October 27th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 2nd November 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 October 2026

For Information

Attachment: Action Sheet 2026 10 05.pdf ***Page 1***

Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

4.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 October 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Council Minutes 2026-10-05.pdf ***Page 6***

5.0 Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28 September 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Special Council Minutes - 2026-09-28.pdf ***Page 22***

Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

6.0 Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held 24 September 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Audit Committee Minute 2026-09-24.pdf ***Page 28***

7.0 Minutes of Special Audit Committee held 6 October 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Audit Committee Minute 2026-10-06.pdf ***Page 37***

8.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 October 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2026-10-12.pdf ***Page 40***

9.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting

held on 15 October 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2026-10-15.pdf ***Page 46***

10.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 October 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2026 10 19.pdf ***Page 58***

11.0 Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held 21 October 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Sustainabilty_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2026_10-21.pdf ***Page 63***

12.0 Planning Section

For Information

There were no issues arising.

Correspondence

13.0 Correspondence Report

For Information

Attachment: Correspondence Report Council 2026-11-02.pdf ***Page 73***

13.1 Correspondence from Health Minister, Department of Health and Southern Health and Social Care Trust re: NOM C/136/2026 Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital

Attachment: letter from Health Minister re Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital.pdf ***Page 75***

Attachment: Letter to Marie Ward - Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital.pdf ***Page 77***

Attachment: SHSCT Response to NMDDC 20261021.pdf ***Page 79***

13.2 Correspondence from NILGA re: Regional Pay Briefing - NI Councils

Attachment: Invite to Pay Briefing 8th December 2026 - NMD.pdf ***Page 81***

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 1 JULY 2024

Minute Ref	***Subject***	**Decision**	***Lead Officer***	***Actions taken/ Progress to date***	***Remove from Action Sheet Y/N***
C/128/2024	*Minutes of Council Meeting held on 01.07.2024*	It was agreed item C/058/2024: Twinning Newry with City of Ramallah should remain on the action sheet.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*N*

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2026

Minute Ref	***Subject***	**Decision**	***Lead Officer***	***Actions taken/ Progress to date***	***Remove from Action Sheet Y/N***
C/023/2026	*Correspondence Report*	*Correspondence from Richard Pengelly, Chief Executive of Education Authority re NOM Voting at 18 C/184/2025* It was agreed that Council write to all schools within the District inviting them to permit elected representatives to attend and engage with pupils for discussion around policies, manifestos and to providing opportunities for pupils to question and scrutinise their local representatives.	*Democratic Services*	*In progress*	*N*

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 5 OCTOBER 2026

Minute Ref	***Subject***	**Decision**	***Lead Officer***	***Actions taken/ Progress to date***	***Remove from Action Sheet Y/N***
C/128/2026	*Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 07/09/26*	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*

C/129/2026	*Minutes of Council Meeting held on 07/09/2026*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/130/2026	*Minutes of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14/09/2026*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. In response to a query from Councillor Lewis regarding additional advertising and communications in relation to financial assistance calls, given that the calls were taking place earlier, Mrs Ward advised that she would raise the matter with the ERT Director, Mr Mallon.	*Democratic Services* *C Mallon*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/131/2026	*Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 17/09/2026*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/132/2026	*Minutes of Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21/09/2026*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/133/2026	*Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on 23/09/2026*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/134/2026	*Correspondence Report*	No correspondence arising.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/135/2026	*Notice of Motion – Equal Funding for Church Halls*	"Church halls are vital community facilities throughout rural and urban areas of Newry, Mourne & Down District Council and should not be excluded from being able to apply for council grants that are available to other community halls. This Council agrees, where a church hall meets the council's existing definition of a 'community facility' (e.g. it is available to the whole community for public use or hire), it should not be denied funding merely on the basis	*C Mallon*		

		that the hall's management committee pertains to a religious body. This Council resolves that in order to be eligible, halls must be managed by a constituted community association or a church body registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, and thus the applicant will ensure it has governing rules which do not restrict any section of the community from using the building or restrict any type of activity, other than for reasons of insurance or legal protections already afforded to such charities." The Motion was referred to the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.			
C/136/2026	*Notice of Motion – Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital*	It was agreed that this Council recognises the vital role of inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital and the importance of safe, accessible maternity care for women across Newry, Mourne and Down and the wider region; expresses its concern at the staffing pressures threatening the sustainability of the service and believes that women should not face unequal access to maternity care because of where they live; calls on the Minister for Health, Department of Health and Southern Health and Social Care Trust to work urgently to support recruitment and retention at Daisy Hill, protect inpatient maternity services and deliver a safe, sustainable solution that works for women, families and staff. Council further calls for the Department of Health to review and reform the current arrangements for the recruitment, employment and deployment of specialist medical staff across Trusts, with consideration given to a region-wide approach that enables staff to be deployed according to need and supports more equitable terms and conditions, helping to address persistent recruitment and retention challenges.	*Democratic Services*	*Correspondence sent* *Replies from the Department of Health and Southern Health and Social Care Trust included on the agenda for November Council Meeting.*	
C/137/2026	*Notice of Motion – Establishment of a Fleadh legacy Fund*	"Newry Mourne and Down district council recognises the incredible impact that Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann had in Belfast this summer and further recognises the work of Comhaltas and the volunteers who made the week such a success. The Council notes the number of musicians,	*C Moffett*	*The Motion will be considered at the next meeting of the Councillors' Equality and*	

		singers, storytellers and dancers from across our district who attended the Fleadh, and will, take steps to prepare a paper on the establishment of a Fleadh legacy fund to support the work of those artists and young people: and, will further write to the other local councils to ask that they also consider this preparation so that we can see the legacy of the Fleadh and our artists protected into the future." The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.		*Good Relations Reference Group (date TBC)*	
C/138/2026	*Notice of Motion – Dolly Parton Imagination Library*	"Newry Mourne & Down District Council; Acknowledges that the majority of physical brain development occurs in the first three years of life, when children form over 1 million new neural connections per second; Recognises the benefits of reading, and reading aloud, to young children which can promote the development of basic literacy and vocabulary skills, establish strong inter-personal relationships between children and parents/guardians, as well as improving longer term educational, health, social and economic outcomes; Is concerned about the rising cost of living which will limit the ability of families to pay for essential educational resources like books for young children; Agrees to investigate and establish a pilot of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in the District to provide a new book each month for children aged 0-5, working with any interested partners to secure the success and sustainable funding of the scheme." The Motion was referred to the Active & Healthy Communities Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.	*A Patterson*		
C/139/2026	*Notice of Motion – Irish Unity Referendum*	"This Council notes that the Good Friday Agreement provides the democratic means to achieve Irish reunification, through unity referendums. If that's what the people decide; condemns the British Prime Minister's recent comments in relation to a referendum on Irish Unity and will write to the British Government reminding	*C Moffett*	*The Motion will be considered at the next meeting of the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group (date TBC)*	

		it of its obligations under the Good Friday Agreement and urge London to begin preparations and discussions with the Irish government to set a date for the unity referendums, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement." The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.			
C/140/2026	*Emergency Notice of Motion – Parades Commission Determination*	It was agreed: • Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its concern at the Parades Commission determination in relation to the Drumcree parade and the Garvaghy Road. • This Council stands in solidarity with the residents of the Garvaghy Road, supports their right to live in peace and recognises the widespread sympathy for residents, including from those from a Protestant and unionist background, as expressed in a recent open letter. • This Council recognises the UK and Irish Government's roles as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and calls on the British Prime Minister, British Secretary of State, Taoiseach and Tánaiste to stand with the Garvaghy Road community, engage directly with all sides of the dispute and use every appropriate avenue available to them to ensure the rights, dignity and expressed wishes of residents are respected. • This Council further affirms that no community should be dragged backwards into the division and conflict of the past and that dialogue, equality, mutual respect and respect for local communities must remain at the heart of our peace process	*Democratic Services*	*Correspondence sent*	
C/141/2026	*Emergency Notice of Motion – Rule of Law*	It was agreed that this Council agrees that all elected representatives are bound by the code of conduct that affirms us to uphold the rule of law.	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 5 October 2026 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor G Hanna

In attendance in

Councillor T Andrews
Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Campbell
Councillor L Devlin
Councillor D Finn
Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor M Hearty
Councillor J Jackson
Councillor A King
Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S Murphy
Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane
Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor H Young
Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Byrne
Councillor W Clarke
Councillor K Feehan
Councillor G Galbraith
Councillor V Harte
Councillor T Howie
Councillor G Kearns
Councillor C King
Councillor Lee-Surginor
Councillor O Magennis
Councillor D McAteer
Councillor K Murphy
Councillor A Quinn
Councillor M Rice
Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright
Councillor M Larkin
Councillor R Howell
Councillor S O'Hare

Officials in attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs A Jones, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

C/126/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to share some of the highlights over the previous month which included attending events for the following:

- A lecture on the 1798 Rebellion.
- The Irish Motocross Championship.
- The Classroom to Career event at Castlewellan High School.
- An event at Oppen Maple Hall, Kilkeel, hosted by the Schomberg Society.
- The launch of Footsteps in the Forest.
- The 25th anniversary of the Castlewellan Maze.
- St Vincent de Paul Centre.
- The Newry Business Awards.
- The unveiling of a memorial plaque to Commodore Milligan, who served during the Second World War.
- The Ultimate Pitch.
- The opening of the new 3G pitch at Saintfield Football Club.

The Deputy Chairperson noted that she had the honour of welcoming the President of Ireland to the Peace Maze in Castlewellan.

The Chairperson advised that two emergency notice of motions had been received and would be dealt with at the appropriate time during the meeting.

C/127/2026: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Howell declared an interest in Item 13 – Notice of Motion - Establishment of a Fleadh Legacy Fund.

C/128/2026: **ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor D Murphy , seconded by Councillor Andrews, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 September 2026 was agreed.**

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/129/2026: **MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 7 September 2026 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 September 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/130/2026 **MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

In response to a query from Councillor Lewis regarding additional advertising and communications in relation to financial assistance calls, given that the calls were taking place earlier, Mrs Ward advised that she would raise the matter with the ERT Director, Mr Mallon.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Kearns, the Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/131/2026 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 September 2026 **(copy circulated).**

In response to a query from Councillor Feehan regarding the current status of Newry City Park and the anticipated timeframe for progress, Mrs Ward advised that liaison with DfI and the procurement process was ongoing and that it was hoped both processes would align.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Byrne, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 September 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/132/2026 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21 September 2026 **(copy circulated).**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Howie, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21 September 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/133/2026 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2026 **(copy circulated).**

Councillor Reilly referred to the S&E Working Group and expressed concern that matters discussed by the Group were not fully visible to all Members. He proposed that the Working Group be dissolved and that all related matters be considered directly by the S&E Committee.

Officers advised that the Working Group had been established to consider operational service issues prior to formal consideration by the Committee. It was noted that the Group was not a decision-making body and that its minutes, presentations and recommendations were subsequently reported to the S&E Committee and Council, where appropriate. Members were also advised that all presentations had been available to all Members.

Following the discussion, Councillor Reilly withdrew his proposal.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Campbell, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/134/2026: **CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

No correspondence arising.

C/135/2026: **NOTICE OF MOTION – EQUAL FUNDING FOR CHURCH HALLS**

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Bowsie:

"Church halls are vital community facilities throughout rural and urban areas of Newry, Mourne & Down District Council and should not be excluded from being able to apply for council grants that are available to other community halls.

This Council agrees, where a church hall meets the council's existing definition of a 'community facility' (e.g. it is available to the whole community for public use or hire), it should not be denied funding merely on the basis that the hall's management committee pertains to a religious body.

This Council resolves that in order to be eligible, halls must be managed by a constituted community association or a church body registered with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland, and thus the applicant will ensure it has governing rules which do not restrict any section of the community from using the building or restrict any type of activity, other than for reasons of insurance or legal protections already afforded to such charities."

This was seconded by Councillor Lewis.

Agreed: **The Motion was referred to the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

C/136/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION – MATERNITY SERVICES AT DAISY HILL HOSPITAL

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Devlin:

"That this Council recognises the vital role of inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital and the importance of safe, accessible maternity care for women across Newry, Mourne and Down and the wider region; expresses its concern at the staffing pressures threatening the sustainability of the service and believes that women should not face unequal access to maternity care because of where they live; calls on the Minister for Health, Department of Health and Southern Health and Social Care Trust to work urgently to support recruitment and retention at Daisy Hill, protect inpatient maternity services and deliver a safe, sustainable solution that works for women, families and staff.
Council further calls for the Department of Health to review and reform the current arrangements for the recruitment, employment and deployment of specialist medical staff across Trusts, with consideration given to a region-wide approach that enables staff to be deployed according to need and supports more equitable terms and conditions, helping to address persistent recruitment and retention challenges."

This was seconded by Councillor Feehan.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Devlin emphasised the importance of maintaining safe and accessible maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital. She highlighted concerns regarding the potential impact on women and families across the district, particularly those in rural areas who could face significantly longer journeys to access inpatient maternity care.

Councillor Devlin stated that access to maternity services should be based on need and that all women should have equitable access to safe care regardless of where they lived. She also acknowledged the commitment and professionalism of staff at Daisy Hill Hospital and stressed the importance of supporting recruitment and retention efforts to ensure the long-term sustainability of the service.

While recognising that patient safety must remain paramount, Councillor Devlin urged that all available measures be explored to address staffing challenges and maintain local maternity provision. She expressed the hope that the Council would speak with one voice in support of fair and equal access to maternity services for women and families across the district.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Feehan thanked Councillor Devlin for bringing it forward and referred to the strong public attendance and cross-party support demonstrated at the recent public meeting on Daisy Hill Hospital. He stated that concerns regarding the sustainability of maternity services were linked to difficulties recruiting and retaining specialist staff and called for greater transparency regarding recruitment efforts. He also advocated a regional approach to workforce planning and specialist staff recruitment to support the long-term sustainability of services.

Councillor Young welcomed the motion and highlighted the importance of retaining maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital. She expressed concern regarding recruitment and retention challenges and stressed the importance of listening to frontline staff, improving workforce planning and ensuring every effort was made by the Department of Health, the

Minister for Health and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust to retain the service.

Councillor Harte expressed Sinn Féin's support for the motion and highlighted the concern and uncertainty experienced by expectant mothers and families. She paid tribute to staff and stated that access to local maternity care was a patient safety issue. Councillor Harte expressed concern that temporary service changes could become permanent and urged the Trust, the Minister for Health and the Department of Health to take all necessary steps to address recruitment challenges and secure the long-term future of the service.

Councillor Reilly expressed concern regarding the impact any temporary closure could have on both patients and staff. He questioned the capacity of Craigavon Area Hospital to accommodate additional births, highlighted the challenges longer travel times would present for rural communities and expressed support for efforts to secure the staffing required to retain the service.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the motion and emphasised the importance of a united response. He highlighted representations received from the public regarding the value of local maternity provision and advised that he had raised the matter with senior Trust officials and the Minister for Health. He stressed the need for a long-term solution to staffing pressures and reaffirmed his support for retaining inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital.

In summing up, Councillor Devlin thanked Members for their support and stated that a unified voice from the Chamber sent a positive message.

Agreed: **It was agreed that this Council recognises the vital role of inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital and the importance of safe, accessible maternity care for women across Newry, Mourne and Down and the wider region; expresses its concern at the staffing pressures threatening the sustainability of the service and believes that women should not face unequal access to maternity care because of where they live; calls on the Minister for Health, Department of Health and Southern Health and Social Care Trust to work urgently to support recruitment and retention at Daisy Hill, protect inpatient maternity services and deliver a safe, sustainable solution that works for women, families and staff. Council further calls for the Department of Health to review and reform the current arrangements for the recruitment, employment and deployment of specialist medical staff across Trusts, with consideration given to a region-wide approach that enables staff to be deployed according to need and supports more equitable terms and conditions, helping to address persistent recruitment and**

retention challenges.

C/137/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION – ESTABLISHMENT OF A FLEADH LEGACY FUND

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Finn:

"Newry Mourne and Down district council recognises the incredible impact that Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann had in Belfast this summer and further recognises the work of Comhaltas and the volunteers who made the week such a success. The Council notes the number of musicians, singers, storytellers and dancers from across our district who attended the Fleadh, and will, take steps to prepare a paper on the establishment of a Fleadh legacy fund to support the work of those artists and young people: and, will further write to the other local councils to ask that they also consider this preparation so that we can see the legacy of the Fleadh and our artists protected into the future."

This was seconded by Councillor Galbraith.

The Deputy Chairperson asked the Chairperson to reconsider his decision to refer the motion to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group, noting that the purpose of the motion was to secure additional funding for the arts.

The Chairperson confirmed that his decision to refer the motion to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group would stand.

Councillor Byrne sought clarification on the referral of the motion to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group. He expressed concerns regarding consistency, noting that previous motions relating to Fleadh events had been referred to the ERT Committee. He also requested clarification on the process for progressing matters from the Equality and Good Relations Working Group to Committee.

Mrs Ward advised that where a unanimous decision could not be reached by the Equality and Good Relations Working Group, the matter would be referred to the SP&R Committee with details of the discussion and the absence of consensus, and it would then be for the SP&R Committee to determine the matter.

Agreed: **The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

C/138/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION – DOLLY PARTON IMAGINATION LIBRARY

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Feehan:

"Newry Mourne & Down District Council;
Acknowledges that the majority of physical brain development occurs in the first three years

of life, when children form over 1 million new neural connections per second; Recognises the benefits of reading, and reading aloud, to young children which can promote the development of basic literacy and vocabulary skills, establish strong inter-personal relationships between children and parents/guardians, as well as improving longer term educational, health, social and economic outcomes; Is concerned about the rising cost of living which will limit the ability of families to pay for essential educational resources like books for young children; Agrees to investigate and establish a pilot of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in the District to provide a new book each month for children aged 0-5, working with any interested partners to secure the success and sustainable funding of the scheme."

This was seconded by Councillor Finn.

Agreed: **The Motion was referred to the Active & Healthy Communities Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

C/139/2026: **NOTICE OF MOTION – IRISH UNITY REFERENDUM**

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Quinn:

"This Council notes that the Good Friday Agreement provides the democratic means to achieve Irish reunification, through unity referendums. If that's what the people decide; condemns the British Prime Minister's recent comments in relation to a referendum on Irish Unity and will write to the British Government reminding it of its obligations under the Good Friday Agreement and urge London to begin preparations and discussions with the Irish government to set a date for the unity referendums, as outlined in the Good Friday Agreement."

This was seconded by Councillor D Murphy.

Agreed: **The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

The Chairperson advised two Emergency Notice of Motions had been received, the wording of which had been emailed to all Councillors and to enable them to be heard, it would be necessary to suspend Standing Order 29.1 for which a qualified majority vote was required, no fewer than 80% of Members present and voting.

Mrs Ward clarified that each of the two emergency motions require a vote to suspend Standing Order 29.1 to enable them to be tabled.

The Chairperson put the matter of suspending Standing Order 29.1 to enable Councillor Rice's motion to be heard to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows: (copy attached)

FOR:	34
AGAINST:	6
ABSTENTIONS:	0

Miss Taggart confirmed a qualified majority had been reached.

The Chairperson advised that Standing Order 29.1 had been suspended by a qualified majority vote, enabling the emergency motion to be heard. He advised that he had decided to refer Councillor Rice's motion to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group under Standing Order 16.1.6.

Following a query from Councillor Rice regarding the Standing Order which gave the Chairperson authority to refer the motion after Council had agreed to hear it, the Chairperson confirmed that this was provided for under Standing Order 30. Councillor Rice subsequently proposed that Standing Order 30 be suspended.

In order to clarify the position for Members, Mrs Ward advised that Standing Order 16.1.1 had been suspended, while Standing Order 16.1.6 remained in effect. She further noted that the Chairperson had exercised his authority under Standing Order 30 to refer the motion to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group and that Councillor Rice had subsequently proposed suspending Standing Order 30.

Councillor Byrne sought clarification from Legal Services. He stated that, irrespective of his party's position on the motion, he had concerns about suspending Standing Order 30, as it removed powers from the Chairperson and could set a precedent for the handling of future motions. He further questioned the purpose of the Chairperson's role if such powers could be removed.

Councillor D. Murphy stated that the motion had been submitted as an emergency motion and that there was urgency in considering it. He noted that delaying consideration for several weeks would not have been appropriate and stated that this was why most Members wished to hear the motion that evening. The Chairperson responded that, in his view, the motion had not been urgent.

It was agreed to adjourn the meeting at this point, proposed by Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Devlin.

The meeting did then adjourn – 6.51pm

Councillors Enright and Tinnelly left the meeting during the adjournment – 7.13pm and 7.40pm respectively.

The meeting did then resume – 7:50pm.

The Chairperson confirmed that following discussions, despite his concerns it would damage community relations, that both motions would be heard.

C/088/2026: **EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – PARADES COMMISSION DETERMINATION**

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Rice:

'That Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its concern at the Parades Commission determination in relation to the Drumcree parade and the Garvaghy Road. This Council stands in solidarity with the residents of the Garvaghy Road and supports their right to live in peace, free from sectarian discrimination, intimidation and harassment, and without an unwanted parade being forced through their community.

This Council recognises the Irish Government's role as co-guarantor of the Good Friday Agreement and calls on the Taoiseach and Tánaiste to stand with the Garvaghy Road community, engage directly with their representatives and use every appropriate avenue available to them to ensure the rights, dignity and expressed wishes of residents are respected.

This Council further affirms that no community should be dragged backwards into the division and conflict of the past and that dialogue, equality, mutual respect and respect for local communities must remain at the heart of our peace process.'

Councillor Rice advised of an amendment to the motion as follows;
'That Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its concern at the Parades Commission determination in relation to the Drumcree parade and the Garvaghy Road.

This Council stands in solidarity with the residents of the Garvaghy Road, supports their right to live in peace and recognises the widespread sympathy for residents, including from those from a Protestant and unionist background, as expressed in a recent open letter.

This Council recognises the UK and Irish Government's roles as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and calls on the British Prime Minister, British Secretary of State, Taoiseach and Tánaiste to stand with the Garvaghy Road community, engage directly with all sides of the dispute and use every appropriate avenue available to them to ensure the rights, dignity and expressed wishes of residents are respected.

This Council further affirms that no community should be dragged backwards into the division and conflict of the past and that dialogue, equality, mutual respect and respect for local communities must remain at the heart of our peace process.'

The motion was seconded by Councillor Quinn.

In speaking to his motion, Councillor Rice commended the residents of the Garvaghy Road and stated that they had the right to live in peace and free from intimidation. He noted that the Orange Order had not paraded along the Garvaghy Road for 28 years and residents did not wish to see the dispute reopened.

He referred to rights protected under the European Convention on Human Rights and questioned whether reopening the route was necessary when an alternative route existed.

Councillor Rice stated that the motion called on the Irish Government to engage directly with the Garvaghy Road community and argued that the progress made over the previous 28 years should be protected. He concluded by reaffirming Sinn Féin's support for the residents. In seconding the motion, Councillor Quinn stated that residents wished to live in peace and have their community treated with dignity and respect. She stressed that the motion was not an attack on any culture or tradition but argued that respect should be afforded equally to all communities.

Councillor Quinn questioned why the issue had re-emerged after almost three decades and stated that younger generations should not inherit the divisions of the past. She further questioned the basis of the Parades Commission's determination and concluded by supporting the principles of dignity, respect and equality.

Councillor Bowsie stated that Sinn Féin had acted inconsistently by supporting a motion on mutual respect while participating in what he described as an unlawful protest. He argued that legally established rights should not be restricted on the basis of local opposition and maintained that decisions should be based on evidence rather than emotion. He criticised the conduct of some protesters and concluded by commending the Portadown District Orange Order for pursuing the matter through lawful processes.

Councillor Lewis stated that the key issue was whether the rule of law should be upheld regardless of personal views. He noted that the Portadown District Orange Order had pursued the matter through legal channels over a period of 28 years and that opposition to the parade had sought to prevent a lawful determination being implemented.

He also criticised comments made about the Orange Institution and concluded by expressing the view that opposition to the parade had been politically motivated and sectarian in nature.

Councillor Truesdale stated that the Drumcree dispute had a long and difficult history and that reopening the issue risked damaging community relations. She advised that Alliance had opposed reopening the matter and argued that dialogue and mediation, rather than further confrontation, offered the best means of resolution. Councillor Truesdale acknowledged the Orange Order's legal entitlement but stated that exercising that right was not obligatory and urged all parties to act lawfully and peacefully.

Councillor Taylor stated that the determination recognising Portadown District's legal entitlement to complete the parade should be respected. He commended the Orange Order for pursuing its objectives through lawful processes and noted its willingness to engage in mediation.

Councillor Taylor criticised recent demonstrations, which he considered damaging to community relations, and expressed concern regarding what he viewed as disrespect towards the unionist community and the Orange Institution. He concluded by stating that recent events had reinforced concerns regarding the protection of unionist identity and rights.

Councillor Feehan confirmed the SDLP's support for the motion and expressed regret that the issue had re-emerged. He stated that the focus should be on reducing tensions and avoiding a return to past divisions.

Councillor Feehan rejected suggestions that those demonstrating on the Garvaghy Road were not local residents and emphasised the need to recognise the historical impact of the dispute on the community. He concluded by calling for intervention to help resolve the matter and by reaffirming support for local residents.

Councillor Reilly expressed concern regarding what he described as hostility towards the Orange tradition during events surrounding the Garvaghy Road dispute. He stated that opposition to the parade reflected wider attitudes towards the unionist community and its traditions and argued that many involved in protests had not been local residents. Councillor

Reilly also condemned comments directed at Carla Lockhart MP and Diane Dodds and expressed concern regarding what he considered misogynistic treatment. He concluded by stating that those involved had made a significant mistake.

Councillor Jackson stated that respect for the rule of law was a fundamental requirement within society and expressed concern regarding individuals choosing to disregard legal requirements. Referring to events on the Garvaghy Road, he criticised comments and speeches directed towards members of the Orange Order and concluded by stating that such actions had strengthened opposition among many unionists to the concept of a New Ireland.

In summing up, Councillor Rice stated that the motion sought to protect a community which, in his view, had sustained peace for 28 years and to ensure that its rights were balanced fairly. He reiterated that residents were not seeking to prevent an Orange Order parade but wished an alternative route to be used. Councillor Rice called on the Irish and British Governments to uphold the principles of the Good Friday Agreement and concluded by reaffirming Sinn Féin's support for the residents.

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

FOR:	32
AGAINST:	6
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The motion was declared carried.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Quinn, the following was agreed;**

- **Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its concern at the Parades Commission determination in relation to the Drumcree parade and the Garvaghy Road.**
- **This Council stands in solidarity with the residents of the Garvaghy Road, supports their right to live in peace and recognises the widespread sympathy for residents, including from those from a Protestant and unionist background, as expressed in a recent open letter.**
- **This Council recognises the UK and Irish Government's roles as co-guarantors of the Good Friday Agreement and calls on the British Prime Minister, British Secretary of State, Taoiseach and Tánaiste to stand with the Garvaghy Road community, engage directly with all sides of the dispute and use every appropriate avenue available to them to ensure the rights, dignity and expressed wishes of residents are respected.**
- **This Council further affirms that no community should be dragged backwards into the division and conflict of the past and that dialogue, equality, mutual respect and respect for**

local communities must remain at the heart of our peace process.'

In response to a point of order from Councillor D. Murphy regarding the suspension of Standing Orders, Mrs Ward advised that she had previously stated that each motion would require a vote to permit it to be tabled. However, she clarified that, as Standing Orders had been suspended prior to Councillor Rice's motion, they would remain suspended until the next meeting.

C/089/2026: EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – RULE OF LAW

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Lewis:

'Following the launch of a criminal investigation of incidents on the Garvaghy Road (Portadown) on Sunday 27th September, this Council agrees that all elected representatives support the rule of law.'

In speaking to his motion, Councillor Lewis stated that, regardless of whether he agreed with decisions taken by the Council or the Parades Commission, he was expected to abide by the law. He stated that the motion sought to reaffirm that all Members supported the rule of law in accordance with paragraph 3.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Councillor Lewis further stated that the motion sought confirmation that all Members remained committed to that principle.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Jackson, who reiterated that the rule of law should be upheld at all times. He stated that there was no ambiguity in this regard and that individuals either respected and complied with the law or they did not.

Councillor Byrne stated that he believed it was inappropriate to debate matters relating to individuals and potential criminal investigations within the Chamber and proposed an amendment to the motion. He proposed the removal of the first line of the motion and that the second line be amended to read:
"That this Council agrees that all elected representatives are bound by the Code of Conduct, which affirms their responsibility to uphold the rule of law."

Councillor Lewis accepted the amendment.

Councillor Quinn stated that matters relating to compliance with the rule of law should be addressed through the appropriate legal processes. She noted that decisions regarding potential prosecutions were subject to evidential and public interest tests being applied by the relevant authorities.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the motion and stated that support for the rule of law should be a fundamental principle for all elected representatives.

Councillor Reilly stated that elected representatives had a particular responsibility to uphold and promote compliance with the law. Referring to previous incidents of public disorder, he stated that he had encouraged individuals to leave the roads and avoid actions which could lead to further difficulties, despite receiving criticism for doing so. He further stated that

elected representatives should act within the law and work to ensure that society continued to function effectively and urged all Members to do likewise.

In summing up, Councillor Lewis stated that elected representatives had a responsibility to recognise that their words, actions and calls to others could have a significant impact on the wider community. He further stated that it was important to remember that all actions should be carried out lawfully and peacefully at all times.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Jackson that this Council agrees that all elected representatives are bound by the code of conduct that affirms us to uphold the rule of law.**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.34pm.

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

Signed:

_____

Councillor G Hanna
Chairperson

_____

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 5 October 2026 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Suspension of Standing Order 16.1.6 to table Emergency Motions

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	For			
C Bowsie		Against		
J Brennan	For			
P Byrne	For			
P Campbell	For			
W Clarke	For			
L Devlin	For			
C Enright	For			
K Feehan	For			
D Finn	For			
C Galbraith	For			
M Gibbons				Absent
O Hanlon	For			
G Hanna		Against		
V Harte	For			
M Hearty	For			
R Howell	For			
T Howie	For			
J Jackson		Against		
G Kearns	For			
A King	For			
C King	For			
M Larkin	For			
N Lawlor	For			
D Lee-Surginor	For			
A Lewis		Against		
O Magennis	For			
A Mathers	For			
D McAteer	For			
D Murphy	For			
K Murphy	For			
S Murphy	For			
S O'Hare	For			
A Quinn	For			
H Reilly		Against		
M Rice	For			
M Ruane	For			
D Taylor		Against		
J Tinnelly	For			
J Truesdale	For			
H Young	For			
TOTALS	34	6	0	1

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 5 October 2026 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Emergency Notice of Motion – Parades Commission Determination

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	For			
C Bowsie		Against		
J Brennan	For			
P Byrne	For			
P Campbell	For			
W Clarke	For			
L Devlin	For			
C Enright				Absent
K Feehan	For			
D Finn	For			
C Galbraith	For			
M Gibbons				Absent
O Hanlon	For			
G Hanna		Against		
V Harte	For			
M Hearty	For			
R Howell	For			
T Howie	For			
J Jackson		Against		
G Kearns	For			
A King	For			
C King	For			
M Larkin	For			
N Lawlor	For			
D Lee-Surginor	For			
A Lewis		Against		
O Magennis	For			
A Mathers	For			
D McAteer	For			
D Murphy	For			
K Murphy	For			
S Murphy	For			
S O'Hare	For			
A Quinn	For			
H Reilly		Against		
M Rice	For			
M Ruane	For			
D Taylor		Against		
J Tinnelly				Absent
J Truesdale	For			
H Young	For			
TOTALS	32	6	0	3

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

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

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In the Chair: Councillor G Hanna

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor G Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor A King	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor D McAteer

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor R Howell
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor N Lawlor	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor H Young	

In attendance in Chamber: (Officials)

Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance in Chamber:

DFI Roads
Ms C Noble – Divisional Roads Manager
Ms B Gillespie – Section Engineer (NMD West)
Mr H Morgan – Section Engineer (NMD East)

SC/008/2026 APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Byrne, Finn, Harte, Howie, Magennis and S Murphy.

SC/009/2025 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/010/2025 DFI ROADS

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation and invited them to present.

Ms Noble introduced herself and her team and thanked Members for the opportunity to present the DfI Roads Annual Report. She advised that Northern Ireland's road network, valued at approximately £37 billion, remained the region's largest public infrastructure asset and highlighted the publication of a new road maintenance strategy aimed at improving maintenance standards, targeting resources more effectively and delivering longer-lasting repairs.

She advised that, although a formal Executive Budget had not yet been agreed, an indicative allocation of approximately £98 million had been identified for structural maintenance, including £12.5 million for the Roads Recovery Fund. She noted that the programmes outlined in the report remained subject to change pending the final budget settlement.

Ms Noble reported that resurfacing schemes had been completed on the B7 Ballynahinch Road, Crossgar, and the B30 Cullaville Road, Crossmaglen, with further schemes planned at Clanrye Avenue, Newry, and Bryansford Village. She advised that the Department continued to prioritise public safety, network resilience and regional balance, with additional investment directed towards road signs, road markings, patching and drainage maintenance.
She noted that resource constraints remained and, consequently, the limited service policy continued for routine maintenance activities. Defect repairs, grass cutting and gully emptying would continue to be prioritised on a risk basis, with grass cutting focused on safety-critical locations and visibility splays.

Looking ahead, she advised that the Department was developing Transport Strategy 2035 and Local Transport Plans in partnership with councils to support economic growth, improve connectivity and encourage sustainable travel. She also highlighted continued investment in walking, wheeling and cycling infrastructure through the forthcoming Everyday Active Travel Urban Delivery Plan.

Ms Noble stated that road safety remained a key priority. She noted that five additional schools within the district had received part-time 20mph school safety zones during the previous year, bringing the total delivered since 2021 to 273 schools. She further advised that the Department's speed limit review consultation responses were being assessed and that the Local Transport and Safety Measures Programme continued to deliver road safety improvements, including planned schemes at Downshire Road, Newry, and Irish Street/St Patrick's Avenue, Downpatrick.

In relation to major projects, she advised that the Department remained committed to the Newry Southern Relief Road, the A1 Junctions Phase 2 project and the A24 Ballynahinch Bypass. She also noted continued collaboration with Louth County Council on the Narrow Water Bridge connection to the Warrenpoint Road, with completion remaining on track for 2027.

In conclusion, Ms Noble reaffirmed the Department's commitment to engagement with elected representatives and local communities. While staffing pressures remained, public safety continued to be the Department's overriding priority. She encouraged Councillors and members of the public to utilise the online reporting system to support the efficient resolution of issues.

Following the presentation, Councillor Hanna invited comments and questions from Members, reminding them to focus on strategic issues rather than local matters.

Comments and questions from members were as follows:

- Thanks were expressed to the delegation for their informative presentation.
- Concern was raised regarding the need for resurfacing works in Bryansford Village, and clarification was sought on whether the scheme would proceed and whether a commencement date had been confirmed.
- It was queried whether the drainage improvement scheme on the Castlewellan to Newcastle Road would extend to the Burren Meadows area.
- Concerns were raised regarding communication with DfI, including the reliability of the online portal and delays in responding to email correspondence. It was also highlighted that DfI was the only statutory body without a dedicated telephone line or alternative communication channel for elected representatives to contact the Department directly.
- An update on the Ballynahinch Bypass was sought and it was queried whether, in light of legal challenges affecting the A5 project, DfI would commit to developing more sustainable bypass proposals should the current scheme not proceed, or whether the proposal would ultimately be abandoned.
- Support was expressed for the provision of a footpath between Saintfield and Crossgar and for the resurfacing of Main Street, Saintfield.
- Concern was raised that the footpath between Killyleagh and Shrigley had become overgrown and was causing difficulties for pedestrians, particularly those with disabilities.
- The planned signal upgrade for Downpatrick Town Centre was welcomed and clarification on the anticipated implementation date was sought.
- Complaints from residents regarding the condition of the road surface in the Knocknashinna area following works undertaken by NI Water were highlighted. Concerns were also raised regarding the adjacent park footway, which had deteriorated, and an assessment of the area was requested.
- It was queried whether a strategy or framework existed for prioritising greenway development projects.
- An update was requested on the timeframe for footway resurfacing works in the Ardfern area of Downpatrick.
- Disappointment was expressed that there were no plans to repair the Damolly Road in Newry despite its importance as a heavily trafficked route.
- The positive work completed on the Old Warrenpoint Road was acknowledged.
- Concern was raised that surface water remained a significant issue on many roads, particularly rural roads, and it was suggested that greater emphasis on drainage improvements during resurfacing schemes could provide a more cost-effective approach to maintaining the road network.
- Clarification was sought on the Department's protocol for repainting road markings.
- Concern was raised regarding the level of engagement by DfI in relation to the Narrow Water Bridge project, with reference made to concerns reported at the Joint Council Committee.
- Referring to Table 28 of the report, it was queried whether there were any plans to increase inspections of street works completed by utility companies, noting a public perception that sufficient checks were not being carried out.
- Disappointment was expressed at the absence of planned works on the A2 road despite its continued deterioration. The lack of progress on proposals to create a safer junction at Ballyardle Crossroads was also highlighted, despite previous indications that funding had been allocated.

- Concerns were raised regarding a perceived imbalance in planned resurfacing works, with projects concentrated in Newry while the Mournes and Kilkeel areas appeared to be overlooked.
- The need for robust scrutiny and follow-up of work undertaken by contractors responsible for verge maintenance was emphasised.
- Concern was raised regarding road conditions on the route between St Louis Grammar School and Kilkeel, as well as on the Blackrock Road.
- An update was requested on the resurfacing of the Bann Road in Castlewellan and the associated drainage works.
- An update on Redmond's Bridge in Leitrim was sought, noting that it had been struck by a vehicle several months previously, concerns had been raised regarding its stability, and it did not appear to have been included within the Department's maintenance programme.
- An update was requested on delays to patching works on the Moyad Road, including the cost implications of those delays and any plans for further works.
- In relation to gully maintenance, clarification was sought as to whether the Call-Out Section was understaffed.
- It was queried why recent road relining works on the Ballynahatton Road/Cranfield Road had resulted in one side of the road being approximately two feet narrower than the other.
- Concerns were raised regarding the proposed Narrow Water Bridge road layout, particularly the potential impact on traffic congestion arising from the reduction to two traffic lanes and the inclusion of a greenway. It was also queried how bus stops would be incorporated into the revised layout.
- The need for improved partnership working and communication between the Council and DfI regarding verge-cutting operations, particularly to ensure that litter exposed during verge cutting was removed promptly, was emphasised.
- It was queried whether statistics were available to demonstrate whether the introduction of 20mph speed limits at schools within the district had resulted in a reduction in traffic collisions.
- A request was made for the provision of a new pedestrian crossing in Ballymartin near the recently opened shop.

The delegation responded as follows:

- DfI remained committed to the Bryansford Village resurfacing scheme, which was included within the indicative budget and for which funding had been identified. A commencement date could not be confirmed until the contract award process had been completed.
- It was confirmed that the drainage improvement scheme between Castlewellan and Newcastle would extend to include the Burren Meadows area.
- Continued use of the online portal was encouraged as it enabled queries to be directed to the appropriate contractor. The portal remained under development and suggestions for improvement were welcomed. All correspondence received by email was triaged, with urgent matters referred to the relevant staff. It was also noted that departmental contact details were included within the annual report.
- In relation to the Ballynahinch Bypass, the Department was awaiting the outcome of the A5 appeal process. Consideration would also be given to decarbonisation measures, construction materials and design standards, together with any implications arising from the legal proceedings. No timescale could be provided at that stage.

- The resurfacing of Main Street, Saintfield remained within the Department's programme of works.
- A detailed response regarding the proposed footway between Crossgar and Saintfield would be provided in due course. It was noted that the proposal could potentially form part of the Active Travel programme.
- The footway in the Knocknashinna area could not be repaired until the local schools had closed.
- Greenway developments were progressed in partnership with Councils and, where Councils wished to prioritise a particular scheme, they could engage with the DfI Active Travel Headquarters Team to explore opportunities for progression.
- No timescale was available for footway resurfacing works in Ardfern, Downpatrick, although footways would be reviewed following completion of road recovery works.
- In relation to the Damolly Road, Newry, the existing road width was not suitable for the volume and type of traffic using the route. Works to widen sections of the carriageway and re-establish verges had been commissioned to facilitate a more effective resurfacing programme.
- The importance of drainage infrastructure was acknowledged. It was explained that much of the current drainage replacement programme related to ageing infrastructure and that additional funding for drainage improvements had been provided by the Minister.
- Road markings were renewed in accordance with established criteria. Inspectors identified markings requiring replacement, which were then prioritised as part of the maintenance programme.
- Regarding the Narrow Water Bridge project, surprise was expressed at suggestions of poor engagement, noting that DfI officials were represented on the Project Board and continued to work to ensure all necessary arrangements were in place for the bridge opening.
- In relation to street works, DfI continued to implement the recommendations of the 2024 NIAO Report and remained focused on achieving inspection targets. While the target inspection rate was 30%, inspection levels were approximately 20-25% due to staffing and resource pressures. Recruitment efforts remained ongoing.
- The importance of enforcement was acknowledged, and it was noted that a dedicated officer was responsible for overseeing inspections and liaising with utility companies regarding reinstatement works. Consideration was also being given to extending the current 52-week warranty period for utility company reinstatements, although this would require legislative change.
- In response to concerns regarding the level of investment in the Kilkeel and Mournes areas, it was highlighted that several kilometres of resurfacing works had been completed in Kilkeel approximately one year previously. A number of additional schemes, including works outside St Louis Grammar School and between Glassdrumman and Annalong, were included within the longer-term programme. While these schemes were not funded within current indicative budgets, additional funding allocations would continue to be sought.
- The need to ensure contractors completed verge cutting and maintenance works to the required standard was acknowledged, and inspections of workmanship were undertaken.
- An update on the Ballyardle Crossroads scheme would be sought from the relevant network development team.
- Road classification formed only one element of the resurfacing prioritisation process. Other factors considered included road condition, defect levels, public liability claims, traffic volumes and overall network need. Given the volume of competing demands,

programmes were continually reviewed in line with available funding and any additional allocations received.

- In relation to the Bann Road, Castlewellan, footway works could be completed during the Halloween school holiday period when St Malachy's High School was closed. Road resurfacing works were expected to follow within the coming months.
- Redmond's Bridge would be investigated by the Department's Structural Maintenance Team and an update would be provided.
- Delays to works on the Moyad Road had arisen because the route had been required as a diversion during works on the Kilkeel Road and in Hilltown. As those works had concluded, it was anticipated that a programme agreement would be finalised within the following weeks, allowing works to commence.
- In relation to gully maintenance, resource pressures within the Call-Out Section were acknowledged. It was noted that different contractors undertook the work and that delivery depended on the resources available at any given time.
- Concerns regarding road relining on the Ballynahatton Road/Cranfield Road were acknowledged and it was confirmed that one side of the road should not be narrower than the other. The matter would be investigated further.
- An Active Travel scheme associated with the Narrow Water Bridge project would provide a continuous shared walking and cycling route. Following public consultation and engagement during July, a preferred route had been identified and discussions with the Project Board remained ongoing. The scheme would retain a right-turn facility into the port.
- Traffic modelling relating to the proposed reduction in traffic lanes in Warrenpoint had been shared with Warrenpoint Harbour and did not indicate that significant congestion issues would arise. It was also noted that buses would stop on the carriageway rather than within lay-bys.
- Verge cutting was undertaken primarily for road safety purposes. Engagement with Council on the strategic road network was ongoing and opportunities for further partnership working continued to be explored.
- Positive feedback had been received regarding the introduction of 20mph speed limits around schools, with parents reporting that school environments felt safer. It was hoped that additional schools would participate in the scheme in future.
- The request for a pedestrian crossing in Ballymartin would be assessed against the Department's established suitability criteria.

Councillors Quinn, Bowsie and Andrews left the meeting during the above discussion at 6.42pm, 6.45pm and 6.46pm respectively.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their presentation and time.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.00pm.

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

Signed: _____

Chairperson

_____

Director

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2026

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 24 September 2026, at 2.00pm, in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

Committee Members in attendance: Councillor C Bowsie, Councillor J Brennan, Councillor O Hanlon

Committee Members in attendance via Teams: Councillor L Devlin, Councillor K Murphy

Non-Committee Members In attendance via Teams: Councillor J Truesdale

Officials in attendance via Teams:
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
Ms J Tierney, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance Via Teams:
Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director: Regeneration

Also in attendance:
Ms C Hagan Sumer NI
Ms S Jones NIAO
Ms C O'Hagan NIAO

AC/062/2026: **APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Byrne and C King.

Ms Slevin noted that the proposed meeting dates were not aligned with the reporting schedule and asked Members whether they would be content to realign the dates accordingly. She advised that the proposed meetings scheduled for January 2027 and April 2027 should be rescheduled to 3 December 2026 and 25 March 2027 respectively.

Councillor Bowsie proposed the amended dates, which was seconded by Councillor Brennan.

AC/063/2026: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

AC/064/2026: **ACTION SHEET OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 30 JULY 2026**

Read: Action Sheet arising from the Audit Committee Meeting held on 30 July 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held 30 July 2026.**

PERFORMANCE

AC/065/2026: **ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 25/26**

Read: Report from Ms C Hughes, Acting Head of Performance & Improvement, regarding Annual Assessment of Performance 25/26 (Copy circulated)

Ms Hughes advised that the report detailed Council's performance improvement objectives for 2025/26, along with the self-imposed performance indicators aligned to the eight corporate objectives as set out in the Corporate Plan 2024-2027. She noted that the report had been approved by the SP&R Committee in August, ratified by Council in September, and subsequently published on the Council's website in compliance with the statutory publication deadline of 3 September 2026.

Ms Slevin thanked Ms Hughes and her team for the comprehensive work in producing the report.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the clear, well-presented report and queried three areas as follows:

- He welcomed the £2m of financial assistance being allocated from Council but queried the success rate of 61% and why 39% of applicants were not receiving funding.
- He welcomed the popularity of the Leisure Services and queried how the increased demand was to be managed.
- He noted his concern that 78% of fleet breakdown was related to vehicles under 8 years of age, querying whether this was considered a young age for a vehicle breakdown.

The responses were provided as follows:

- Mr Mallon reminded Councillor Bowsie that as previously discussed, there were a number of reasons why groups were unsuccessful with financial assistance, ranging from not meeting mandatory requirements to insufficient budget. He noted that applicants may be successful, however they were scored and ranked below the level of funding that was available.
- Mr Patterson advised that work was progressing within Leisure Services regarding customer satisfaction, reminding members that a report had been tabled at the most recent AHC Committee meeting that detailed future actions regarding customer satisfaction.

- Mrs Murphy advised that 7 years was the fleet replacement recommendation and that she would revert to Councillor Bowsie directly regarding the detail of breakdowns.

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

- **Assessment of Performance 2025-26, including the summary document "Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward".**
- **The addendum to the Assessment of Performance detailing the summary of changes to the planning statistics.**

AC/066/2026: **PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director: Regeneration, regarding Planning Department Update. (Copy circulated)

Mr McGilly outlined the report, noting that it was an ongoing report that would continue to be presented at Committee. He advised that the report had been considered by the SP&R Committee the previous week and detailed the performance of the Planning Department against its 2025/26 targets, together with the most recent performance data extracted from the Council's internal reporting systems.

Councillor Bowsie expressed concern regarding the Planning Department's performance, noting that processing times remained significantly above both the Northern Ireland average and those achieved by other councils. He highlighted that Belfast City Council, despite receiving a higher volume of planning applications, had achieved considerably shorter processing times. He questioned whether the Planning Service Improvement Programme was delivering the intended outcomes and sought clarification on whether additional staffing resources were required to improve performance.

Mr Mallon advised that staffing resources had been discussed at the SP&R Committee the previous week, reiterating that engagement with the Department and a review of the Council's performance improvement proposals had indicated that staffing and resources within the Planning Service were considered adequate. He explained that the fundamental challenge remained the historic backlog of planning applications and while the Council continued to process a significant volume of applications, second only to Belfast City Council, performance statistics were based on the time elapsed between receipt and determination of applications. As a result, the determination of older applications continued to adversely affect performance figures. Mr Mallon reminded Members that proposals to address the backlog would be presented to the SP&R Committee in the coming month, with the aim of improving performance against the statutory targets.

Councillor Bowsie stated that he was not satisfied with the response provided, noting that similar explanations had been given over a number of years without a corresponding improvement in performance. He highlighted that Belfast City Council, despite processing a higher volume of planning applications, continued to achieve significantly shorter determination times for local applications. He expressed the view that there were ongoing issues within the Planning Department and sought clarification on the implications of

continued failure to meet statutory performance targets, including whether external intervention or audit oversight could arise as a result.

Mr Mallon cautioned that comparisons with Belfast City Council should be viewed in context, stating that, unlike Belfast's predominantly urban environment, the Newry, Mourne and Down district contained extensive environmental and landscape designations, including Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Global Geopark. As a result, planning applications often required consultation with a range of external bodies, which added complexity to the planning process and had a subsequent impact processing time.

Councillor Hanlon noted that the report had already been considered in detail by the SP&R Committee and welcomed its presentation to the Audit Committee, reiterating her view that the planning application backlog represented a significant risk to the Council and therefore warranted oversight by both committees. She welcomed the detailed report and the assurance that regular updates would be brought forward to enable Members to monitor trends and assess progress over time. While emphasising the need to improve performance and address the backlog, she also stressed the importance of supporting and protecting Planning Department staff as Council employees.

Ms Slevin requested that reports relating to the Planning Department also be presented to the Audit Committee. She noted that the planning application backlog represented a risk to the Council and therefore considered it important that the Committee maintained oversight of any actions, developments and performance improvements associated with addressing the backlog.

Councillor Devlin welcomed the contribution being made by apprentices within the Planning Service and noted positive feedback received from members of the public regarding their work, querying whether opportunities existed to recruit additional apprentices to further support the service. She also referred to the significant delays arising from statutory consultees and acknowledged the impact these delays were having on the processing of planning applications and queried whether consideration had been given to issuing consultation requests at the validation stage of an application, rather than waiting until a case officer had been assigned, with a view to progressing applications more efficiently and reducing delays within the system.

Mr McGilly noted that while that approach presented certain challenges, it was an option being actively explored. With regard to delays associated with statutory consultees, he explained that this issue was being monitored at a Northern Ireland level through engagement with the Department and the Statutory Consultee Forum. He advised that the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) had introduced a programme of change aimed at improving consultation response times and, while still at an early stage, there were initial indications that progress was being made. Mr McGilly also advised Members that delays in obtaining consultee responses remained a challenge for Councils across Northern Ireland and continued to be closely monitored.

Councillor Truesdale referred to concerns previously raised at the SP&R Committee regarding planning enforcement and queried whether enforcement cases were tracked electronically, noting that she believed enforcement matters often involved multiple departments and expressed concern that cases could be delayed or overlooked as they progressed through the system.

Mr McGilly advised that planning enforcement cases were electronically tracked through the MasterGov system, which was also used to monitor local and major planning applications and confirmed that the system included functionality for tracking enforcement cases.

Councillor Truesdale referred to a recent planning approval for a change of use from a hairdresser's premises to an office in Downpatrick for her Party, which she noted had taken 207 weeks to be determined. She sought clarification on whether a proposed approach of allocating caseloads based on complexity, rather than date received, would help to ensure that straightforward applications of this nature could be processed more quickly in future.

Mr McGilly advised that he was unable to comment on individual applications without considering any relevant detail.

Following a query from Councillor Hanlon regarding the appropriateness of querying a personal planning application, Mrs Ward acknowledged that Councillor Truesdale had likely referred to the specific planning application as an illustrative example. However, Mrs Ward reminded Members that Committee meetings should not be used to seek information on individual cases or applications and advised Members to exercise caution in this regard. She advised that it was not appropriate to raise or discuss individual planning applications within the context of the Committee's proceedings.

Ms Slevin advised Members to discuss individual queries directly with officers.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

CORPORATE SERVICES – OPEN SESSION

AC/067/2026: **CORPORATE RISK REGISTER, TO INCLUDE S&E RISK REGISTER**

Read: Report from Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Corporate Risk Register. (Copy circulated)

Ms Jones outlined the report and Corporate Risk Register, confirming that it had been reviewed by Senior Management (SMT) on 8 September and was informed by Quarter 1 assurance statements. She advised that the register identified 12 corporate risks, comprising seven red risks, four amber risks and one yellow risk, and confirmed that no new risks had been added since the previous review.

Ms Jones reminded Members that Directorate Risk Registers were presented to the Audit Committee on a rotational basis and advised that the Sustainability and Environment Directorate Risk Register was included for consideration, noting that eight risks had been identified within the Directorate Register, including two new risks relating to defendant insurance claims and compliance with health and safety requirements. Of the eight risks, five were rated red and three were rated amber, with two risks having increased in score since September 2025.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the information provided on progress to date in relation to the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) but suggested that Members be provided with a project schedule to assist in monitoring key milestones and ensuring delivery remained on track.

Mr Mallon advised that the first BRCD Tourism Project Board meeting had been convened the previous day, with representation from all parties. He noted that the project risk register and proposed delivery programme had been considered and discussed and confirmed that updates would continue to be reported through the established governance structures, enabling Members to monitor progress.

Ms Slevin requested further detail on the S&E Risk Register given the two new risks that had been identified.

Mrs Murphy advised that the Sustainability and Environment Directorate Risk Register had been reviewed during Quarter 1, noting that two existing risks had increased in score, including the fleet management risk, which had been reassessed in light of issues relating to driver behaviour, speeding offences, insurance claims and a vehicle overturn incident. She also advised that the cemeteries risk score had been revised following a realignment of the risk assessment methodology.

Mrs Murphy further advised that two new risks had been added to the register, relating to insurance claims management and health and safety compliance and outlined a number of mitigating actions, including the appointment of an Insurance Officer, implementation of a fleet action plan, the introduction of technology to support driver behaviour management, staff training initiatives, and ongoing health and safety improvement measures. She noted that the two new risks were closely linked and were being actively managed through a range of associated action plans.

Following a query from Councillor Bowsie regarding burial space within the District, Mrs Murphy advised that work was currently underway regarding a review of burial provision across the district, taking account of the remaining capacity and potential capacity for expansion at those sites.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at Appendix 1, full Corporate Risk Register as evidenced at Appendix 2. It was also to note the revised Sustainability & Environment Directorate Risk Register at Appendix 3 and detailed Sustainability and Environment Directorate Risk Register at Appendix 4.**

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2014

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Brennan, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, 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 Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Brennan, 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/068/2026: **DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS REPORT**

Read: Report Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contracts. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the following:**

- **The 2026/27 Q2 update in relation to Direct Award Contracts.**
- **The Direct Award Activity 2026/27 year in review (Q1&2) totals**
- **The Active Direct Award Contracts as of 11/09/2026**

AC/069/2026: **PROCUREMENT ACTION PLANS**

Read: Report Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects & Procurement, regarding Procurement Action Plans. (Copy circulated)

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

AC/070/2026: **UPDATE ON AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS**

Read: Report from Ms J Tierney, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Update on Audit Recommendations. (Copy circulated)

Ms Slevin advised that, moving forward, reports should include details of any associated risk implications arising from recommendations that had not yet been implemented. She emphasised the importance of ensuring that the Committee was kept informed of any risks associated with delayed or outstanding actions.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the progress in implementing both internal and external audit recommendations.**

AC/071/2026: **UPDATE ON FRAUD AND RAISING CONCERNS**

Read: Report from Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Update on Fraud and Raising Concerns. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Devlin, 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**

INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/071/2026: **SUMER NI SUMMARY REPORT**

Read: Sumer NI Summary Report (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Brennan, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report, including:**

- **Mid-Year Follow Up Report**
- **PCSP Report**

NIAO – CLOSED SESSION

AC/073/2026: **DRAFT REPORT FOR THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE**

Read: Draft Report for Those Charged with Governance (Copy circulated)

Cllr Devlin left the meeting at this stage – 2.49pm

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Brennan, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to remove this item from the agenda.**

CIRCULARS

AC/074/2026: **DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE – COMMERCIAL DELIVERY GROUP, MAJOR IT PROJECTS – LESSONS LEARNED REPORT JULY 2026**

Read: Department of Finance – Commercial Delivery Group. Major IT projects. Lessons learned report. July 2026 (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the circular.**

AC/075/2026: **NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE IN NI 2026-27: INSTRUCTIONS**

Read: National Fraud Initiative in NI 2026-27: Instructions (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the circular.**

AC/076/2026: **NIAO SELF APPRAISAL CHECKLIST: NFI**

Read: NIAO Self Appraisal Checklist: NFI (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the circular.**

AC/077/2026: **NIAO MEDIA RELEASE – LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUDITORS REPORT 2026**

Read: NIAO Media Release – Local Government Auditors Report 2026 (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the circular.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.08pm

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

Signed: _____
Mrs M Ward
Chief Executive

Signed: _____
Ms B Slevin
Independent Chairperson

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2026

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 6 October 2026, at 9.30am, via MS Teams

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:
Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Byrne
Councillor L Devlin
Councillor O Hanlon

Non-Committee Members In attendance via Teams:
Councillor H Reilly
Councillor H Young

Officials in attendance via Teams:
Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs A Jones, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Ms J Tierney, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance via Teams:
Ms S Jones NIAO
Ms C O'Hagan NIAO

AC/078/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors O'Hare and Truesdale

AC/079/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AC/080/2026: NMDDC STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS 2025/26

Read: Draft Statement of Accounts 2025/26. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Jones outlined that the main amendments to the accounts related to the treatment of public and employer liability claims and while a provision for these claims had been recognised and offset against the corresponding asset, there was no resulting impact on the overall balance sheet position.

She noted that the changes had impacted a number of disclosures within the financial statements, including amendments to Notes 15, 19 and 21. she advised that the amendment to Note 15 required a prior year adjustment in the 2024/25 accounts in respect of public and employer liability claim provisions and that changes to Note 21 reflected pension disclosures arising from the Goodwin and Virgin Media rulings.

Mrs Jones further advised that additional detail had been included regarding legal cases outside the insurance provision and that work was ongoing in relation to a final amendment to Note 12 in conjunction with the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO).

Following a query from Councillor Young regarding outstanding maintenance issues and whether they were accounted for within the budget, Mrs Ward confirmed that there was provision within the reserves for ongoing maintenance with appropriate reports being tabled as required through the usual routes.

Councillor Bowsie requested confirmation that the insurance company had formally confirmed liability assurances, to which Mrs Jones confirmed that had been received in writing.

Councillor Bowsie queried whether Council knew when claims were to be paid out, to which Mrs Jones noted that there were a large number of variables to each case and therefore timescales for claims could not be set.

Mrs Ward advised that Council received updates from their broker when claims were settled, however had no influence or power as to any settlement agreement.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the Statement of Accounts for year ending 31 March 2026 for signing by the Chief Executive and Chairperson.**

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 3 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2014

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

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

AC/081/2026: **DRAFT REPORT TO THOSE CHARGED WITH GOVERNANCE**

Read: Draft Report for Those Charged with Governance (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the draft Report To Those Charged With Governance 2025/26.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 09.56am

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

Signed: _____
Mrs M Ward
Chief Executive

Signed: _____
Ms B Slevin
Independent Chairperson

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 12 October 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson: Councillor K Feehan

Committee Members: Councillor G Hanna, Councillor G Kearns, Councillor D Lee-Surginor, Councillor J Tinnelly, Councillor H Young

Committee Members in attendance via Teams: Councillor W Clarke, Councillor C Galbraith, Councillor O Hanlon, Councillor N Lawlor, Councillor A Lewis

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

Officials in attendance via Teams: Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/096/2026: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, S Murphy and Ruane.

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.

ERT/097/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ERT/098/2026: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 14 SEPTEMBER 2026

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/099/2026: **BRCD CONTRACTS FOR INNOVATION CHALLENGE FUND**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding BRCD Contracts for Innovation Challenge Fund. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth advised that the Contracts for Innovation Grant Programme, delivered under the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD), invited Councils to identify operational challenges and provided an opportunity for private sector organisations to develop and present innovative solutions. She reported that the Council had successfully been appointed to lead the first challenge to be brought to market and that officers had worked closely with the BRCD team to develop the proposal.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve, subject to securing the necessary approvals from the Belfast Region City Deal, the implementation of the Contracts for Innovation Challenge, including:**

- **The progression of all required legal agreements and procurement activities, including the use of the Competitive Flexible Procurement Procedure, to deliver the Innovation Challenge Fund; and**
- **The award of contracts to eligible and successful SMEs within the approved funding budget.**

ERT/100/2026: **LOCAL GROWTH FUNDING**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Local Growth Funding – Department for Communities. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report and advised that the Department for Communities (DfC) had secured funding opportunities for which the Council had submitted four applications, as outlined in Section 2 of the report. She reported that the applications comprised a Commercial Property

Grant Scheme; a Revive and Reimagine Property Façade Grant Scheme for Downpatrick; enhanced public realm and landscaping works in Downpatrick (Grove area); and enhancement works along the Newry Greenway and towpath. Mrs Smyth noted that the relevant business cases were attached at Appendix 1.

In response to a query from Councillor Hanlon regarding whether works, such as landscaping within The Grove area of Downpatrick, would be undertaken by external contractors or managed by the Council's in-house landscaping teams, and whether the funding would be ringfenced and not used for general maintenance, Mr Mallon confirmed that the works would be managed in-house and that general maintenance was funded through a separate budget.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to note the submission of applications to DfC and approve, subject to Letter of Offer, implementation of the projects outlined in section 2 of the officers' report.**

ERT/101/2026: **MOURNE GULLION LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS PROJECT**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, which sought approval of the business case detailed at Appendix 1. She advised that the Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project was a partnership between the National Trust, the Council, Mourne Heritage Trust and NI Water. She reported that a recent funding application had been approved and had secured £1.1 million in development funding. Mrs Smyth noted that, as a project partner, the Council was responsible for delivering elements of the approved programme, including the investments outlined in Section 2.1 of the officers' report.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the business case for the Mourne Gullion Landscape Connections Project.**

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 Young, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.**

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

ERT/102/2026: **LEP REVIVE & REIMAGINE COMMERCIAL PROPERTY GRANT**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Local Economic Partnership: Revive and Reimagine Commercial Property Grant. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to approve issuing of notification of assessment outcome to applicants, including progressing relevant applicants to Letter of Offer award as per the assessment process outlined in section 2 of the officers' report and to accept and return a Letter of Offer from DfC in respect of Revive and Reimagine Commercial Property Grant, pending final approval from DfC.**

FOR NOTING

ERT/103/2026: **BUILDING CONTROL 6 X MONTHLY REPORT**

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration regarding Building Control 6 x Monthly Update Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the report.**

ERT/104/2026: **LICENSING 6 X MONTHLY REPORT**

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration regarding Licensing 6 Monthly Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by**

Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the report.

ERT/105/2026 **NEWRY BID UPDATE**

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

Councillor Young acknowledged and congratulated Newry BID on a successful quarter of activities and events, commended the level of collaboration involved and welcomed the positive outcomes delivered.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the quarter two update from Newry BID on delivery performance against BID Strategic Priorities 2026-2031.**

ERT/106/2026 **PEACEPLUS LOCAL ACTION PLAN**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding PEACEPLUS Local Action Plan. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership on 24 September 2026 and that officers will now proceed with the procurement and delivery of activities under Strand 3 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan as detailed in section 2 of the officers' report.**

ERT/107/2026 **REGIONAL BALANCE BILL PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Regional Balance Bill Public Consultation. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Galbraith welcomed the report and expressed support for the principles of the Regional Balance Bill. He highlighted the importance of equitable access to investment, public services and opportunities across all communities, and stated that binding targets and accountability measures would help promote fair regional development. Councillor Galbraith encouraged support for the Bill as it progressed through the Assembly.

Councillor Feehan associated himself with Councillor Galbraith's comments, welcomed the Council's support for the response, and encouraged parties to submit

responses to the consultation.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the response to the Regional Balance Bill.**

ERT/108/2026 **ULSTER UNIVERSITY ECONOMIC POLICY CENTRE (UUEPC) OUTLOOK NMDDC**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding UUEPC – Economic Outlook NMDDC. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the update on Council's Economic Outlook compiled by Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (UUEPC).**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.25pm.

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

Signed: _____

Councillor K Feehan
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed: _____

Conor Mallon
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 15 October 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor C Bowsie

Committee Members in Attendance in Chamber:
Councillor O Hanlon, Councillor A King, Councillor C King, Councillor A Mathers, Councillor D McAteer, Councillor M Rice

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:
Councillor P Byrne, Councillor M Hearty, Councillor S O'Hare, Councillor H Reilly, Councillor D Taylor, Councillor J Truesdale

Non-Committee Members in Attendance in Chamber: Councillor J Jackson

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
Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance via Teams: Ms J Tierney, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance

SPR/155/2026: **APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS**

An apology was received from Councillor Howie.

SPR/156/2026: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/157/2026: **ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 17 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 17 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

SPR/071/2026 – Castlewellan Forest Park NLHF Funding
Councillor Truesdale requested an update on the Compensation Events (CEs) to date, to which Mr Mallon confirmed that a paper was being prepared for Members consideration.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 17 September 2026.**

SPR/158/2026: **OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – SUPREME COURT RULING**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Supreme Court Ruling. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Jackson stated that the DUP viewed the ruling as a positive outcome for the rights of women and girls, noting that women's rights had been hard fought for and said the ruling provided clarity on sex-based protections by affirming that the legal definition of a woman is based on biological sex. He further stated that the judgment clarified that individuals born male who identify as women do not have a right to access women-only spaces or services.

Ms Kirk advised that the recommendation was to note the Notice of Motion relating to the Supreme Court ruling, explaining that the matter had been considered by the Council's Equality and Good Relations Reference Group on 30 September 2026, and that the consensus of those present was to recommend that Council await the outcome of the High Court action being taken by the Equality Commission before considering any further action. She noted that a decision in the case was expected around December 2026.

Councillor Reilly expressed support for Councillor Jackson's comments, stating that it was important to uphold and respect the rights of women, particularly in relation to the use of private spaces and facilities. He criticised the actions of the Equality Commission in this matter and said that, regardless of the outcome of the High Court case, it was common sense to respect and protect women's use of such facilities.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Notice of Motion: Supreme Court Ruling was discussed at the Councillor's Equality and Good Relations Reference Group on 30 September 2026 and the consensus of those present was to recommend**

Council await the outcome of the High Court and direction from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland in relation to the Supreme Court Ruling.

SPR/159/2026: **NEWRY CANAL LOCK 6 RESTORATION WORKS, LOCK 7 SURVEY**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Lock 6 Newry Canal Restoration Works & Lock 7 survey. (Copy circulated)

Mr Mallon outlined the report, noting that approvals had previously been obtained in June 2025. He advised that design work for Lock 6 had since been completed, and an updated quotation had also been received from the framework contractor, and that additional budget was being sought to enable the works at Lock 6 to proceed. He noted that visual condition surveys had been undertaken on a number of locks, with Lock 7 identified for more detailed survey work.

Councillor Mathers welcomed the proposed canal improvement works but questioned whether it would have been more efficient to assess and address all locks as part of a single programme, noting concerns that a phased, lock-by-lock approach could significantly delay completion of the overall repairs.

Councillor McAteer seconded Councillor Mathers' proposal echoing his sentiments.

Mr Mallon advised that works to Lock 5 had already been completed and that the current report related to proposed works at Lock 6. He noted that visual surveys had been undertaken on Locks 2, 3, 4, 7 and 8, with Lock 7 identified as the next priority for detailed survey work. He added that, should Members wish, officers could bring forward a programme of detailed inspections and design work for the remaining locks to develop a comprehensive project covering the canal's lock infrastructure as a whole.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, the following was agreed:**

- **To procure and appoint a contractor and additional consultancy services as required to deliver the Lock No. 6 project as outlined in section 2.1 of the officer's report.**
- **To procure a detailed survey and restoration plan for Lock No. 7.**
- **To update the capital plan with the budget required to progress the project.**

SPR/160/2026: **PURCHASE OF SAINTFIELD DEPOT**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding the Purchase of Saintfield Depot. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Bowsie noted that the wording of his original Notice of Motion had not been included within the report and proceeded to read it out for the Committee. He thanked officers for preparing the report within the limited timescales available, however he stated that he did not support the officer recommendation not to purchase the site, arguing that the cost estimates were excessive and that the wider economic impact of ongoing parking issues in Saintfield should be taken into account. He emphasised the need to address parking capacity across the district and questioned why the higher land values in Saintfield should prevent investment in parking provision for local ratepayers. He also queried why planning and development constraints appeared to make the proposal unviable when similar challenges had been overcome on other Council projects.

Councillor Bowsie proposed that Council proceed with the purchase of the site. This was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

Mr Sage advised that the report had been prepared following discussions at the Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG) in August 2026, explaining that a site visit with Translink had not alleviated previously identified concerns relating to land contamination, the presence of asbestos-containing materials and the associated remediation costs. He further advised that an initial planning assessment indicated significant challenges, including the site's location within a predominantly residential area and its frontage onto a protected route, which would require consultation with DFI Roads. He advised that discussions with DFI Roads had highlighted concerns regarding access arrangements, traffic movements and the proposed bus stop and lay-by.

Mr Sage confirmed that taking all the issues into consideration, the recommendation was that the site should not be purchased and that Translink should be advised accordingly so they could proceed with placing the site on the open market.

Councillor Reilly expressed concern that the report presented an overly negative assessment of the proposal, stating that he considered the site to represent a significant opportunity to support economic growth and local businesses in Saintfield and that failing to secure the site could have long-term consequences for the town.

Councillor Reilly proposed that Members should undertake a site visit before making a decision, as he did not believe the issues identified were insurmountable.

Councillor Hanlon supported the suggestion of a site visit, stating that Members needed to view the site to fully understand the proposal and the challenges involved. She stressed the importance of considering the officer's report, and stated that she was generally content with the officer recommendations.

Councillor Truesdale echoed the comments regarding the value of a site visit and stressed that the report represented an impartial assessment rather than an attempt to discourage the purchase. She recalled the concerns raised at SFWG regarding the significant cost per parking

space and the length of time it would take to recover the investment. She also sought an update on discussions regarding use of the Saintfield Community Centre for parking purposes. Mr Patterson advised that discussions with Saintfield Community Centre remained ongoing and that an update would be provided to Members in due course.

Councillor Taylor supported a site visit and acknowledged that, while some of the identified challenges might be overcome, the issues outlined in the report required careful consideration. He noted the planning and access concerns raised by DFI Roads and requested that Councillor Bowsie share any alternative cost information that he was in possession of as it would be useful for Members' consideration.

Mrs Ward noted that Translink was keen to progress the sale of the site and suggested that, if Members considered a site visit necessary, efforts should be made to arrange it before the matter was considered by Full Council.

Mrs Ward advised the Committee that they now had two proposals to consider, first Councillor Bowsie's regarding purchasing the site and Councillor Reilly's regarding a site visit.

Councillor Bowsie stated that he felt a site visit was akin to a "red herring" and wished to proceed with his proposal to purchase the site as he felt that Translink had been extremely patient with an original deadline of August for Council consideration and an officer had already carried out a site visit.

Councillor McAteer noted that it would be beneficial to have more information on the parking situation in Saintfield as he felt there were no issues getting parked during the week and acknowledged that weekends may be more difficult. He stated that further information regarding suitable alternatives should also be considered.

Councillor Taylor noted that he had asked Councillor Bowsie following his proposal to share any relevant information regarding costs to assist Members to make an informed decision, to which Councillor Bowsie noted that it was difficult to discuss costs in open session but stated that he had been in contact with car parking professionals who had advised that the costs were excessive. He stated that following SFWG meeting in August, a more detailed breakdown of the costs was requested and noted his disappointment that this had not happened.

Councillor Jackson noted that Saintfield had a chronic car parking issue that needed to be addressed, but also there was a lack of ground available to facilitate additional parking and that these two issues should be taken into account when considering purchasing the land.

Councillor Byrne recognised the importance of supporting the local economy and investigating any need for additional parking provision and noted that Members had been discussing the costs associated with the proposal without having all of the relevant information available and emphasised the need to make an informed decision in the best interests of ratepayers. He supported the suggestion of a site visit and suggested that the matter be deferred to allow for a site visit before a final decision was taken at Full Council.

Councillor Bowsie noted his disappointment in the delay in reaching a decision.

Mrs Ward noted that, if Members were in agreement, the item could be deferred to accommodate a site visit prior to November Council meeting should Translink be agreeable, and a decision made on the item at November Council meeting. Councillor Bowsie agreed to defer decision on his motion being made until after the site visit took place.

Mrs Ward acknowledged the work undertaken by officers to gather the information within a limited timeframe and noted that the report had been brought forward following discussions at the SFWG. She emphasised that a key issue remained establishing the nature and extent of the parking demand in Saintfield and understanding the factors contributing to the perceived shortage of parking, including whether it was related to park-and-ride or commuter usage. She recognised that Translink wished to progress the sale of the site but cautioned against making a decision without sufficient and relevant detail and stressed the importance of Members being fully informed.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to defer the item to allow for a site visit (if Translink were agreeable) prior to November Council, to allow for a decision on the item at November Council meeting.**

SPR/161/2026: **PURCHASE OF NEW PAY AND DISPLAY MACHINES**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Purchase of New Pay and Display Machines. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage outlined the report that sought approval to purchase 45 new pay-and-display machines for Council-operated off-street car parks. He explained that the existing machines were nearing the end of their operational life and required replacement to maintain reliable parking services and the new machines would provide improved functionality, including contactless and chip card payments, vehicle registration input, remote monitoring and enhanced reporting capabilities.

Councillor Hanlon expressed concerns about the report, noting that it did not include information on income generated from existing pay-and-display car parks or how that revenue was being used. She questioned the rationale for investing in new machines before addressing wider issues relating to Council's parking strategy and charging arrangements, highlighting the poor condition of the Irish Street car park in Downpatrick, arguing that investment in parking infrastructure should extend to resurfacing and maintenance works. She suggested the proposal appeared premature without a broader review of parking provision and associated finances and proposed to defer the item to allow for further information to be brought back to Members before a decision was taken.

Mrs Ward noted that not all Members sat on all committees but took the opportunity to note that the item had been tabled at the latest SFWG meeting, as well as at the Sustainability &

Environment Working Group for discussion but that a report could be tabled at Committee for Members consideration.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to defer the item to allow for further information to be tabled for Members consideration.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, 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 and 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council and information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, 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/162/2026: **LICENCE OF OFFICE SPACE AT CROSSMAGLEN COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director: People & Legal, regarding Licence of Office Space at Crossmaglen Community Centre. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to grant the annual licence agreement with the group identified in the report for a period of up to five years subject to the licence fee noted in the officer's report.**

SPR/163/2026: **RELEASE OF CHARGE FROM PART OF LAND AT MULLAGHBAWN**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director: People & Legal, regarding Release of Charge from Land at Mullaghbawn. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to release the charge over that portion of the lands as outlined in red on the map attached to the officer's report.**

SPR/164/2026: **LICENCE FOR CAR PARK AT BARNMEEN COMMUNITY CENTRE**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director: People & Legal, regarding Licence for Car Park at Barnmeen Community Centre. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to grant a licence in respect of the car parking spaces at Barnmeen Community Centre during term time to the party named in the report for a term of 5 years at a peppercorn licence fee subject to Departmental consent.**

SPR/165/2026: **LICENCE FOR ACCESS AT MILL STREET NEWRY**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director: People & Legal, regarding Licence for Access at Mill Street Newry. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to issue a licence to the party named in the officer's report in respect of the strip of lands at Mill Street, Newry as outlined in green on the map attached for a period of 12 months, subject to the licence fee noted in the officer's report.**

SPR/166/2026: **SURRENDER OF LEASE AT LIR GROVE NEWTOWNHAMILTON**

Read: Report from Ms E kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Surrender of Lease at Lir Grove, Newtownhamilton. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to surrender the Lease dated 21 June 1993 in respect of lands at Lir Grove, Newtownhamilton, subject to agreement from NI Housing Executive.**

SPR/167/2026: **SURRENDER OF PART OF LANDS AT DONARD PARK NEWCASTLE**

Read: Report from Ms E kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Surrender of Part of Lands at Donard Park Newcastle. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to accept a surrender of a portion of the lands leased by the party named in the report as hatched black on the map attached to the officer's report.**

SPR/168/2026: **CANAL BANK 3 EMERGENCY WORK**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability, regarding Canal Bank 3 Emergency Work. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the final account value as detailed in section 2.3 of the officer's report.**

SPR/169/2026: **STANDBY GENERATORS**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability, regarding Standby Generators. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the business case to progress a capital project for standby power provision at Newry Leisure Centre.**

Cllr Hearty left the meeting at this stage – 7.00pm

SPR/170/2026: **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT REVIEW – PLANNING**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Development Management Review - Planning. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the implementation of a 12 month pilot project within Development Management to address case load allocation and processing as detailed in section 2.2 and 4.1 of the officer's report.**

SPR/171/2026: **ROWALLANE DEA MULTI-SPORT DELIVERY PROGRAMME**

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living, regarding Rowallane DEA Multi-Sport Delivery Programme. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, the following was agreed:**

- **To appoint a framework contractor for delivery of the 3G pitch as detailed within the report.**
- **To procure and appoint an Integrated Consultancy Team to progress the Langley Road Multi-Sports Hub to planning stage and subsequent delivery of the hockey pitch at the site.**
- **To continue stakeholder engagement regarding future governance management and lease arrangements of the Langley Road Multi-Sports Hub site.**

SPR/172/2026: **LEGAL ADMINISTRATION – STRUCTURE REVIEW**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Legal Administration – Structure Review. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the new Legal Administration structure, to create one additional Full-Time Equivalent Legal Advisor and one law student placement, as presented at Appendix 1 and section 2 of the officer's report.**

Cllr Rice left the meeting at this stage – 7.25pm

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

SPR/173/2026: **NCCR THEATRE CONFERENCE UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding NCCR Theatre Conference Update Report. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the update provided on progress against delivery of the NCCR Theatre and Conference Facility.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/174/2026: **NCCR PROGRAMME BOARD MINUTES**

Read: Minutes of the NCCR Programme Board Meeting held 28 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

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

SPR/175/2026: **BRCD TOURISM PROPOSITION PROJECT BOARD MINUTES**

Read: Minutes of the BRCD Tourism Proposition Project Board Meeting held 23 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

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

SPR/176/2026: **STATUTORY REPORTING: SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD JULY – SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Statutory Reporting: Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for Period July – September 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period July – September 2026.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.32pm

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

Signed: _____

Councillor Callum Bowsie
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 19 October 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers, Downshire Civic Centre

Chairperson: Councillor T Howie

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

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

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

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

Apologies were received from Councillors Galbraith and Jackson.

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

AHC/075/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The following key points were highlighted:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOR NOTING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Signed: _____
Councillor T Howie
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2026

Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 21 October 2026 at 6pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chair:	Councillor M Ruane	
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor M Hearty
	Councillor D Murphy	
Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:	Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
	Councillor H Reilly	Councillor D Taylor
	Councillor J Truesdale	
Non-Committee Members In Attendance via Teams:	Councillor A Lewis	
Officials in Chamber:	Mrs S Murphy, Director, Sustainability and Environment	
	Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability	
	Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment	
Officials in attendance Via Teams:	Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer	
Also in Attendance via Teams:	Mr K Bloomfield, HMO Manager, Belfast City Council	

SE/118/2026: **APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Campbell, O'Hare, K Murphy and Young.

The Chairperson expressed condolences to family, friends and colleagues from the SDLP following the passing of former councillor, Dermot Curran.

SE/119/2026: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/120/2026: **ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

SE/004/2024 – Report on Notice of Motion – Flood Defences
Councillor Truesdale noted that residents were anxious about potential flooding as winter approached and stressed the importance of ongoing communication and coordination between the Council and relevant agencies.

SE/034/2025 – Officer Report on NOM – Street Lighting
In response to a query from Councillor Finn regarding an update on above item, Mr Sage advised that he would discuss with officers involved and would revert to Councillor Finn outside the meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 September 2026.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/121/2026: **NMDDC DRAFT OFF-STREET PARKING (PUBLIC CAR PARKS) 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 presented the report, which provided an update on the outcome of the public consultation on the proposed Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2026 and sought approval of the Order in advance of its enactment. He advised that six consultation responses had been received, with views divided and the greatest level of support relating to the proposed closure process. He noted that three respondents had opposed all proposals and that, although equality and rural implications had been raised, the limited number of responses meant the findings were not considered representative of wider public opinion.

Councillor Andrews expressed disappointment at the low number of consultation responses.

In response to a query from Councillor Truesdale regarding whether leisure centres would fall within the scope of the proposed Order, Mr Sage confirmed that they would, but advised that enforcement could not commence until the Order had been enacted. There are no plans to charge for car parking at Leisure facilities.

Councillor Finn also noted the low level of consultation responses, highlighted the potential impact on businesses and queried whether further steps could be taken to improve engagement with businesses and residents.

Mr Sage advised that the Council's consultation process had been followed, with details published on the Council website and promoted through social media channels. He noted that the consultation had concluded and was unaware of any further actions that could be taken at this stage.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to ratify the new Newry Mourne & Down District Council Off-Street Parking (Public Car Parks) Order 2026, in preparation for enactment, upon revocation / amendment of the current Off-Street Parking (Northern Ireland) order as amended.**

SE/122/2026: **BUSINESS CASE FOR SUMMER AND WINTER BEDDING PLANTS**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Summer and Winter Bedding Plants. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage outlined the report, which sought approval of the business case detailed at Appendix 1 and authorisation to commence procurement for the supply of bedding plants for the period 2027 to 2031. He advised that the preferred option identified within the business case was to retain seasonal bedding displays at key locations while further rationalising provision in line with sustainable landscape principles, with any savings achieved being reinvested in permanent sustainable landscape improvements.

Councillor Andrews proposed to accept the recommendations and placed on record his thanks to Council staff for their work in maintaining the District as an attractive place to visit.

Councillor Truesdale queried whether more sustainable alternatives to annual bedding plants, including perennial or mixed planting schemes, had been considered and whether any assessment had been undertaken of sites that could be converted to more sustainable planting arrangements.

Mr Sage advised that he did not have details of the number of bedding sites that could potentially be converted to perennial planting but would seek clarification from the relevant officer and report back to Councillor Truesdale outside the meeting. He noted that the matter aligned with actions contained within the Council's Biodiversity Strategy and would be considered as part of the associated action plan.

Councillor Truesdale also raised concerns regarding the condition of the award sign at the Shimna Road/Bryansford Road junction, noting that it had deteriorated and was potentially

hazardous. Mr Sage requested that further details be forwarded to him and confirmed that the matter would be followed up.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, it was agreed to approve the recommendations of the Business Case and authorise the commencement of the procurement process for the supply of seasonal bedding plants for the period 2027-2031.**

SE/123/2026: **CHRISTMAS 2026 CAR PARKING CHARGES**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Christmas Parking Arrangements. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage outlined the report, which sought Members' consideration of parking arrangements in Council-operated charged off-street car parks in the period leading up to Christmas 2026. He advised that free weekend parking had been introduced ahead of Christmas 2025 following approval of a Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Kearns.

He noted that, while the initiative had supported town centre businesses, it had resulted in a loss of parking revenue and reduced parking turnover during peak trading periods. He advised that three options had been identified for 2026 and confirmed that officers recommended the continuation of free parking on the three weekends immediately preceding Christmas 2026.

Councillor D Murphy proposed acceptance of the officers' recommendation (Option 3) for free Saturday parking on the three weekends immediately preceding Christmas 2026. He acknowledged concerns regarding all-day parking reducing availability for shoppers but considered the initiative to have been beneficial and noted that feedback from local businesses had generally been positive.

Councillor Truesdale expressed support for the recommendation, noting that the initiative had appeared successful. She suggested that it be reviewed before Christmas 2027, given the associated loss of revenue and concerns regarding misuse of the free parking provision.

Councillor Andrews supported the recommendation and highlighted the importance of measures to encourage footfall in town centres. He suggested that feedback be sought from businesses, traders and consumers to inform future consideration of the initiative.

Councillor Finn welcomed the initiative and noted its popularity during the previous Christmas period. She emphasised the importance of supporting town centre businesses and suggested engagement with BID organisations, trade groups and local businesses to better understand the impact of the scheme and identify potential improvements.

Mr Sage advised that, subject to the Committee's decision, an evaluation process would be undertaken and engagement would take place with local businesses to obtain feedback. He

added that further assessment could also be carried out to examine traffic congestion, traffic flow and parking turnover to support a more comprehensive review of the scheme's effectiveness.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to approve the provision of free parking for the three weekends immediately preceding Christmas 2026 within Council-operated charged off-street car parks.**

SE/124/2026: **DAERA CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT CLEAN AIR STRATEGY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND TO 2032**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding DAERA consultation on the Draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor presented the report, which sought Members' approval of the Council's response to the DAERA consultation on the Draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland 2032. She advised that the consultation remained open until 27 October 2026 and that the strategy set out an ambition to improve air quality by 2032.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the Council's response, noting that it supported the aims and objectives of the draft strategy. She welcomed the references to fuel poverty, a just transition and the application of similar measures to commercial premises, and considered the response to be constructive and balanced.

Councillor Reilly raised concerns regarding the potential enforcement implications of the proposed measures and their impact on households experiencing fuel poverty. He highlighted continued reliance on oil, coal and solid fuels, particularly in rural areas, and expressed opposition to any approach that could be perceived as monitoring or penalising residents in relation to domestic heating choices.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Hearty, to approve the consultation response to DAERA on the Draft Clean Air Strategy for Northern Ireland to 2032 at detailed in Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

SE/125/2026: **NOTICE OF MOTION - PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLIC DRINKING LAWS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Notice of Motion – Public Drinking Laws. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor advised that the purpose of the report was to facilitate consideration of the Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Truesdale, which had been deferred from the Council meeting held on 7 September 2026. She noted that the report recommended that officers engage with the PSNI through the PCSP Network to gain a detailed understanding of the challenges associated with enforcement of the legislation and to identify how the Council could support this work while ensuring the health and safety of Council officers.

In speaking to her Motion, Councillor Truesdale welcomed the comprehensive report and emphasised the importance of the proposed legislation, noting that it was a joint initiative between the Department for Communities (DfC) and the Department of Justice. She highlighted concerns regarding the potential disproportionate impact on homeless individuals and those with alcohol dependency issues, particularly given existing pressures within the homelessness sector.

She stressed the importance of adequate resources and training for Council officers, including personal safety, de-escalation techniques and signposting to appropriate support services. She also noted the need for exemptions for private gardens, events and festivals to ensure normal social drinking was not inadvertently affected and welcomed the potential reduction in litter and broken glass across parks, beaches and woodland areas.

Councillor Andrews acknowledged the cross-departmental work being undertaken and emphasised the need for additional resources and support from Stormont to assist Councils in implementing proposed legislation.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to consider both the Motion and the recommendations contained within the Notice of Motion. It was also agreed to engage with the PSNI through the PCSP Network to obtain a detailed understanding of the issues faced in enforcing the legislation and how Council could support this work while protecting the health and safety of Council officers.**

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, 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 Hearty, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, 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/126/2026: **HOUSES IN MULTIPLE OCCUPANCY – HMO UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Houses in Multiple Occupancy – HMO Update Report. (Copy circulated)

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

- **The public access to the online facility containing entries from the HMO register is not reinstated at this time but shall be reviewed annually.**
- **The HMO application online consultation register is reinstated on the 1 December 2026, having particular regard to the significant weight that must be attributed to Councils' statutory obligations under The Houses in Multiple Occupation (Notice of Application) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2019 and the opportunity for applicants to make specific requests to be exempted from the requirements of same.**

SE/127/2026: **WASTE MANAGEMENT CONTRACTS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Waste Management Contracts. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to approve the contract extensions and price uplift as detailed in sections 2.2, 2.3 and Appendix 1 of the officers' report.**

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

SE/128/2026: **ACTION SHEET AND PRESENTATIONS FROM THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP MEETING OF 23 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Action Sheet And Presentations from The Sustainability and Environment Working Group Meeting of 23 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to note the documents.**

SE/129/2026: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN-COMMITTEE MINUTES OF FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026 & JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 24 SEPTEMBER 2026**

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting In-Committee Minutes of Friday 28 August 2026 & Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin Held On 24 September 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to note the documents.**

FOR NOTING

SE/130/2026: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 28 AUGUST 2026**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting No 108 Minutes Friday 28 August 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the document.**

SE/131/2026: **CHRISTMAS REFUSE COLLECTIONS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Christmas Holiday Arrangements for Refuse Collection and Household Recycling Centres. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Lewis noted that bin collections in Slieve Croob were split between the Downpatrick and Newry collection teams and sought assurance that Christmas collection stickers would clearly identify the relevant collection route.

Mrs Trainor confirmed that route-specific stickers would be issued to residents, clearly advising of any alternative collection dates, and advised that arrangements were being finalised to ensure their timely distribution.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the report.**

SE/132/2026: **CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS UPDATE**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Christmas Illuminations Update. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Hearty noted that the Christmas illuminations contract was due to expire and that the forthcoming procurement exercise presented an opportunity to review the Council's approach, particularly in light of requests for provision in smaller towns and villages.

Mr Sage advised that the principal challenge was financial, with increasing costs and overspends in recent years. He noted that any review would need to consider available funding and existing provision.

Mrs Murphy advised that officers would also review support provided through the Financial Assistance programme and confirmed that these matters would be considered as part of the business case accompanying the procurement exercise.

Councillor Finn raised concerns regarding previous lighting issues at Merchants Quay, which had resulted in periods of darkness, and sought an update on whether the matter had been resolved with DfI.

Mr Sage advised that officers had worked with the DfI to undertake testing and complete remedial works, which had resolved the issue, and confirmed that no similar problems had arisen during the most recent Christmas season.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the report.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.53pm.

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

Signed: _____

Councillor M Ruane
Chairperson

Signed: _____

Mrs Sinead Murphy
Director of Sustainability & Environment

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	2 November 2026
Subject:	Correspondence to Council
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

Purpose of Report:

For Decision

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	To provide an update on correspondence received for attention of Council.
2.0	**Key Issues**
2.1	This paper refers to correspondence to be brought to the attention of Council. Items are referred to in 3.0 below.
3.0	**Recommendations**
	That Council considers and notes the following correspondence:
3.1	**Correspondence from the Health Minister, Department of Health, and Southern Health and Social Care Trust** Council received correspondence from the Health Minister, Department of Health and the Southern Health and Social Care Trust regarding Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital.
3.2	**Correspondence from NILGA** Council received correspondence from NILGA regarding Regional Pay Briefing – NI Councils.
4.0	**Resource Implications**
4.1	Not applicable
5.0	**Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations**
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.

5.3	Proposal initiating consultation The consultation seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves Please select the consultation period: Choose an item. Rationale:
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs**
6.1	Does the proposal relate to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service. No – The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs
7.0	**Appendices**
7.1 7.2 7.3	Department of Health Correspondence Southern Health and Social Care Trust Correspondence NILGA Correspondence
8.0	**Background Documents**
8.1	

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH

Department of Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

Ms Marie Ward
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
Chief Executive
Via conor.smyth@nmandd.org;
democratic.services@nmandd.org

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

Our Ref: COR-1801-2026

Date: 27 October 2026

Dear Marie

Thank you for your correspondence of the 15 October 2026 regarding the notice of motion agreed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council on 5 October 2026 concerning inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital.

I recognise the strength of feeling expressed by Council Members and fully recognise the importance of safe, high-quality and accessible maternity services for women and families across Newry, Mourne and Down and the wider region. I also acknowledge the concerns that uncertainty regarding the sustainability of services can cause for expectant mothers, their families, local communities and staff.

The primary consideration for the Department and the Health and Social Care (HSC) system must always be the safety of mothers and babies. The challenges facing maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital are driven by significant workforce pressures, particularly difficulties in recruiting and retaining consultant obstetricians and other specialist staff. These challenges are not unique to Daisy Hill Hospital and reflect wider workforce shortages experienced across health services both locally and internationally.

I have been clear that I want to see services maintained wherever it is safe and sustainable to do so. The Department, the Southern HSC Trust and the wider HSC system continue to explore all available options to support recruitment and retention at Daisy Hill Hospital. Substantial efforts have been made over a prolonged period to secure the specialist workforce required to sustain a safe inpatient maternity service. However, the overriding priority must remain the delivery of care that meets the highest standards of safety and quality.

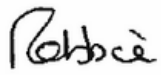
I recognise the concerns expressed by the Council regarding potential impacts on women and families, particularly those living in rural areas who may face longer travel times should changes to inpatient maternity services become necessary. These considerations are being carefully assessed as part of ongoing planning and decision-making processes. Any decisions regarding service configuration must balance accessibility with the need to ensure that services are clinically safe, resilient and supported by appropriately trained staff.

With regard to the Council's call for a review of current recruitment, employment and deployment arrangements, workforce challenges across HSC are a matter of ongoing focus. My Department continues to work with HSC Trusts and system partners to identify opportunities to strengthen workforce planning, improve recruitment and retention, and maximise the effective deployment of specialist staff across Northern Ireland. Consideration of regional approaches to workforce management forms part of this broader work, recognising the need to ensure equitable access to services and the best use of limited specialist resources.

I welcome the Council's constructive engagement on this important issue. My Department will continue to work closely with the Southern HSC Trust, healthcare professionals, staff representatives and local stakeholders to seek sustainable solutions that support women and families while ensuring the continued delivery of safe maternity care.

Thank you again for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely



Robbie Butler MLA
Minister of Health

From the Interim Permanent Secretary and HSC Chief Executive

Department of Health
An Roinn Sláinte
Männystrie O Poustie
www.health-ni.gov.uk

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

via email: conor.smyth@nmandd.org
democratic.services@nmandd.org

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 90 520559

Email: mike.farrar@health-ni.gov.uk

Our Ref: SCORR-0215-2026

Date: 23 October 2026

Dear Ms Ward

Notice of Motion: Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital

Thank you for your correspondence of the 15 October 2026 regarding the notice of motion agreed by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council at its meeting 5 October 2026 concerning inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital.

I appreciate the strength of feeling expressed by the Council members and fully recognise the importance of safe, high-quality and accessible maternity services for women and families across Newry, Mourne and Down, and the wider region. I also acknowledge the concerns that uncertainty regarding the sustainability of services can cause for expectant mothers, their families, local communities and staff.

The primary consideration for the Department and the Health and Social Care (HSC) system must always be the safety of mothers and babies. The challenges facing maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital are driven by significant workforce pressures, particularly difficulties in recruiting and retaining consultant obstetricians and other specialist staff. These challenges are not unique to Daisy Hill Hospital and reflect wider workforce shortages being experienced across health services both locally and internationally.

I have been clear that I want to see services maintained wherever it is safe and sustainable to do so. The Department, the Southern HSC Trust and the wider HSC system continue to explore all available options to support recruitment and retention at Daisy Hill Hospital. Substantial efforts have been made over a prolonged period to secure the specialist workforce required to sustain a safe inpatient maternity service. However, the overriding priority must remain the delivery of care that meets the highest standards of safety and quality.

I recognise the concerns expressed by Council regarding potential impacts on women and families, particularly those living in rural areas who may face longer travel times

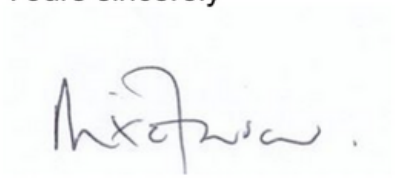
should changes to inpatient maternity services become necessary. These considerations are being carefully assessed as part of ongoing planning and decision-making processes. Any decisions regarding service configuration must balance accessibility with the need to ensure that services are clinically safe, resilient and supported by appropriately trained staff.

With regard to the Council's call for a review of current recruitment, employment and deployment arrangements, workforce challenges across HSC are a matter of ongoing focus. The Department continues to work with HSC Trusts and system partners to identify opportunities to strengthen workforce planning, improve recruitment and retention, and maximise the effective deployment of specialist staff across Northern Ireland. Consideration of regional approaches to workforce management forms part of this broader work, recognising the need to ensure equitable access to services and the best use of limited specialist resources.

I welcome the Council's constructive engagement on this important issue. The Department will continue to work closely with the Southern HSC Trust, healthcare professionals, staff representatives and local stakeholders to seek sustainable solutions that support women and families while ensuring the continued delivery of safe maternity care.

Thank you again for writing to me on this matter.

Yours sincerely



MIKE FARRAR

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

TOGETHER, IMPROVING CARE, TRANSFORMING LIVES

Chair
Eileen Mullan MBE

Chief Executive
Steve Spoerry

Your Ref: C/136/2026
Our ref: SS/EM/20261021

21st October 2026

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
O'Hagan House
Monaghan Row
Newry
BT35 8DJ

VIA EMAIL - conor.smyth@nmandd.org; democratic.services@nmandd.org

Dear Marie,

RE: Notice of Motion – Maternity Services at Daisy Hill Hospital

Thank you for your correspondence.

We fully recognise the strength of public support for local maternity services.

We understand the concern this situation is causing and are grateful to the women, families, staff, trade unions, elected representatives and others who have shared their views, ideas and feedback.

Our intention remains to maintain inpatient maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital, provided we can recruit and retain sufficient clinical expertise to deliver a safe and sustainable service. Our overriding priority is the safety of women and babies, and ensuring that every woman has access to safe, responsive maternity care.

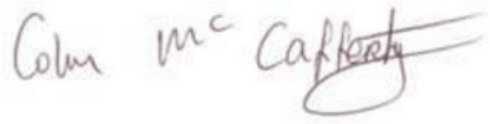
The Trust continues to work to secure consultant obstetricians for Daisy Hill Hospital, while also preparing contingency arrangements to temporarily consolidate births and inpatient maternity care at Craigavon Area Hospital from 23rd November 2026.

You and your council members will have received our latest update on Thursday 15th October 2026.

A further update will be provided at the public Trust Board meeting on Tuesday 3rd November 2026 at Monaghan Row, Newry.

Further detailed information is available on our website, including the Trust Board paper from 24th September 2026 and a frequently asked questions document, which we hope you will find useful:

Maternity Updates | Southern Health & Social Care Trust



Colm McCafferty
Deputy Chief Executive
On behalf of the Chief Executive

nilga northern ireland local government association

the voice of local government

Councillor Glyn Hanna
Chair
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
District Council Offices
Monaghan Row
Newry
BT35 8DJ

Sent by email to: democratic.services@nmandd.org

23rd October 2026

Dear Councillor Hanna,

Regional Pay Briefing – NI Councils

As in previous years NILGA is holding a regional pay briefing with the Local Government Association's Workforce Team (the National Local Government Employer body) to engage with councils about the 2027/28 pay round.

Regional pay briefings are the most important part of a consultation process designed to provide the National Employers with councils' views. I urge your Council to ensure senior officers attend, particularly in Finance and HR as well as encouraging wider Elected Member attendance.

For Northern Ireland councils, the pay briefing will take place on **Tuesday 8th December 2026 at 10am**. The meeting will be held via Microsoft Teams. An invitation will be sent to you and/or those person/s nominated on behalf of the Council.

Please do not share this link with any other person, those nominated to represent the Council will be sent a link directly. The briefing should be completed no later than 12 noon.

We encourage 2 or 3 representatives from your council (to include at least one senior officer) to attend.

This invitation has gone to fellow Mayors and Chairs of all councils, and all council Chief Executives for their attention / for forwarding to senior Human Resources / Finance Officers.

Northern Ireland Local Government Association
Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Castlereagh, BT8 6RB
Tel: 028 9079 8972 email: office@nilga.org web: www.nilga.org twitter: @NI_LGA

To register your attendance and receive the Microsoft Teams link please send your name and email address to Diane Anderson, Corporate Services Manager (d.anderson@nilga.org) by **Friday 27th November 2026.**

Yours sincerely,

Alison Allen.

Alison Allen
Chief Executive and National Pay Local Co-ordinator

Cc: Council Chief Executive