were thanked for their time and the detailed information shared.
- Disappointment and frustration were noted that the NCTCC was the only site that had not yet been delivered, having been delayed from the original 2016 timeline and now proposed for delivery in 2029. Clarification was sought as to whether the NCTCC remained a priority for the Department of Health (DoH) and whether projected costs had increased in light of the ongoing delays to the project's delivery.
- The delegation were asked whether consideration had been given to acquiring part of the Quays Shopping Centre as a possible location for the health club.
- Clarification was sought on whether the delegation considered that the DoH remained committed to delivering the NCTCC, or whether it should be communicated that the project had been deprioritised by the DoH.
- Consideration was sought as to whether any improvements were being made to the Out of Hours service to ensure its effectiveness in reducing unnecessary attendance at Accident and Emergency (A&E), given that a number of attendees did not require emergency care.
- It was noted that fully qualified Physician Associates (PAs), with completed registration exams and GMC numbers, were working in bank and agency roles. Members asked whether this indicated a recruitment issue in relation to these posts within the Trust area.
- An update was requested on the current position and future plans for Kilkeel GP Surgery.

The delegation responded as follows:

- The Department of Health (DoH) still had the NCTCC on its priority list; however, the delegation noted that the priority list remained extensive.
- The projected cost was originally £88m and had increased to approximately £90m.
- A Business Case had been finalised and submitted to the DoH, with all preparations in place to commence procurement once confirmation was received from the DoH.
- The delegation confirmed that the Head of Estates had met with local representatives to discuss the potential use of the Quays Shopping Centre, and that this remained under consideration.
- The delegation advised that while they could not speak on behalf of the DoH, the NCTCC remained on the Department's long priority list.
- Mr Spoerry confirmed that should capital investment become available, there were several priorities requiring attention within Daisy Hill Hospital.
- It was noted that the Out of Hours and integrated neighbourhood services did help to reduce unnecessary hospital attendance; however, it was emphasised that improved health outcomes required cooperation across all public service providers to develop infrastructure supporting extended day services.
- Mr Beattie highlighted the need to improve dialogue with GP services to ensure better integration between local authority and health services, which he considered should be a key focus of the NCTCC.
- The delegation confirmed that there had been a change in job title, with roles now referred to as Physician Assistants rather than Physician Associates.
- It was noted that the Trust employed the largest number of Physician Assistants in line with GMC recommendations and had a Specialist Consultant Supervisor for Physician Assistants. It was confirmed that the Trust was not currently actively recruiting further

Physician Assistants, pending clarification from the DoH regarding the recent job title change and any associated implications for service delivery.

- The Trust was managing Kilkeel GP Practice, alongside Crossmaglen and Mullaghbawn surgeries, providing logistical support to ensure the ongoing viability of services for the local community. There were no plans to withdraw this support.

Cllrs Jackson, Hanlon, O’Hare and Reilly left the meeting at 7.22pm, 7.22pm, 7.26pm and 7.27pm respectively.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their presentation and time.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.31pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

Signed:

Chairperson

Director

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2026

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 7 May 2026, at 2.00pm, in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

Committee Members in attendance in Chamber:

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor S O'Hare

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor K Murphy
--------------------	---------------------

Officials in attendance in Chamber:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
 Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
 Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
 Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital & Procurement
 Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
 Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People
 Ms K Hanna, Finance Manager
 Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
 Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
 Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance in chamber:

Mr P Brady Sumer NI
 Ms C O'Hagan NIAO

AC/023/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan and C King.

AC/024/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AC/025/2026: ACTION SHEET OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 29 JANUARY 2026

Read: Action Sheet arising from the Audit Committee Meeting held on 29 September 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Slevin noted that training had been arranged at the request of Members and expressed disappointment that Members had been unable to attend. She confirmed that the training

would be rearranged and encouraged all Members to attend in order to remain up to date with changes and relevant issues arising in relation to Audit Committee business.

Councillor Bowsie advised that he had attended Audit Training arranged by NILGA some months previously and queried whether the proposed training would duplicate that training. Ms Slevin confirmed that the sessions were not a duplicate and strongly recommended attendance at the training arranged by Council.

Councillor Hanlon queried whether the training could be arranged for the same day as the next Audit Committee meeting, to which Miss Taggart advised that, as the training was open to all Members, it was difficult to arrange during daytime hours.

Ms Slevin advised that Miss Taggart would seek to rearrange the training and again encouraged all Members to attend.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held 29 January 2026.**

AC/026/2026: TO AGREE DATE AND START TIMES FOR 2026/27

Read: Proposed date and start times for Audit Committee meetings for 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Bowsie noted the proposed date in April 2027, which fell approximately two weeks before the elections, and queried whether Council anticipated achieving a quorum for the meeting.

Mrs Ward advised that the dates had been discussed with Party Leaders and noted that both Audit and Planning Committee meetings were generally held during periods of canvassing. She further advised that, given the statutory timelines associated with audit requirements and the signing of accounts, it would be necessary for Members to make themselves available for Committee meetings as required in fulfilment of their role as Elected Members.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve the dates and start times for Audit Committee meetings for 2026/2027.**

AC/027/2026: AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND TIMETABLE 2026/27

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Audit Committee Terms of Reference and timetable for 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne confirmed that, in line with best practice, the documents were reviewed annually and advised that no amendments were required, as the documents remained compliant with best practice guidance. He further noted that Appendix 3 detailed the timetable for the

forthcoming year, including the standing agenda items for each quarter and the required attendees at the quarterly pre-meetings.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the Audit Committee Terms of Reference and to note the timetable for the year ahead.**

AC/028/2026: AUDIT COMMITTEE SELF ASSESSMENT

Read: Proposed date and start times for Audit Committee meetings for 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Slevin advised that the document remained in draft form and that the completed self-assessment checklist had been circulated to all Members for comment. She noted that the checklist was comprehensive and detailed and requested that Members review the document and provide any comments, and all responses received would be considered prior to the final report being presented to the July meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

PERFORMANCE

AC/029/2026: DRAFT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2026/27

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne outlined that the report had been presented to the February meeting of the Strategy, Policy and Resources (SPR) Committee. He advised that the subsequent consultation process had now been completed and that the report would be presented to a forthcoming SPR Committee meeting for ratification and to the July Audit Committee meeting for noting.

Mr Byrne noted that the five objectives remained largely unchanged, with a minor amendment to the wording of Objective Four in relation to sustainability, together with several minor amendments to target measures.

Councillor O'Hare queried the marginal improvement in planning statistics, noting that there were still significant issues impacting ratepayers across the District, and requested further information on the current position.

Mr Mallon reminded Members that a quarterly Planning Update Report was presented to both the SPR and Audit Committees, reporting against statistics, targets, and business plan objectives. He advised that there were ongoing recruitment and retention challenges, issues relating to the quality of submitted applications, and delays in response times from statutory consultees. He confirmed that Council was continuing to explore innovative approaches to improve decision-making, streamline processes, and expedite application

determination, and noted that a paper would be brought to a forthcoming SPR Committee meeting regarding proposals for the Planning Department. He further advised that improvements had been made over the past six to eight weeks in relation to turnaround times and expressed hope that this positive trend would continue.

Councillor O'Hare queried what consideration had been given to the health and wellbeing of employees, given the potential pressures arising from ongoing issues.

Mr Mallon confirmed that all relevant factors were taken into account in the management of the Department and that Council, as an employer, had a duty of care for staff health and wellbeing. He acknowledged that workload volumes presented challenges but noted that targets for determined applications per month were being met and exceeded.

Mrs Ward advised that Council placed significant emphasis on staff health and wellbeing, including access to non pay benefits, wellbeing days, additional support mechanisms, and opportunities to engage with specialist services, and confirmed that these supports were available across all Departments.

Mrs Murphy advised that the Health and Wellbeing Group had developed an annual work plan for all staff, including isolated workers, and was leading on a staff stress survey in collaboration with HSCNI, which was planned for rollout by September 2026. She further confirmed that mental health check-ins had been undertaken by an external provider, with onward referrals made as appropriate in partnership with the HR Department.

Councillor O'Hare queried whether the assessment would consider if health and wellbeing factors were contributing to the backlog and ongoing issues within the Planning Department.

Mrs Ward reminded Members that the meeting was in open session and cautioned against detailed discussion of individual staff matters. She confirmed that the issues being experienced were not unique to this Council but were reflected across the region, alongside concerns regarding statutory consultee response times.

Mr Mallon advised that Council received 66% of statutory consultee responses within the required timeframe, compared with approximately 86% in the nearest comparable Council in terms of size and application volume. He stated that this represented a 20% deficit against comparable authorities which presented a significant challenge. He confirmed that the figures were based on statistics published by DFI. He outlined that approximately 15% of processing time related to validation and allocation to a case officer, around 70% to statutory consultation, and the remaining 15% to consideration of responses and preparation of recommendations, noting that delays in statutory consultee responses were a significant contributing factor to overall processing times.

Councillor Bowsie echoed Councillor O'Hare's comments regarding staff wellbeing and welcomed the fact that there were no current vacant posts. He noted a slight improvement in processing times, from 45.2 weeks in 2024/25 to 44.6 weeks currently. He also queried the potential impact of Mid and East Antrim Council no longer providing Shared Environmental Services (SES).

Councillor Bowsie further queried why only 257 trees had been planted against a target of 2,800. Mrs Murphy advised that staff were continuing to address significant storm damage, which had impacted delivery of the tree planting programme and Mr Byrne advised that the

report had been presented to the February SPR Committee and therefore contained more dated information, but confirmed that the target had since been met.

Mrs Ward confirmed that SOLACE were considering correspondence received regarding the SES service provided by Mid and East Antrim Council on behalf of all 11 Councils, and that an update would be provided to a future Planning Committee in due course.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the forthcoming paper on the Planning Department update. She queried whether delays in assigning case officers could also contribute to delays in consultation, suggesting that applications awaiting allocation may be a factor in overall timescales, rather than statutory consultee response times alone.

Mr Mallon advised that applications were validated upon receipt and that validation was up to date. He noted that case officers were managing between 60 and 80 applications each and that further allocations could not be made until existing workloads reduced, due to capacity constraints. He acknowledged that there was a gap between validation and allocation and advised that measures were being explored to address this, including reducing unnecessary consultations. He confirmed that consultation timescales commenced once consultations were issued, and therefore DFI statistics accurately reflected that stage, but that Council was considering ways to address delays arising prior to allocation.

Councillor Devlin queried why Council appeared to be at a disadvantage compared to other comparable Councils. Mr Mallon clarified that he had not referred to Council being at a disadvantage, but rather that it was operating at a 20% deficit compared with similar authorities.

Councillor Devlin acknowledged the challenges and queried what work had been undertaken to identify the causes of delays within statutory consultee responses, to which Mr Mallon confirmed that the issues had been raised with the Department and discussions were ongoing.

Councillor Byrne requested that further information regarding statutory consultees be brought back to Committee for consideration, noting that any delay had a detrimental impact on residents of the District.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the following:

- **The five draft performance improvement objectives 2026-27, as outlined in appendix 1.**
- **The proposed approach and timetable for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27, as outlined in appendix 2, including approval to commence the consultation and engagement process on 13 February 2026.**

CORPORATE SERVICES – OPEN SESSION

**AC/030/2026: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER – CORPORATE SERVICES
DIRECTORATE RISK REGISTER ALSO TO BE TABLED**

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Corporate Risk Register – Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register Also to be Tabled. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne outlined that the Corporate Risk Register had been updated as at 28 April 2026 by the Senior Management Team (SMT), noting that there were 12 risks in total, including 7 rated red, 4 amber, and 1 yellow. He further noted that section 2.3 of the officer's report set out the Corporate Services Risk Register, which contained 8 risks in total, containing 1 red, 6 amber, and 1 yellow.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the effort being made to secure £29.2m Belfast City Region Deal (BRCD) funding within the District but stated that the information presented had been largely abstract. He suggested that, should Council wish to secure cross-party support, SMT should be more forthcoming with detail regarding the project. He queried what level of detail had been provided to project partners and expressed doubt that it matched the information provided to Elected Members.

Mrs Ward confirmed that details of the proposal had been discussed at four workshops, to which all Councillors had been invited, and referred to the April SPR Committee meeting where it was noted that partners had agreed to progress to the Outline Business Case (OBC) stage.

Councillor Bowsie queried the appointment level of the Strategic Capital Projects Director and whether the role should be included as a mitigation factor to reduce the overall risk score. He also raised concerns regarding the risk associated with engagement with the media, suggesting that Council response times to media enquiries were slow and should be improved, and noted that delayed responses or Member queries could negatively affect public perception.

Mrs Ward acknowledged that scrutiny of Council activity could sometimes be perceived negatively and emphasised that, while scrutiny was appropriate, the manner in which it was undertaken could impact public perception. She advised with regard to response times to media enquiries that a report containing the facts would be brought to Committee as hearing and knowing where two different things. In relation to the Strategic Capital Projects Director role, she noted that this had been discussed in closed session at the April SPR Committee meeting and was included in open session for information purposes only.

Councillor Bowsie stated that the post had been referenced in open session and queried whether Council therefore effectively had five Directors.

Mrs Ward referred Councillor Bowsie to the detail contained within the SPR Committee report, which had been considered in closed session, and reiterated that she would revert to him outside the meeting should he require further clarification.

Councillor Bowsie stated that, if any matters were confidential, they should have been tabled in closed session.

Ms Slevin advised that the job title had been referenced in open session for information purposes only and reiterated that there were confidentiality considerations in relation to the detail, advising Councillor Bowsie to raise the matter outside the meeting.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, the following was agreed:

- **To approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at**

Appendix 1. Full Corporate Risk Register can be evidenced at Appendix 2.

- **To note the revised Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register summary at Appendix 3 and detailed Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register at Appendix 4.**

AC/031/2026: PROMPT PAYMENT STATISTICS QUARTER 4 2025/26

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Prompt Payment Statistics Quarter 4 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Hanna outlined that the current statistics confirmed that 92% of invoices were paid within the 30 days, with 8% falling outside that time, with the average processing time being 14 days

Ms Slevin commended the team for the progress in payment statistics.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Quarter 4 2025/26 and the financial year 2025/26 Prompt Payment Statistics.**

Items restricted in accordance with Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during the following items which related to exempt information by virtue of Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during these items of business.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.**

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

CORPORATE SERVICES – CLOSED SESSION

AC/032/2026: UPDATE OF AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding an Update on Audit Recommendations.
(Copy circulated)

Ms Slevin wished to record her thanks to the team for the hard work in actioning the recommendations, and the clear presentation of data that made it easily understood.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the following:

- The progress in implementing both internal and external audit recommendations.
- The 2024/25 Follow Up by SUMER NI tabled today will also be considered as part of this report going forward.

AC/033/2026: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS REPORT

Read: Report Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Direct Award Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the following:

- The 2025/26 Q4 update in relation to Direct Award Contracts.
- The Direct Award Activity 2025/26 year in review totals
- The Active Direct Award Contracts as of 31/03/2026

AC/034/2026: PROCUREMENT ACTION PLANS

Read: Report Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Procurement Action Plans. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Directorate Procurement Action Plans.

AC/035/2026: UPDATE ON FRAUD AND RAISING CONCERNS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Update on Fraud and Raising Concerns.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the following:

- The update in relation to fraud and raising concerns cases as detailed at Appendix 1
- The progress on actions arising from the NIAO Internal Fraud Risk self-assessment

Mr Brady declared an interest in the following item and left the Chamber – 3.00pm

AC/036/2026: INTERNAL AUDIT CONTRACT EXTENSION

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Internal Audit Contract Extension. . **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to agree the second one-year extension period in order that work can commence on the final year of the four-year Internal Audit Plan.**

Mr Brady rejoined the meeting – 3.02pm

NIAO – CLOSED SESSION

AC/037/2026: AUDIT STRATEGY 2025/26

Read: Audit Strategy 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the contents of the Audit Strategy 2025/26.**

INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/038/2026: SUMER NI SUMMARY REPORT

Read: Sumer NI Summary Report **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report, including:**

- **Performance Data and Validations**
- **Estates Management and Security**
- **Labour Market Partnership**
- **Review of Local Economic Partnership**
- **Follow up of 2025/26 Recommendations**

AC/039/2026: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2026/27

Read: Internal Audit Plan 2026/27 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Plan 2026/27.**

AC/040/2026: ANNUAL ASSURANCE REPORT

Read: Annual Assurance Report **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the Annual Assurance Report 2025/26.

CIRCULARS

AC/041/2026: ACCOUNTS DIRECTION TO DISTRICT COUCILS 2025/26 – LG07/2026

Read: Circular LG07/2026 – Accounts Direction to District Councils 2025/26 – LG07/2026 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the circular.

AC/042/2026: DISTRICT COUNCIL RATE STATISTICS – LG 08/2026

Read: Circular LG08/2026 – District Council Rate Statistics **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the circular.

AC/043/2026: NI AUDIT OFFICE – RAISING CONCERNS IN THE NI PUBLIC SECTOR – MARCH 2026

Read: Circular from NI Audit Office – Raising Concerns in the NI Public Sector – March 2026 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the circular.

AC/044/2026: NI AUDIT OFFICE CODE OF AUDIT PRACTICE 2026

Read: Circular from NI Audit Office – Code of Audit Practice 2026 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the circular.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.34pm

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

Signed: **Mrs M Ward**
 Chief Executive

Signed: **Ms B Slevin**
 Independent Chairperson

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

28

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 11 May 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson: Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Committee Members

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor M Ruane
Councillor H Young	

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor A Quinn	

Officials in attendance: Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:** Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

ERT/050/2026 APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor S Murphy and Tinnelly.

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. He asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

Councillor Lee-Surginor noted this was his final meeting as Chair, and thanked Members for their contributions over the past year.

ERT/051/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ERT/052/2026 ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 20 APRIL 2026

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/041/2026: Financial Assistance Call 1 Tranche 2 2026/27:

Councillor Andrews queried whether there was an update on the progress of the Letters of Offer to successful applicants.

Mr Mallon advised that April's Economy, Regeneration & Tourism (ERT) Committee minutes had been ratified at Council meeting held 5 May 2026, therefore following the closure of the call-in period, officers would take forward any actions accordingly.

ERT/035/2026: Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Night Time Economy in Downpatrick:

Councillor Galbraith queried what actions had taken place since the previous ERT Committee meeting on the above item, to which Mr Mallon reiterated that as the minutes had been ratified at Council held 5 May 2026, actions would be taken forward following the closure of the call-in period.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 April 2026.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/053/2026

ARTS OUTREACH PROGRAMME 2026/27

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Arts Outreach Programme for 2026/27.
(Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth stated that the paper set out proposals for the delivery of an arts outreach programme for 2026–27, which had been delivered over the past few years. She explained that the recommendations in Section 3 of the report sought approval to deliver an artist bursary programme, which would issue letters of offer for six bursaries. She further advised that the proposals included delivering two art bursaries through a service level agreement for the John Hewitt International Summer School, delivering a theatre-in-residence programme via a service level agreement, and delivering an artist-in-residence programme, also through a service level agreement.

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Ruane, to approve the following:

- **To deliver an Artist Bursary Programme, awarding Letters of Offer for 6 bursaries.**
- **To deliver 2 Artist Bursaries through a Service Level Agreement for the John Hewitt International Summer School**
- **To deliver a Theatre Company in Residence programme, establishing an SLA for delivery against KPI's.**
- **To deliver an Artist in Residence programme, establishing an SLA for delivery against KPI's.**

ERT/054/2026

GRAPHIC DESIGN, ARTWORK & PRINT MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Graphic Design, Artwork & Print Management Services. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth stated that approval was being sought, through procurement and approval of the attached business case, to appoint graphic design, artwork and print management services. She explained that this was essential to support communications and marketing across the tourism, culture, arts and events programmes.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to approve the business case and necessary procurement exercises to appoint a graphic design, artwork and print management services contract for tourism, culture, arts and events.**

ERT/055/2026

LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP – PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Local Economic Partnership – Professional Services. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth stated that Members would be familiar with the Local Economic Partnership as previous reports had been presented, including the action plan approved by the Department for the Economy. She explained that the paper sought approval for the procurement of the professional services required to support the delivery of two capital grant programmes outlined within the action plan and fully supported by the Department for the Economy.

She advised that the programmes were the Commercial Property Grant and the Property Façade Renewal Scheme, and that the associated costs would be fully funded through the Local Economic Partnership.

In proposing the report, Councillor Andrews queried whether there were any additional plans to include villages and towns across the District alongside any funding opportunities for the same.

Mr Mallon noted that there was an initiative being developed through Central Government Departments and that opportunities could arise when that Shaping Sustainable Places initiative was rolled out.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the paper, mentioning the hard work that had been carried out in the background with owners and traders in Downpatrick.

Councillor Hanna queried how Council proposed to make business owners aware of the scheme when it became available.

Mrs Smyth confirmed that Council hoped to launch the Commercial Property Grant Scheme in the coming weeks, noting that a press release would be issued when officially launched. She confirmed that Members would be made aware and encouraged them to engage with the local community to share the information.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to approve**

procurement of professional services required to support the delivery of two capital grant programmes on behalf of the Local Economic Partnership: Revive and Reimagine – Commercial Property Grant and Property Façade Renewal Scheme.

ERT/056/2026

UNESCO TOGETHER PROJECT

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding UNESCO Together Project. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth stated that the paper outlined funding received for the UNESCO Together project, supported through the PEACEPLUS funding programme, with all details of the project outlined at section 2 of the officer's report. She advised that this would enable the project to proceed, including the completion of all necessary legal requirements to facilitate project delivery, and would also approve the attached business case to allow the required procurements to be undertaken.

AGREED:

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

- **To approve the acceptance of the Letter of Offer for UNESCO Together (PEACEPLUS) and the completion of all necessary legal and administrative requirements to enable project delivery.**
- **To approve the business case and subsequent procurements to enable delivery of the UNESCO Together (PEACEPLUS) Project.**

ERT/057/2026

NEWRY BID

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Newry BID Updae. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth stated that Newry BID had recently completed a successful re-vote securing a further five-year term and had now entered a new BID period. She explained that, as part of this arrangement, there was an operating agreement between the Council and Newry BID setting out the Council's role in administering the BID levy, including issuing invoices and managing any debt. She advised that the report presented information on this operating agreement, which was included as an appendix, and sought approval from members to sign the new BID operating agreement. She highlighted that Section 2 of the report set out details of the revised and updated agreement, which reflected recommendations arising from a recent audit report.

Councillor Hanna queried whether all parties involved with the proposed operating agreement were content with the agreement as he understood there were issues previously regarding the levy collection.

Mrs Smyth advised that Council had met with Newry BID and they were content to take the proposed operating agreement to their board for agreement, confirming that any future debt and levy agreements would be tabled at the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meetings for agreement.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Young, the following was agreed:

- **To note the update provided against Newry BID successful re-vote for a 3rd BID Term.**
- **That Council sign the renewed "BID Levy Operating Agreement" and work with Newry BID in ensuring adherence to the conditions contained within.**

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

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Kearns, 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 Paragraph 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).

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised that the following had been agreed while in closed session.

ERT/058/2026

FOOD CURATOR – TOURISM EVENTS

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Food Curator – Tourism Events. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, to establish a Service Level Agreement with Food NI for delivery of the Food Curator Element of both Wake the Giant and Eats and Beats 2026 festivals.

ERT/059/2026

HOTEL ACCOMMODATION SCHEME

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Hotel Accommodation Scheme. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, to issue Letters of Offer to the applicants recommended for the award of funding under the Hotel Accommodation Scheme and that Pre-Letter of Offer conditions are to be met prior to issue of full Letter of Offer and where conditions are not satisfied, no letter of offer will be issued.**

FOR NOTING

ERT/060/2026

KILCURRY SUBCATCHMENT WATER ASSESSMENT PROJECT

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Kilcurry Subcatchment Water Assessment Project. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note acceptance of the Letter of Offer for Kilcurry Subcatchment Water Assessment project (DAERA Environment Fund) and the completion of all necessary legal and administrative requirements to enable project delivery.**

ERT/061/2026

NMD MUSEUMS QUARTERLY UPDATE

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Quarterly Update Report for Museums (Q4 25/26 Jan-March). **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the content of the report.**

Councillor Andrews offered his thanks to Councillor Lee-Surginor as Chairperson and Councillor Feehan as Deputy Chairperson for their work over the year.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.31pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026

Signed: **Councillor D Lee-Surginor**
Chairperson

Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed:

Conor Mallon

Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

35

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 May 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor M Hearty	Councillor T Howie
Councillor A King	Councillor C King
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor H Reilly

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor R Howell
Councillor M Rice	Councillor D Taylor

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Community Development
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Non-Committee
Members In Attendance
via Teams:**

Councillor C Bowsie

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:**

Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director Economy, Growth & Tourism

SPR/068/2026:

APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor O'Hare, and also from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive; Mrs Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment and Mr Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital, Estates & Procurement.

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. She asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

SPR/069/2026:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

SPR/070/2026: ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2026

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 23 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 23 April 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/071/2026: LDP REVISED TIMETABLE

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director: Regeneration, regarding LDP Revised Timetable. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly advised that the paper provided an update on the progress of the Local Development Plan in line with the current timetable, along with a revised timetable for future stages. He explained that the legislative framework required the timetable to be updated to reflect changing circumstances, noting that the last revision had taken place in 2023, and that the report outlined the key actions taken to date.

In proposing the report, Councillor McAteer queried the additional time that had been added to the proposed timeline, stating that he believed it had originally proposed in 2029 and now a further 2 years had been added to the timeline.

Mr McGilly explained that the main uncertainty related to the Public Examination stage, which would be managed by the Department, making it very difficult to accurately predict timescales. He noted that the revised timetable had been based on the experiences of other councils that had already progressed through the same process, and that the timetable required revision to reflect these uncertainties and the statutory procedures that had to be followed at each stage, as outlined within the report. He confirmed that the proposed timetable represented a realistic approach.

Councillor McAteer stated that he believed the processes needed to be improved at a legislative level and that public consultation should not be blamed for any further delays to the timetable, stating that representations should be made to improve the processing of the LDP.

Councillor Hanlon queried where Councillor McAteer would like to make representations.

Councillor McAteer stated that as the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) were the lead Department for LDP, representations should be made to them to consider the LDP development across the North, to consider what changes in legislation could be brought forward to improve the timeline of the LDP.

Mr McGilly explained that the two-tier process for developing the LDP had been set out through legislation and was therefore required to be followed, noting that concerns around the process had been raised through the Planning Performance Improvement Forum with the

Department, and that work was ongoing to review the issue. He noted that all councils were at different stages of the process, which made any changes difficult to implement consistently.

Mr McGilly acknowledged that the process was cumbersome but emphasised that it was a statutory process Councils were required to undertake. Referring to comments made by another officer, he said there was a view that more could potentially be done to improve the process, although this would need to happen above Council level rather than within Councils themselves and suggested that the issue could be raised further through the Planning Performance Improvement Forum.

Councillor McAteer proposed to write to the Planning Performance Improvement Forum and ask them to consider the LDP development across the North and examine what legislative changes could be introduced to improve and shorten the LDP timeline.

This was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hearty, the following was agreed:

- **The draft revised timetable at Appendix A.**
- **That following approval by resolution of the Council, the Planning Department liaises with the PAC prior to submitting the revised Timetable to the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) for agreement.**
- **That following agreement of the revised Timetable by DFI, that it be made available and published in accordance with regulation 8 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.**

It was also agreed, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Reilly, that the Council would write to the Planning Performance Improvement Forum requesting that it consider LDP development across the North and examine what legislative changes could be introduced to improve and shorten the LDP timeline.

SPR/072/2026:

PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026/27

Read:

Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance & Performance, regarding Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne explained that the draft plan had been tabled at January's Committee and had been followed by a nine-week consultation period. He advised that feedback received during the consultation process was outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, and that page 5 contained a table detailing the amendments made between the draft and final versions.

In proposing the report, Councillor Reilly queried whether all cleansing staff had completed the required training for working at busy roadsides, noting that littering was a worsening problem that needed addressed.

Mr Sage confirmed that 5 courses of the Lantra Temporary Traffic Management course had been completed and advised that all required staff would be fully trained by the end of June 2026. He also advised that Mrs Murphy was considering options where litter issues had been raised and an update would be tabled in due course.

Councillor Mathers stated that his Party was contacted daily about littering and that communities were now addressing the issue themselves. He requested a clear timeline when Council staff would be able to commence the litter picking in the problem areas.

Councillor Mathers also noted that the backlog in planning applications had not improved and queried whether it was now time to bring in a temporary resource to deal with the backlog as applicants were getting frustrated at delays over issues such as Bat Surveys not being requested when an application was submitted

Mr Mallon advised that a report was tabled at SPR, Audit and Planning Committee each quarter that detailed the challenges around recruitment and retention, noting that a paper had been tabled in closed session later on the agenda and further proposals would be tabled in the coming months regarding the Planning Department. He advised that Bat surveys were under the remit of the applicant and were also seasonal therefore should the applicant have missed the seasonal window, there would be a delay to the application and that this was outside of Council control. He advised that Bat Surveys were then shared with NIEA for consideration as a statutory consultee.

Councillor Howie noted the issues raised by constituents were fly tipping and dog fouling and requested that Council consider how enforcement targets could be met in this area.

Councillor McAteer stated that fly tipping was a cause for concern in his area, noting that Council should consider monitoring the known hotspot areas utilising the same measures other councils used, such as solar powered CCTV. He further noted that Bat Surveys did cause problems for applicants, but all applications received should be scanned for required surveys before being validated and the applicant made aware that one was required.

Councillor Hanlon advised Councillor McAteer that Councillor C King had tabled a motion regarding solar powered CCTV which was being progressed through the appropriate committee and requested that officers provide an update to Councillor McAteer on the matter.

Mr McGilly confirmed that a report would be tabled at a subsequent meeting regarding planning proposals, noted that the Planning Committee were aware of the implementation of Validation Checklists and that these would stop applications being validated that did not have all the required documentation.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Howie, the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27 and Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27 were agreed.

SPR/073/2026:

CULLYHANNA COMMUNITY CENTRE

Read:

Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, regarding Cullyhanna Community Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Robb stated that the report sought approval to appoint a contractor to replace the roof at Cullyhanna Community Centre following weather-related damage and water ingress that had temporarily closed the facility earlier in the year. Although the centre had reopened, she explained that a full roof replacement and some internal works were required to extend the building's lifespan and advised that the works would likely take place over the summer for an estimated eight to twelve weeks, with engagement taking place with the Community Association regarding disruption and support measures for lost income during the closure period.

In proposing the report, Councillor Hearty welcomed the investment as the centre was a well utilised resource for the area.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of a contractor to replace the roof at Cullyhanna Community Centre as detailed within the report.**

SPR/074/2026: CHANGING PAVILION AT MILLTOWN, WARRENPOINT

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director: Healthy Living, regarding Changing Pavilion at Milltown, Warrenpoint. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Haughey stated that the report sought members' approval, as outlined in Section 3, to procure and appoint a contractor to replace the changing pavilion at the sports facility in Milltown in line with the approved capital budget presented to the recent Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG) on 7 May 2026.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of a contractor for the replacement of the existing changing pavilion at Milltown, Warrenpoint, with a new modular facility, ensuring compliance with health and safety standards and supporting continued use of the site by local sports clubs.**

SPR/075/2026: FITNESS EQUIPMENT – KILKEEL LEISURE CENTRE

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director: Healthy Living, regarding Fitness Equipment – Kilkeel Leisure Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Haughey stated that the report sought members' approval, as outlined in Section 3 of the report, to purchase gym equipment for the refurbished Kilkeel Leisure Centre through the council's current framework supplier, as agreed at a recent SFWG meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to approve the**

purchase of fitness equipment for Kilkeel Leisure Centre as detailed within the report.

SPR/076/2026: CRANFIELD SEA DEFENCES

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Cranfield Sea Defences. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon explained that the report, which had also been tabled at a recent SFWG meeting, related to damage caused at Cranfield during Storm Bram in December 2025. He stated that a technical note had been completed to provide direction on the required repair works and to identify the processes and reports needed to secure ASSI assent from the NIEA. He advised that the report recommended approval of the capital programme and budget to progress the Cranfield Sea Defences project, along with progression of the necessary ICT appointments.

In proposing the report, Councillor Reilly highlighted his disappointment that NIEA had refused permission to repair the damaged sea defences when the existing footprint would not be expanded and the work was urgently needed. He queried whether any responses had been received regarding his motion related to coastal erosion given that Council was to bear the cost of the additional workload required when funding was available from Central Government in other areas.

Councillor Hanlon advised that officers would revert to Councillor Reilly regarding his query.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the provision in the capital programme a budget to progress the Cranfield Sea Defences project and progress with ICT appointment.**

SPR/077/2026: MEMBERSHIP OF ULSTER SCOTS ULSTER BRITISH WORKING GROUP

Read: Report from Mrs E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People, regarding Membership of Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kirk explained that it had previously been agreed to establish an Ulster Scots/Ulster British Working Group, with the title and Terms of Reference (ToR) to be confirmed at its first meeting. She stated that, at the Group Party Leaders' meeting on 5 March, it had been agreed to recommend membership arrangements based on the council's Irish Language Strategy Cross-Party Working Group, which was listed in section 2.1 of the report and that officers were seeking approval to progress on that basis.

Councillor Reilly noted his Party had concerns regarding the proposed membership and would only reluctantly accept the make-up of the Working Group. He noted that the Irish Language Working Group had a large remit and budget, which the Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group had yet to build, and stated he believed it would be better served by allowing any interested Councillor to attend. He stated he did not believe anyone with a Nationalist background would want to promote the Ulster Scots Ulster British identity and queried whether Council would permit his Party to have two Members of the working group.

Councillor Hanlon confirmed that the ToR would be determined at the first meeting of the working group, along with confirming the preferred name of the working group.

Councillor Lewis wished to reiterate Councillor Reilly's point, noting that the Ulster Scots Ulster British identity was primarily represented by two Party's within Council and in order to give the working group as much credibility as possible, it would be ideal if Unionist Parties were given more than one seat each. He confirmed that, as alluded to, should the membership be an item to be agreed by the working group then he was content to discuss the issue at the working group.

Councillor Hanlon noted that the DUP were to be Chairperson of Council in the coming year and would have two seats for the next year, but requested Ms Kirk clarify the issue.

Ms Kirk advised that, in line with other established working groups, the first meeting would be to agree the ToR and membership of the working group.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the establishment of the working group, stating he believed it should have been in place long ago. He expressed his hope that the working group would be an effective group and Council would support the ideas of the group regarding Ulster Scots and Ulster British identity and culture, and that the ToR and membership could be agreed at a meeting that should be arranged in the coming days.

Councillor Hanlon encouraged all interested members to attend the first meeting to enable the membership and ToR to be agreed but advised that a meeting would not be arranged until June as the minutes would need to be ratified at full Council on 1 June 2026.

Cllr Byrne left the meeting at this stage – 6.24pm

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the report, and queried whether the make-up of the Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group could reflect the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group.

Ms Kirk advised that the paper was to note the recommendation made by Party Leaders and reiterated that both make-up of the working group and ToR would be agreed at the working group's first meeting.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to note the recommendation of the Party Leaders meeting on 5 March 2026, and that the membership of the Ulster Scots Ulster British Working group be the same allocation as that of the Councillor's Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group.

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

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Lewis, 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 Paragraph 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).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/078/2026: DISPOSAL OF LAND AT ANNALONG

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director: Legal & People, regarding Disposal of Lands at Annalong. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to accept a surrender of the Lease from the tenants and grant a new lease to the existing tenants of the land outlined in magenta and green on the map attached to the officer's report for a term of 99 years from 2026 at a peppercorn rent subject to revised Departmental Consent.

SPR/079/2026: PLANNING – PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Planning – Professional Support. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the engagement of the Professional Planning support to the Development Management Team for 1-2 days support per week over an initial period of 6 months.

SPR/080/2026: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS FOR IT SOLUTIONS

Read: Report from Ms G Ringland, IT Manager, regarding Direct Award Contracts for IT Solutions. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the continuation of use of the DAC process for the contracts at Appendix 1 until 31st March 2030 in order to enable continued use of existing solutions which are deeply embedded into operational practices.

SPR/081/2026: ADDITIONAL VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS (AVCs)

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance & Performance, regarding Additional Voluntary Contributions. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to approve the re-contracting of the AVC provider via the Portsmouth Framework for a period of 36 months, with the option to extend for a further 12 months. The proposal delivers a net saving to the Council and to officers who avail of the scheme.**

SPR/082/2026: RELEASE OF EASEMENT AT DAISY HILL, NEWRY

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Release of Easement at Daisy Hill, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed release the Easement detailed in the officer's report for the market value.**

SPR/083/2026: REQUEST FOR WAYLEAVE AT MARKET STREET CAR PARK, DOWNPATRICK

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Request for Wayleave at Market Street Car Park, Downpatrick. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to enter into a Wayleave Agreement with Northern Ireland Electricity Networks over the lands known as Market Street Car Park, Downpatrick.**

SPR/084/2026: LICENCE AT FORESHORE BLOODYBRIDGE NEWCASTLE FOR BIRD SURVEY

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Licence for Bird Survey at Foreshore at Bloody Bridge, Newcastle. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to grant the British Trust for Ornithology a licence permitting them to carry out a survey of the Kittiwakes from May 2026 until September 2026 and then again from May 2027 to September 2027 in respect of a strip of the foreshore at the Bloody Bridge,**

Newcastle, subject to the consent of the Crown Estate.**SPR/085/2026: LICENCE FOR GLENREE HOUSE**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Licence for Glenree House. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed to sign and seal the licence with the Department of Finance for the occupation of premises at Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry as detailed on the map shaded grey attached to the officer's report for the amount detailed in the report, together with the accompanying Licence for Works to facilitate preparation for Council occupancy.**

SPR/086/2026: FLEET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2026/27

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, presented by Mr C Sgae, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Fleet Replacement Programme 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed to approve the Fleet Replacement Programme 2026 – 27.**

SPR/087/2026: CAMLOUGH LAKE RECREATIONAL HUB

Read: Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital, Estates & Procurement, presented by Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Camlough Lake Recreational Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to progress the appointment of the preferred contractor (supplier 4) to deliver the Camlough Lake Recreational Hub Facility subject to the completion of standstill period.**

FOR NOTING - ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014**SPR/088/2026: SFWG MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 7 MAY 2026**

Read: SFWG Minutes of Meeting held 7 May 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the minutes.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.26pm
 For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

Signed: Councillor Oonagh Hanlon
Chairperson

Signed: Marie Ward
Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2026

**Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on
Monday 18 May 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers,
Downshire Civic Centre**

Chairperson: Councillor C Bowsie

**In attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor A King	Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor Lee-Surginor	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor K Murphy

**Committee Members in
attendance via Teams:**

Councillor D Finn	Councillor R Howell
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor J Truesdale

Officials in Chamber:

Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living
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 A Lewis

AHC/032/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Healthy Living.

AHC/033/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**AHC/034/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL
2026**

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 27 April 2026. **(Copy circulated).**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the Action**

Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 27 April 2026.

AHC/035/2026: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUM UPDATE

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

Newry DEA Action Sheet Forum Private Meeting: 23 April 2026

Councillor Mathers spoke of the recent All Star Taekwondo Championship that was held in Newry Leisure Centre with 170 fighters from 18 clubs across the 32 counties in attendance stating that the event showcased what the leisure centre had to offer.

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

- **Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting held on 14 April 2026**
- **Rowallane DEA Forum Meeting held on 14 April 2026**
- **Slieve Croob DEA Forum Meeting held on 21 April 2026**
- **Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 23 April 2026**

AHC/036/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION - COLD WATER SWIMMING FACILITIES

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding the Notice of Motion received from Councillor Lewis at the Council Meeting on 13 April 2026 in relation to cold water swimming facilities . **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Lewis thanked officers for their work on the matter of cold water swimming which had become very popular across the District and explained the motion had been brought as a result of engagement with groups that used Tyrella Beach. He spoke of the importance of looking at ways to promote and enhance the facilities.

Councillor Jackson commended Councillor Lewis on bringing forward the Motion and echoed his sentiments to examining ways to improve and make it safer for users.

In voicing support for the officers recommendations to include further investigation, Councillor Truesdale spoke of concern that Tyrella Beach, like Murlough was tidal and quite isolated, stating that she would be concerned around staffing off season with the opening and closing of facilities and asked that costs be examined.

Mr Haughey confirmed officers would need to engage with colleagues in the ERT department regarding operational matters and costs associated with potentially opening the facility out of season.

Councillor Lawlor welcomed any improvements and stated that Tyrella was one of the most scenic beaches within the District.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to progress the actions as detailed in the Notice of Motion as follows:

- 1. Engage with local cold water swimming groups to assess current usage and demand**
- 2. Engage with the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to explore any existing or potential health-led initiatives involving cold water swimming**
- 3. Assess the feasibility of opening existing shower and changing facilities at Tyrella Beach during the winter period**
- 4. Consider the introduction of a pilot scheme to provide such facilities, with a view to gauging demand, usage, and overall benefit**

AHC/037/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION - DOG EXERCISE AREA AT DUNLEATH PARK

Read: Report from Conor Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding the Notice of Motion received from Councillor Galbraith at the Council Meeting on 6 October 2025 in relation to a dog exercise area at Dunleath Park. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Galbraith thanked officers for the report and recommendations and spoke at length about residents' concerns about issues relating to Dunleath Playing Fields particularly dog fouling and incidents involving dogs being off lead in inappropriate areas.

He acknowledged the vast majority of dog owners were responsible and wanted safe places to let dogs run and exercise freely with the need to respect other park users however there was a lack of suitable infrastructure to support that balance.

Councillor Galbraith spoke of how other Councils in Northern Ireland had successfully introduced similar dog parks with feedback being overwhelmingly positive with such spaces encouraging good behaviour, provision of a safe outlet for dogs to socialise and offering owners the opportunity to train and manage their pets in a controlled environment. He added that by offering a designated space it would make it easier to enforce existing dog control orders in the rest of the playing fields, clarifying exactly where dogs should be kept on lead and reducing the incidents of fouling and conflict.

Councillor Jackson spoke in support of the Motion stating he had major concerns which had been raised with him from parents about the issue. He stated any improvement in facilities to make it safer for all using the area, especially children would be welcome.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed that consideration of a dedicated dog exercise facility should form part of a wider future development review for Dunleath Park and include engagement with Downpatrick DEA Members.

AHC/038/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION - UNAUTHORISED USE OF OFF ROAD VEHICLES

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Community Development, delivered by Mrs M Flynn, Head of Engagement regarding the Notice of Motion received from Councillor Mathers at the Council Meeting on 13 April 2026 in relation to unauthorised use of off-road vehicles on Council-owned land. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Mathers stated that the Motion reflected a very real and growing concern across the District stating that parks and public spaces were shared assets, owned by the people of Newry, Mourne and Down and existed to be places where people could enjoy time together and how such vehicles were being driven illegally through these spaces, causing fear and intimidation.

Councillor Mathers pointed out there was a real risk to public safety with scramblers and quad bikes travelling at speed, often without protective equipment and with little regard for others, putting users of these spaces at risk of serious harm, as well as endangering the users of these machines. He stated Council should not wait for a serious incident or tragedy before taking decisive action and work needed to be done to find solutions to the problem.

Councillor Mathers took the opportunity to say clearly that existing legislation already restricted the use of mechanically propelled vehicles on land without the landowner's permission and that it was illegal.

He stated that the Motion called for the development and enforcement of a clear implementation plan in collaboration with the PSNI and local stakeholders including regular joint patrols in known hotspot areas, clear reporting pathways so residents know exactly how and where to raise concerns and the use of signage and other appropriate deterrent measures. He added that this approach would enable focus on enforcement where necessary and also on prevention, communication and partnership. It recognised that this was not just a policing issue or Council issue it was a community issue that required coordinated action.

Councillor Mathers advised this was a problem across Councils in all 32 counties and Grace's Law (Ireland) was the informal name given to new Irish regulations introduced in 2026 that banned the use of scrambler (off road) motorbikes in all public places. The law was named in memory of Grace, a 16 year old girl who was tragically killed after being struck by a scrambler bike in Finglas, Dublin in January 2026 and that was how serious this issue had become.

Mrs Flynn advised the report acknowledged concerns raised by Councillor Mathers and provided a legislative context around the issue. Members were asked to consider the recommendations and mitigations to address this important issue, including the provision of youth diversion programmes across the District, the development of further interagency meetings and engagement and a direct request to PSNI to increase patrols in hotspot areas.

Councillor Mathers took the opportunity to address points within the officers report including the following:

- While there was a need to plan, the problem was not a new one and had been happening for quite a while being brought up consistently at DEA and PCSP meetings.
- Hotspot areas had been identified on many occasions, so it was not about re-identifying them

- Agreed with the approach that education was key to inform parents and young people of the dangers and legalities around this type of activity.
- Whilst acknowledging the good work of the youth agency it was felt that the young people engaging in this type of activity were unlikely to engage with the youth agency and therefore planning and identifying a correct approach was required.
- There was a need to identify groups that did not avail of PCSP grants and find a way of getting this vital funding to them to build plans for their areas.
- PSNI have knowledge of the areas that were mostly affected and it was felt their resources would be better spent identifying the whereabouts of vehicles and confiscating them where possible.
- Welcomed the Respect Project would be using their forum to spread the word around risks involved in this activity.
- Members within Newry DEA would continue to highlight this problem and Council needed to apply signage to the lands they owned, outlining that it was illegal to drive these machines on these lands.

Mrs Flynn responded to say she would take on board the points raised and advised that the PCSP financial assistance was currently open, as was the good relations financial assistance. She stated she would ask officers to examine who had not applied to see if some of those groups could be encouraged to apply and benefit from the funding streams before closure in June 2026 which may might assist with summer provision.

Mrs Flynn further stated that in relation to the issue of working with young people who fell outside the scope of statutory provision, the Respect Project was crucial in the Newry area and they had developed a comprehensive programme of scheduled activities for the summer months.

Councillor Truesdale thanked Councillor Mathers for bringing the Motion outlining that it was constantly raised within her DEA and with PCSP. She spoke of how it was not just children but that young adults were using scramblers to do drug runs for example and the dangers around that. She stated that the Justice Minister was working with infrastructure on closing legislative gaps and strengthening powers to permanently seize and destroy vehicles that came in under illegal activity.

Councillor Truesdale raised the issue about noise having to be consistent and logged with regard to public space protection and noise abatement orders. She also enquired what other legislative powers and tools Council had and the importance of everyone including the community working with PSNI. She highlighted that the issues was not specific to Northern Ireland but across the United Kingdom and Ireland and suggested maybe there was a role for central government to do to address problems associated with off road vehicles.

Councillors Mathers advised on positive note Councillor Howell had informed him that correspondence had been sent around schools in Newry that day from the PSNI highlighting the dangers of such vehicles.

Councillors Finn and Lee-Surginor echoed the sentiments of Members and voiced support for the Motion on behalf of their Parties.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed Members agree the steps set out in section 2.2 of the officers report to address the issue of unauthorised off-road vehicles on Council land as follows:

- 1. Officers in Community Development to hold an inter-agency meeting to agree an approach to address the problem of dangerous and unauthorised use of off-road vehicles focusing initially on current hotspot areas and agreeing an approach which can be used across the District as required;**
- 2. Relevant AHC Officers will identify hotspot sites used for illegal off-road vehicle activity and ensure clear signage is installed. This signage enables the PSNI to exercise their enforcement powers, including the seizure of vehicles;**
- 3. Community Development Officers to develop a District wide awareness campaign for off-road vehicles. Many users may not fully understand the legality or risk involved and a campaign will empower residents with the knowledge of how to report incidents correctly;**
- 4. Community Development Officers to engage with colleagues in the Youth Service and other providers around the development of educational workshops/diversionary activities in hotspot areas;**
- 5. Community Engagement to continue the provision of a small grants scheme through PCSP for local community groups to develop their own localised solutions for community safety/anti-social behaviour issues to address this problem;**
- 6. PSNI to be requested to increase patrols in known hotspot areas and focus on enforcement;**
- 7. The Respect Project to include the risks associated with off-road vehicles as part of their summer diversionary programme delivered on behalf of the PCSP/Council in summer 2026.**
- 8. Issue to be kept under review via relevant DEA Forums and the PCSP Anti-Social Behaviour Subgroup and a progress report brought back to Committee in due course**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.26pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

Signed: Councillor C Bowsie
Chairperson

Signed: Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2025

**Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on
Wednesday 20 May 2026 at 6.15pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall**

Chair:	Councillor O Magennis	
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews Councillor M Larkin Councillor D Taylor	Councillor M Hearty Councillor M Ruane Councillor H Young
Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:	Councillor K Feehan Councillor K Murphy	Councillor D Finn Councillor H Reilly
Officials in Chamber:	Mrs S Murphy, Director, Sustainability and Environment Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer	
Officials in Attendance via teams:	Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer	

SE/052/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Jackson.

Councillor Magennis noted this was her final meeting as Committee Chair and expressed thanks to officers and Vice-Chairperson Hearty for the support offered over the past year.

Councillor Andrews recorded his appreciation to Councillors Magennis and Hearty for their service in the roles of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

SE/053/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/054/2026: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2026

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2026.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/055/2025: CONSULTATION ON THE UK'S NEW PRODUCT SAFETY FRAMEWORK

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Consultation on the UK's new Product Safety Framework. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Trainor presented the report advising that it sought approval to submit a consultation response on the UK's new product safety framework, as detailed in Appendix 1.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, to approve the submission of the consultation response to the Department for Business and Trade on proposals on a new, modernised and enhanced core product safety framework as detailed in Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

SE/056/2025: CONSULTATION ON UK'S MARKET SURVEILLANCE AND ENFORCEMENT FRAMEWORK

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Consultation on UK's Market Surveillance and Enforcement Framework **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Trainor outlined the report, which sought approval for the submission of a consultation response to the Department for Business and Trade on proposals for new, modernised and enhanced reforms to UK product regulation, market surveillance and enforcement, as detailed in Appendix 1.

Councillor Andrews noted that technology was continually evolving and welcomed the consultation response.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Larkin, to approve the submission of the consultation response to the Department for Business and Trade on proposals on a new, modernised and enhanced reforms to UK product regulation market surveillance and enforcement as detailed in Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

SE/057/2025: CONSULTATION ON THE FIRE SAFETY OF DOMESTIC UPHOLSTERED FURNITURE

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Consultation On The Fire Safety of Domestic Upholstered Furniture. (**Copy circulated**)

Mrs Trainor advised the purpose of the report was to seek approval to submit a consultation response, prepared by the Environmental Health Department on behalf of the Council, to Government proposals for new regulations on the safety of domestic upholstered furniture.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to approve the consultation response on Fire Safety of Domestic Upholstered Furniture to the Department for Business and Trade as detailed in Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

SE/058/2025: SUSTAINABILITY MEMBERSHIPS & SLAS

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding Sustainability Memberships & SLAs. (**Copy circulated**)

Mr Sage advised the purpose of the report was to consider and agree financial support to Sustainable NI, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, and the NI Resource Network for the Council's sustainability and climate change, eco-skills, Live Here Love Here, and circular economy initiatives for the 2026/27 financial year. He confirmed the resource allocation was already contained within the current year's budget.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Magennis, the following was agreed;**

- **To provide support to SNI at Accelerator Membership Level £10,000 and approve signing of an SLA with Sustainable NI for 2026-27 year.**
- **To provide support to KNIB of £39,770 – includes as follows:**
 - **Eco Schools at Option 1 Basic Level = £3,100,**
 - **Live Here Love Here support at = £32,500**
 - **Green Flag Awards support at = £4,170 and approve signing of an SLA with Keep NI Beautiful for 2026-27 year.**
- **To pay membership of the NI Resource Network at £400f or support with Circular Economy and Waste Prevention initiatives**

SE/059/2026: DRAFT PARKING ORDER

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding NMDDC Draft Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage advised the purpose of the report was to update Members on an aspect of the off-street parking function transferred to Councils in 2015. The report focused on the legislative parking order governing the use of Council off-street car parks and the progress of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Draft Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2026.

He advised that Council-controlled car parks operated under the Off-Street Parking Order 2000, enacted by the Department for Infrastructure, which significantly restricted the Council's ability to manage its car parks. He further advised that other Council sites were governed by byelaws, which presented enforcement challenges, while some sites had no legislative cover.

He noted that the off-street parking landscape had evolved, with Councils moving away from the Department for Infrastructure model and developing their own enforcement arrangements to meet increasing demands for effective parking management. This had led to the need for Councils to develop their own parking orders, and it was essential these were progressed and agreed prior to the removal of Department for Infrastructure legislation.

Mr Sage confirmed the core provisions of the proposed Council parking order remained consistent with the existing order, with key changes outlined at Sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the report.

Councillor Ruane requested that the provision of parking bays for mothers and children be considered across Council car parks within the district. He noted that, while not legislated for, such provision existed in other settings, such as supermarkets.

Mr Sage confirmed this could be examined from a legislative perspective and would revert to Councillor Ruane outside the meeting.

Councillor Reilly raised the issue of e-scooters and suggested specific byelaws were required to address this, similar to those introduced for anti-social behaviour and alcohol use in public areas.

Mrs Murphy advised the introduction of byelaws would require discussion with the Council's Legal Services. She further advised that a Notice of Motion regarding off-road vehicles had been considered at a recent Active and Healthy Communities Committee and that Councillor Reilly's query would be referred to that Committee.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to approve the Newry Mourne & Down District Council 'DRAFT' Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order and to authorise release for the Public Consultation Process.**

SE/060/2026: CLIMATE ADAPTION REPORT TO DAERA

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding Climate Adaption Report to DAERA **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage presented the report, which sought Members' approval for the submission of the

Climate Change Adaptation Report, as required under the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024. He confirmed that any suggested changes or additions could be added and submitted to DAERA for inclusion in the report.

He noted that the first Climate Change Adaptation Report had been submitted on 31 March 2026 and that reports were required every five years. He further noted that the report was required to include governance arrangements; objectives and strategies addressing climate adaptation; the methodology used to identify and assess climate change impacts; identified climate risks; and proposed adaptation actions.

Councillor Taylor noted that discussions had taken place in recent months regarding climate change targets and that he and others had raised concerns regarding their realism and the need for review.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed to approve submission of the report to DAERA and to allow DAERA to analyse and publish information from the submitted report as required by the Climate Change (Reporting Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.**

SE/061/2026: **HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY–UPDATED SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Houses In Multiple Occupancy–Updated Service Level Agreements. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Trainor advised the purpose of the report was to seek Committee approval of the Service Level Agreements between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Belfast City Council in relation to the HMO service, as detailed in Appendices 1 to 3 of the report.

She advised that Belfast City Council’s HMO service, operating on behalf of the 11 Councils, was responsible for managing the HMO licensing application process, while decisions regarding the grant, refusal, variation and revocation of HMO licences rested with the Council.

Mrs Trainor further advised that the previous SLA between the Council and Belfast City Council, approved in 2019, had been drafted in the future tense prior to the HMO service becoming operational, and that the updated SLAs reflected the current operation of the service.

Councillor Hearty stated that, despite arguments presented at the Sustainability and Environment Working Group held earlier that day regarding the need for HMOs, he continued to have concerns regarding their location in certain areas.

He noted that Belfast City Council had recently increased fees for processing HMO applications and queried whether this continued to provide value for money and whether it would be feasible for the Council to deliver the service independently.

Mrs Trainor advised that Belfast City Council employed staff centrally and had the necessary systems in place. She further advised that she was not aware of any other Council seeking to deliver the service independently and that the costs of doing so had not been assessed. She confirmed this could be examined and that she would revert to Councillor Hearty outside the

meeting.

Mrs Murphy advised that, at the previous month's Committee, a revised fee structure had been approved, and it had been highlighted that the structure was based on cost recovery for Belfast City Council. However, she noted there was a statutory cap on the amount that could be charged, meaning full cost recovery was not achieved. She further advised that Belfast City Council had raised the issue of achieving full cost recovery, which was being progressed through the SOLACE grouping.

Councillor Reilly sought clarification that the report related to the certification of HMOs and associated costs and did not represent the Council encouraging HMOs within the District. Mrs Trainor confirmed this, advising that the report concerned the continuation of the service and that the SLA was drafted in the present tense.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the Service Level Agreements between Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and Belfast City Council in relation to HMO Service as detailed in appendices 1-3 of the officers' report.**

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 Hearty, 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 (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 Young, seconded by Councillor Hearty it was agreed to come out of closed session.**

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

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

SE/062/2026: SUSTAINABILITY CONTRACTS

Read: Report from Mrs Gail Kane, Head of Facilities Management, Presented by Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding Sustainability Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to award a Direct Award Contract for Town Centre CCTV Systems in Newry, Warrenpoint and Kilkeel and a further Direct Award Contract for the repair and maintenance of Council Facility CCTV systems, as detailed in section 2 of the officers' report.

SE/063/2026: BUSINESS CASE FOR MAINTENANCE OF ARTIFICIAL SPORTS PITCHES

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding Business Case for Maintenance of Council artificial sports pitches and surfaces 2026-2029. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Larkin, to approve the business case for the procurement of a contract for the provision of specialist maintenance services for artificial pitch maintenance.

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

SE/064/2026: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN-COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2026 & JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 30 APRIL 2026

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting In-Committee Minutes Of Thursday 26 February 2026 & Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin Held On 30 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Ruane, to note the documents.

FOR NOTING

SE/065/2026: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2026

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting No 103 Minutes Thursday 26 February 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to note the document.

SE/067/2026: HMO ANNUAL REPORT

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Annual Report on NIHMO Service Activity from 2025 - 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to note the activity of the NIHMO Service during the financial year 2025/26.**

SE/068/2026: UPDATE ON TOBACCO AND VAPES BILL

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Update on Tobacco and Vapes Act. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to note the report.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.48pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Magennis**
Chairperson

Signed: **Mrs Sinead Murphy**
Director of Sustainability & Environment

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



60

Ms Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ
Tel: 028 9052 2556
Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: COR-0704-2026

Date: 7 May 2026

Dear *Marie*

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 April 2026 regarding your request to meet with senior departmental officials to discuss the current constraints on offering CAR-T therapy in Northern Ireland.

I fully appreciate the Council's continued interest in CAR-T therapy and recognise the importance of this issue for members and the communities they represent. As you will be aware, access to CAR-T therapy has also been the subject of considerable discussion within the Northern Ireland Assembly, reflecting the strength of interest and concern around this treatment. The Council has previously been provided with the most up-to-date information available, including an outline of current development plans. Should the position change, officials would, of course, be very willing to provide a further briefing to the Council.

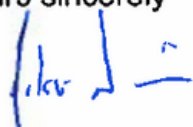
I would like to reassure you that patients in Northern Ireland continue to have access to CAR-T treatments in line with Circular HSC(SQSD) 12-22 – NICE Technology Appraisals: Process for Endorsement, Implementation, Monitoring and Assurance in Northern Ireland. This framework ensures that effective and innovative new medicines are introduced in a timely and equitable manner.

Where CAR-T treatments are recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE), patients in Northern Ireland will be able to access them on the same basis as patients in other parts of the UK, through the established referral pathways to trusted specialist centres across the wider NHS.

Thank you for your continued interest in this important matter.

61

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mike Nesbitt', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health

From the office of the Minister for Infrastructure
LIZ KIMMINS MLA



Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

council@nmandd.org

Private Office, 3rd Floor,
James House, Gasworks Site,
2 - 4 Cromac Avenue,
Belfast, BT7 2JA
Telephone: (028) 9054 0540
Email: Private.office@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk

Your reference: C/055/2026
Our reference: COR-0370-2026
8 May 2026

Marie, a chara,

NOTICE OF MOTION - WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

Thank you for your correspondence of 21 April 2026 regarding the Council's Notice of Motion in respect of wastewater infrastructure in the council area.

I fully appreciate the impact that wastewater challenges are having on housing and economic growth in your council area and across the North and that is why it is vital that we modernise our ageing wastewater system, which is a top priority for my Department. The issues outlined in your correspondence are not short-term problems and cannot be solved within a single budget cycle. Sustained, long-term investment is required to modernise infrastructure and future-proof the system.

I am working with Executive colleagues to advocate for an increase in wastewater investment beyond single-year settlements. This includes making the case for a multi-year budget settlement that supports planned delivery over the price control period rather than relying on ad-hoc allocations. However, there is much more we can achieve beyond simply seeking additional funding. Innovative thinking and working in partnership can unlock wastewater capacity faster than traditional capital upgrades alone. NI Water's innovative approach to wastewater upgrades in Newry is an example of this approach in action, delivering quicker, lower-cost solutions within current funding constraints.

I will also continue to progress the implementation of the new flooding and sustainable drainage legislation to support NI Water's ability to cope with climate change, housing demand and ageing infrastructure.

Furthermore, developer contributions will be implemented through a phased approach, with the initial focus on designing and legislating for a scheme to enable voluntary contributions. The initial voluntary scheme will enable developers, if they wish to do so, to contribute directly to upgrading or replacing NI Water's wastewater infrastructure in areas where capacity constraints are preventing new connections.

I am aware that when housing demand exceeds supply, it can affect both house prices and the availability of social housing. I will continue to do all that I can to enable the release of wastewater capacity constraints, to help mitigate any impact that this may have on housing affordability and availability. I will continue to work with Executive colleagues, NI Water and other key stakeholders to achieve this.

In respect of planned investments in the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area, NI Water has advised of its planned key capital investments in wastewater for 2026/27 and 2027/28.

- 2026/27 (£12.2m) - the majority of this wastewater investment focuses on upgrading Downpatrick, Drumaness and Annsborough wastewater treatment works. Investment will also be targeted at Sleepy Valley Rathfriland wastewater pumping station and Annsborough drainage area networks.
- 2027/28 (£3.9m) - this wastewater investment focuses on upgrading Downpatrick and Annalong wastewater treatment works and also the delivery of drainage area plans for Annalong, Ballynahinch and Dundrum. This investment will also focus on addressing Unsatisfactory Intermittent Discharges (combined sewer overflows that discharge at a frequency that is greater than they have been designed for) in Annalong and Dundrum.

The investments outlined above are in addition to the innovative plan for Newry referenced above. This plan includes an estimated £26m in additional investments which will reopen Newry for development for up to 10 years in terms of current known projects, including 400 property connections for both housing and business premises.

NI Water is in the process of developing its business plan for the next Price Control period, PC28 (2028/29 – 2032/33). Once this has been finalised with the Utility Regulator, Councils can be advised of the proposed schemes included for their council area.

The delivery of all projects planned for the remainder of this price control period, PC21, and PC28, will be subject to funding availability and completion of any statutory approvals that may be required.

Your correspondence also referred to the need to keep NI Water's funding and governance arrangements under review. I can confirm that over the past number of years my Department has analysed a number of alternative funding models and options for NI Water. Options for raising additional revenue, using financial transaction capital and additional borrowing have all been considered alongside seeking an increase in public expenditure funding.

Reviews by my Department have consistently concluded that the funding and governance model for NI Water, as a non-Departmental public body, must operate within the Executive's policy framework for the funding and the delivery of water and sewerage services. The funding and governance model must therefore comply with the

requirements of Managing Public Money NI and specifically, regularity, propriety and value for money. Any alternative model would require the introduction of domestic water charges. I am opposed to this approach as it will impose an additional financial burden on people and families in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

Is mise le meas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Liz Kimmins', is centered within a light gray rectangular box.

LIZ KIMMINS MLA
Minister for Infrastructure

From the Minister of Finance

*Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council*

Private Office
2nd Floor
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
BELFAST
BT3 9ED

Tel: 028 9081 6116
Email: private.office@finance-ni.gov.uk

Your reference: C/052/2026
Our reference: COR-0248-2026
Date: 7 May 2026

Marie, a chara

NOTICE OF MOTION – BASIC INCOME FOR ARTISTS

Thank you for your letter of 21 April 2026, regarding the Notice of Motion agreed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council in relation to the introduction of a Basic Income for Artists scheme.

I appreciate the Council's interest in supporting the arts, culture and creative sectors and recognise the important contribution that artists and creative workers make to our social, cultural and economic life. I also acknowledge the challenges faced by many in the sector, particularly in the context of ongoing cost pressures and income insecurity.

However, as you will be aware, the Executive continues to operate within a highly constrained financial environment. The overall budget position remains extremely challenging, with significant pressures across all public services. As Minister of Finance, my role is to manage the overall Executive Budget and ensure that available resources are allocated in line with collectively agreed Executive priorities.

Responsibility for policy development and delivery in relation to arts, culture and creative industries rests primarily with the Minister for Communities. Consequently, it would be for the Minister for Communities, in the context of their departmental responsibilities and budget allocation, to consider proposals of this nature and to identify and prioritise funding to support them. Any new or expanded scheme would need to be assessed alongside other competing pressures within the Department for Communities' existing budget.

My Department stands ready to engage constructively with Executive colleagues as part of the wider budget and Programme for Government processes. Decisions on

new spending commitments, including those requiring cross-departmental collaboration, must ultimately be considered and agreed by the Executive as a whole.

Thank you again for writing on this matter. I trust this response is helpful in clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities involved.

Is mise le meas



JOHN O'DOWD MLA
MINISTER OF FINANCE



Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

67

Telephone: (028) 9051 2692
e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref: COR-0271-2026
Date: 20 May 2026

From: The Minister

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Via email: Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org

Dear Marie,

NOTICE OF MOTION - BASIC INCOME FOR ARTISTS

Thank you for your correspondence about Newry, Mourne and Down District Council's motion to call for the Northern Ireland Executive to introduce a Basic Income for Artists scheme.

There is no provision within the Executive's budget to establish a comparable scheme here, and I have no plans at this time to replicate it.

I appreciate the Council's interest in this issue and your commitment to supporting artists.

Yours sincerely

Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities



Level 9
Causeway Exchange
1-7 Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7EG

68

Telephone: (028) 9051 2692
e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref: COR-0272-2026
Date: 20 May 2026

From: The Minister

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Via email: Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org

Dear Marie,

RIISING COST OF HOME HEATING OIL IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Thank you for your correspondence regarding the rising costs of home heating oil in Northern Ireland and the support being progressed by my Department for those impacted by the sharp increase in prices.

I am firmly committed to providing practical assistance to those most at risk of fuel poverty. I brought forward proposals to the Executive on 16 April for a support package aimed at helping those most impacted by rising fuel and home heating oil costs, these proposals were agreed alongside securing an additional £19.2 million of funding.

This means assistance to the value of £100 for oil will be offered to over 340k households across Northern Ireland. This covers a range of vulnerable groups, including those with disabilities, older people and those on a low income.

Support will be one award per residential address. People may be eligible to apply for Home Heating Oil Support if they use home heating oil and are:

- a) In receipt of an income-related benefit, including Pension Credit, Universal Credit and Income Related Employment and Support Allowance.

- b) In receipt of a disability benefit, including Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance and Armed Forces Independence Payment.
- c) A single person or a couple not on one of those benefits but with a low income (including pensioners) with a joint annual income below £30,000.

Following Executive agreement, my officials are working at pace to deliver the necessary IT system development and put in place the legislative and administrative arrangements required for the scheme.

Existing arrangements for support include awards from Discretionary Support which may include interest free loans to help with fuel costs and, in specific circumstances, non-repayable grants for essential living expenses. Further information on the Discretionary Support Scheme can be found here: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/discretionary-support>

I encourage anyone facing immediate risks to their health or wellbeing, such as being unable to afford essential heating or basic living expenses, to contact my Department's Make the Call service. Further information on how to contact the Make the Call service can be found here: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/make-call-service>

The NI Energy Advice Service (NIEAS), funded by my Department and delivered by the Housing Executive, continues to offer free and impartial advice including grant referrals, heating tips and oil buying savings. Information on how they can be contacted can be found here: <https://www.nihe.gov.uk/housing-help/ni-energy-advice/ni-energy-advice-get-in-touch> Applications can also be made to the Affordable Warmth Scheme through NIEAS, for more information on the scheme visit [The Housing Executive - Affordable Warmth Scheme](#)

Yours sincerely



Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities