Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn
agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne
and Down
District Council

February 2nd, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 2nd February 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 To set a District Rate for the Financial Year 2026/27

Council Report re District Rate 2026-27 - final.pdf ***Page 1***

Appendix 1 - MTFP 202627 - 2 February 2026.pdf ***Page 9***

Appendix 2 - Annex 1a - General Estimate of Rates 202627 Form for Striking Combined District Rates.pdf ***Page 10***

Appendix 3 - Capital Strategy Report 2026-27.pdf ***Page 12***

Appendix 4 - Capital Programme at 31012026.pdf ***Page 17***

Appendix 5 - Treasury Management Strategy 2026-27.pdf ***Page 19***

Appendix 6 - NMDDC MRP Statement 2026-27.pdf ***Page 36***

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

3.1 Item deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of part 1 of schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 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 this item of business

Appendix 7 - SFWG Action Sheets considering Rate Setting 202627.pdf ***Not included***

4.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 12 January 2026

Action Sheet 2026 01 12.pdf ***Page 38***

Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

5.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 12 January 2026

Council Minutes 2026-01-12.pdf **Page 42**

Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

6.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 19 January 2026

Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2026-01-19.pdf **Page 52**

7.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2026

Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2026-01-22.pdf **Page 59**

8.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 26 January 2026

Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2026 01 26.pdf **Page 68**

9.0 Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on 28 January 2026

Sustainabilty_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2026_01-28.pdf **Page 72**

10.0 Planning Section

Correspondence

11.0 Correspondence Report

Correspondence Report Council 2026-02-02.pdf **Page 76**

11.1 Correspondence from Minister Givan MLA re NOM Voting at 18 C/184/2025

Response from Minister Givan re NOM Voting at 18 C.184.2025.pdf **Page 78**

11.2 Correspondence from Minister Muir MLA re NOM ReGen Waste Warrenpoint C/183/2025

Response from Minister Muir MLA re NOM ReGen Waste Warrenpoint.pdf **Page 80**

11.3 Correspondence from Richard Pengelly, Chief Executive of Education Authority re NOM Voting at 18 C/184/2025

Response from Richard Pengelly, CEO of Education Authority re NOM Voting at 18 C.184.2025.pdf ***Page 81***

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Mr Alan Beggs

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Ms Louise Dillon

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Lynne Fitzsimons

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Mrs Catherine Hanvey

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Ms Catherine Hughes

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Joanne/Noelle Johnston

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Aurla King

Cllr Cathal King

Ms Elaine Kirk

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Niall Lawlor

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Mr Martin McKibbin

Sinead Murphy

Cllr Selina Murphy

Cllr Declan Murphy

Cllr Kate Murphy

Cllr Siobhan O'Hare

Mr Andy Patterson

Cllr Áine Quinn

Cllr Henry Reilly

Cllr Michael Rice

Ms Alison Robb

Ruth Rooney

Cllr Michael Ruane

Donna Starkey

Sarah Taggart

Cllr David Taylor

Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly

Cllr Jill Truesdale

Mrs Marie Ward

Cllr Helena Young

Report to:	**Council**
Date of Meeting:	2 February 2026
Subject:	**District Rate 2026/27**
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Gerard Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	**x**	**For noting only**	

Members are asked to approve the recommendations at 3.1 below.

1.0	**Purpose and Background**
1.1	District councils are obliged under legislation to fix for the next financial year the amount estimated to be required to be raised by means of rates made by the Council before 15 February each year; section 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Regulation 3 of Part 2 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 refer.
2.0	**Key issues**
2.1	**Chief Executive's submission to Council on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and robustness of the revenue estimates.** In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Chief Executive, as Chief Financial Officer is required to provide assurance to Members on the robustness of the revenue estimates and the adequacy of the Council's reserves position as part of the rate setting process prior to submission to the Department of Communities (DfC). Detailed estimates have been formulated, presented to and scrutinised by Members at Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG). These have considered outturns from previous years, corporate pressures, planned savings and efficiencies, current spending plans and projected future investment and that adequate funding is available to protect frontline services. There have been five SFWG meetings since 18 November 2025 in preparation for striking of the 2026/27 rate. The action sheets for each meeting are attached at ***Appendix 7***. As a result of this extensive process and the detailed analysis that has been undertaken, I am satisfied that the estimates presented should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2026/27 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council have been made in the preparation of the estimates.

Significant uncertainties highlighted by the Chief Executive

Future impact of current Economic Climate

We continue to operate in a challenging financial environment, with higher interest rates and inflationary pressures having an adverse impact on the Council comparable to that experienced by our ratepayers. A recent report from the Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (22 January 2026) highlights that:

"Ongoing geopolitical uncertainty, alongside weak business and consumer confidence, contributed to uneven economic growth in Northern Ireland during 2025. Workforce jobs data show that employment expanded strongly in the first quarter before contracting as the year progressed. Overall, the economy is expected to record modest job growth of 0.5% in 2026, with slightly stronger growth anticipated over the longer term.

Underpinning these forecasts, the Bank of England reduced interest rates by 0.25 percentage points to 3.75% in December 2025, in response to easing inflationary pressures and softening labour market conditions. It is expected that 2026 will see only one further 0.25 percentage point cut, as inflationary pressures have not been fully abated. The easing of monetary policy is expected to provide some support for economic growth in the near term."

The future impact of inflation and interest rate movements on the Council's operations, rate base, and financial position remains uncertain. As a result, several assumptions have been incorporated into the 2025/26 budget (see section 2.3).

In addition, there are several other significant uncertainties within the current estimates:

Staff Costs

Staff costs represent approximately 50% of the Council's gross expenditure. Any increase in pay rates therefore has a material impact on the Council's overall financial position.

The National Pay Award for 2025/26 was agreed on 23 July 2025. However, with inflation remaining elevated, the Council—alongside other employers—is likely to face pay demands for 2026/27 that reflect the prevailing economic environment.

In setting the Rate for 2026/27, pay assumptions have been included, as the Pay Award for that year will not be determined until later in the financial year. Should the agreed Pay Award exceed these assumptions, the financial impact will need to be managed within the year.

The Council has also applied a vacancy allowance to salaried posts, recognising that the organisation will not operate at 100% staffing levels throughout the year.

Draft budget at NI Executive level

The finance minister has set out proposals for a Draft Budget covering the period 2026–27 to 2029–30 and has launched a public consultation on what is described as a long-overdue return to multi-year budgeting. A multi-year budget would enable Stormont departments to plan expenditure on a longer-term basis and would also provide local councils with greater certainty when forecasting future funding levels, alongside any additional services they may be required to deliver.

Within the draft budget, there are proposals to increase the Domestic Rate by 5% and increase the Non-Domestic Rate by 3%.

The budget has yet to be agreed and has been subject to political opposition from a broad range of parties represented in the Assembly. A multi-year budget agreed at Executive level would be beneficial in strengthening the Council's medium-term planning. As there is currently no agreed and legislated budget, significant uncertainty exists at the time of setting the district rate.

The 2025/26 estimates include funding from Central Government based on previous arrangements. However, until a budget is agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive, the availability and level of these funding streams cannot be confirmed

Animal Welfare Funding

The cost of delivering the Animal Welfare Service across all Northern Ireland councils to meet the statutory enforcement obligations under the Welfare of Animals (Northern Ireland) Act 2011, is approximately £1.25 million per year.

From 2012/13 Council animal welfare services were wholly funded through a regional grant from DAERA, however the funding was withdrawn in 2023. The cost to Council for the animal service during 2024/25 was approximately £172k excluding vat.

The decision by DAERA Minister to cease Animal Welfare funding was the subject of a Judicial review led by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council and Belfast City Council. The court concluded that *"the making of that decision by the Minister without giving advance notice to the relevant Assembly committee was in breach of a procedural legitimate expectation. I grant leave on that aspect of the applicants' claim (which was dealt with on a rolled-up basis) and will allow the application on that basis".* The Executive has yet to decide whether funding will be reinstated to local councils.

Go Succeed Funding

Revenue funding from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHCLG) under the Local Growth Fund has been confirmed at £2.53 million for Go Succeed. This compares to a previous revenue allocation of £7.2 million under the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, resulting in a funding shortfall of £4.6 million for Local Authorities in Northern Ireland.

There is ongoing uncertainty as to whether this shortfall will be addressed. As a result, councils may be required to absorb a proportion of these costs to support delivery of the Department for the Economy's emerging Entrepreneurship Strategy, as well as to contribute to Programme for Government outcomes, in particular the objective of "*Growing a Globally Competitive and Sustainable Economy".*

Rates Support Grant (RSG)

Rates Support Grant was devised to assist the least wealthy and most deprived and rural Councils to provide equality of service provision equal to the wealthier Councils. Seven Councils are impacted by the cuts and four Councils not impacted. NMDDC is significantly impacted with a **14.41%** share of the regional pot for the 2025/26 financial year.

These cuts will fall across a range of services but given the correlation between low income/deprivation and Section 75 groups and inequality it will fall hardest on the poorest within these areas. The Rate Support Grant has been significantly eroded over the years to

the point where it is now essentially ineffective in delivering the policy objective. See table below to show how the grant (total Northern Ireland regional pot) has been reduced over the years;

Year	NI Recurrent Baseline Allocation £'000	Notes
2008/09	£20,497	<11% reduction
2015/16	£18,300	
2016/17	£18,300	
2017/18	£17,568	<4% reduction
2018/19	£16,865	<4% reduction
2019/20	£15,865	<6% reduction
2020/21	£15,865	
2021/22	£11,924	<25% reduction
2022/23	£8,924	<25% reduction
2023/24	£4,900	<45% reduction
2024/25	£3,100	<36% reduction
2025/26	£3,100	

Until an NI Executive Draft Budget is agreed for 2026/27, the total amount of RSG to be allocated to the local government sector remains uncertain. However, the table above highlights a concerning downward trend in RSG allocations to councils. These reductions will have a significant and ongoing impact on the Council's financial position in future years.

The Council's RSG allocation for 2025/26 was £446k (down from £509k in 2024/25), representing a 14.41% share of the regional pot of £3.1m. The Department for Communities (DfC) has yet to advise councils of their revised RSG eligibility percentages for 2026/27 as these need to reflect the 2023 Non-Domestic Valuation List. The overall RSG budget for 2026/27 has not yet been confirmed and is dependent on the final Departmental Budget.

Uncertainties in relation to the Windsor Framework

Various uncertainties remain as to the impact of Brexit and the implementation of the Windsor Framework on the NI Economy and funding streams. No provision has been made in the estimates for any financial implications arising.

	To ensure the efficient delivery of statutorily required food import checks on relevant agri-food goods entering Northern Ireland via Warrenpoint Port, these checks are being carried out on an ongoing basis by trained and authorised Council staff at the port. Regular meetings are held with key partners, including DAERA, Defra, the FSA, Border Force, Seatruck, and Warrenpoint Port, to share learning and address operational issues as they arise, including matters relating to the implementation of the Windsor Framework. Funding for this service continues to be provided by the FSA. The Council is currently preparing to submit a funding bid to the FSA for 2026/27 to support the ongoing provision of the service; however, there remains some uncertainty regarding future funding. **Councils Rates Base going forward** Another significant uncertainty for Council is the number of outstanding Non-Domestic Revaluation challenges with Land and Property Services Northern Ireland (LPSNI) as at December 2025. A total of £13.5m of the Net Annual Value of non-domestic properties is currently under challenge across 193 cases. If a significant proportion of these challenges are successful, this would have a negative impact on both the estimated and actual penny product, thereby reducing the Council's rate base. Another key concern relates to the pausing of NI Reval 2026. All non-domestic properties had received new valuations, which were due to come into effect from 1 April 2026. Although the new valuation list was published on 22 January 2026, the Minister of Finance announced a pause in the revaluation process on 29 January 2026. As a result, business rates for the next financial year will be calculated using the existing NI Reval 2023 valuation list. The current Estimated Penny Product is therefore based on the NI Reval 2023 valuations. Should a further revaluation be introduced in advance of a future rates-setting process, the Council faces uncertainty regarding the potential impact on the Actual Penny Product in subsequent years. **Sustainability Considerations** One of the eight strategic objectives of the Councils 'draft' Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 is to *"Protect and enhance our environment and address the climate change emergency to secure a sustainable future".* Work is in progress and reported through the Sustainability and Environment Committee on the Sustainability considerations. A Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy & Action Plan is currently out to Public Consultation (closing on 13 March 2026). The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) wrote to the Council on 7 December 2025 regarding the Provisional Notice of Assessment for the 2026/27 Producer Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) Scheme. The total estimated efficient cost of managing household packaging waste is £5.8m for 2026/27, compared with £5.6m in 2025/26. The Council has allocated funding equivalent to just over 1% of the pEPR income rate for 2026/27.
2.2	**Long Term Financing of Council** I am satisfied that the estimates presented, while subject to the significant uncertainties noted above, provide adequate financial resources to support the Council's running costs

for 2026/27. I am also satisfied that reasonable consideration has been given to the financial risks facing the Council, as known at this time, in the preparation of these estimates.

The minimum prudent level of reserves that the Council should maintain is ultimately a matter of professional judgement. CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) does not prescribe a statutory minimum level of reserves but advises that councils should hold reserves sufficient to meet their medium-term financial commitments. It is therefore for the Council, having regard to all relevant local circumstances, to determine an appropriate level of reserves and balances. As previously advised, reserves should not be used to fund the Council's day-to-day operations, as this would not represent prudent financial management.

Reserves act as the Council's safety net for unforeseen circumstances. Failing to maintain a prudent minimum level of reserves can have serious consequences. In the event of a major problem or a series of adverse events, the Council could face a significant deficit or be forced to make arbitrary and potentially damaging cuts to spending during the year.

It is generally accepted that maintaining at least one month's expenditure as a minimum reserve is a prudent practice. For the Council, this equates to approximately £11.5 million at present. This calculation is based on projected salaries for 2026/27, actual expenditure to suppliers over the last four quarters, and the current level of inflation.

In October 2025, the Council approved a Reserves Policy. The purpose of this policy is to establish a framework for maintaining financial reserves, supporting effective financial planning, and ensuring the Council has adequate financial resilience.

Following this, in November, the Strategic Finance Working Group completed further work to allocate Capital Reserves to specific projects. A total of £19.7 million of Capital Reserves was allocated, of which £14.5 million is already committed to specific projects.

This allocation supports the Council's strategic planning and ensures that sufficient resources are earmarked for both ongoing and upcoming capital projects.

As noted, the Council continues to face significant financial uncertainties. Factors such as higher interest rates, inflationary pressures, and ongoing challenges to LPSNI valuation lists could substantially impact our rate base, although the extent of this impact is currently unknown.

The Capital Strategy Report 2026/27 ***(see Appendix 3)*** gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed in the implications for future financial sustainability.

Council's capital programme ***(see Appendix 4)*** is a corporate priority to ensure investment within the District. Council reserves will assist with any economic impacts in relation to the increasing costs of construction and future economic challenges.

Council Treasury Management Strategy ***(Appendix 5)*** summarises the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. Council has and will be borrowing and investing substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks.

	Where the Council finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). See ***Appendix 6*** for the Council's MRP statement for 2025/26. **Overall Position on Reserves** I am therefore content that the current reserves held by the Council are adequate to meet the medium-term financial commitments of NMDDC.
2.3	**Key factors contributing to proposed rate increase in 2026/27** Council's Treasury Management experts have advised 'The most significant impacts on the Council's treasury management strategy for 2026/27 are expected to include: the influence of the government's 2025 Autumn Budget, lower short-term interest rates alongside higher medium- and longer-term rates, slower economic growth, together with ongoing uncertainties around the global economy, stock market sentiment, and geopolitical issues'. The impact of higher interest rates and inflationary pressures will continue to affect Council services in 2026/27, with assumptions made and included within budgets as to the continuing impact on our trading operations; • The Council has provisionally allowed for a 3.0% national pay award in 2025/26. The exact award will be confirmed later in the year; however, this estimate aligns with projections from other local authorities. • A vacancy allowance has been incorporated into the estimates for salaried posts, set at 5% of gross payroll costs. This reflects the assumption that some posts may remain unfilled temporarily. Front-line posts are excluded from this allowance, as they must be filled immediately to maintain service provision. • In October 2024, The UK Government has announced an increase in the amount of National Insurance paid by employers from 1 April 2025. The rate increased to 15% in April 2025, and the threshold will be reduced to £5,000. The approximate recurring cost of this increase to Council in 2026/27 is £1 million. • The increased tonnages and associated costs of waste and recycling across the District have been incorporated into the 2026/27 budgets. Waste contracts are linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI), which was 3.4% in December 2025. • The Council's insurance budget has increased by £335k, based on 2025/26 actuals. Our brokers have highlighted that we are in unprecedented times, with a rapidly hardening insurance market affecting a wide range of cover types. The restricted market for Local Authority risks mirrors the broader market hardening, with few new entrants in an already limited market.
3.0	**Recommendations**
3.1	Members are asked to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group in relation to the 2026/27 rate setting process (see Appendix 7) and, having regard to the Chief Executive's statement as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 (see 2.1 & 2.2 above): 1. **Approve an increase in the district rate for 2026/27 of 2.80% based on an estimated penny product of 2,561,999 meaning a non-domestic rate of 31.0337 pence and a domestic rate of 0.4999 pence**.

	2. Approve the Medium-Term Financial plan and authorise the 2026/27 expenditure included in the estimates (Appendix 1). 3. Approve the General Estimates of Rates form 2026/27 to be signed by the Chief Financial Officer (Appendix 2). 4. Approve the Capital Strategy Report for 2026/27 required by the CIPFA Prudential Code. (See Appendix 3). 5. Approve the ongoing Capital Programme (see Appendix 4). 6. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/27 (see Appendix 5). 7. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026/27 (see Appendix 6). 8. Approve the action sheets of the Strategic Finance Working Group relating to the rate setting process. (see Appendix 7: *Restricted item)*
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	Resource implications are as detailed in the appendices.
5.0	**Equality and good relations implications**
5.1	No equality or good relations implications have been identified.
6.0	**Rural Proofing implications**
6.1	Due regard to rural needs has been considered in making the recommendation.
7.0	**Appendices**
	Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Plan Appendix 2: General Estimates of Rate 2026/27 – DfC Return Appendix 3: Capital Strategy Report 2026/27 Appendix 4: Capital Programme at 31/1/2026 Appendix 5: Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/27 Appendix 6: Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026/27 Appendix 7: Action Sheets of meetings of Strategic Finance Working Group to consider rate setting process 2026/27 [Restricted item].
8.0	**Background documents**
	Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Medium Term Financial Plan

			02-Feb-26
	Actual 2024/25	**Actual 2025/26**	**Proposed Rate 2026/27**
Revenue Income	-14,831,790	-16,974,890	-19,352,597
	-14,831,790	***-16,974,890***	***-19,352,597***
Revenue Expenditure	34,206,435	36,470,500	40,011,982
Payroll	44,770,996	47,735,727	49,521,909
MRP	5,873,000	5,763,000	5,944,000
Loan Interest	2,957,500	3,743,000	3,813,000
PFF MRP costs	1,008,000	1,048,000	586,000
PFF (Reserve Net Off)	-1,008,000	-1,048,000	-586,000
Total Net Spend	***72,976,141***	***76,737,337***	***79,938,294***
Rate Support Grant	-804,580	-509,020	-430,070
RSG loss - from reserves	-364,430		
Net to be raised	**71,807,131**	**76,228,317**	**79,508,224**
Est'd product of 1 penny	2,473,259	2,525,089	2,561,999
ND District Rate (pence)	29.0334	30.1884	31.0337
Conversion factor for DR	0.016107	0.016107	0.016107
Domestic Rate (pence)	0.4676	0.4862	0.4999
	6.41%	3.98%	**2.80%**

Annex 1a

Department for Communities - General Estimates of Rates
2026/2027

Council:- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Total Amount to be Raised	**79,938,294**	
Reduced by Rates Support Grant	**-430,070**	**Zero or negative amount to be entered**
+/- Balance Applied	**0**	
Amount to be Raised *(via District Rates, De-rating and Transferred Functions Grants)*	**79,508,224**	
Total Penny Product *(from table below)*	**2,561,999**	
Non-Domestic District Rate	**31.0337**	
Council Specific Conversion Factor	**0.016107**	
Domestic District Rate	**0.4999**	

Penny Product Information	
Estimated Penny Product (Rateable) - *(To be based on figure provided by LPS, DoF, which is total of non-domestic and domestic penny products, with rating policy reductions applied; as this is for rate setting the council specific conversion factor will have been applied to domestic capital values)*	**2,419,090**
Estimated Penny Product (De-rated) *(To be based on figure provided by DoF)*	**116,570**
Derived Penny Product (Transferred Functions Grant) (Fixed amount)	**26,339**
Total Penny Product	**2,561,999**

Grants payable by DfC	
Estimated De-rating Grant (DRG) *(De-rating Grant payable by DfC during year will be Estimated PP (De-rated) x Non-domestic District Rate)*	**3,617,598**
Transferred Functions Grant (TFG) *(includes NI Local Government Commissioner for Standards Costs) (Derived Penny Product (TFG) x Non-domestic District Rate)*	**817,397**
Rates Support Grant	**430,070**

Amount payable by DoF	
Estimated Amount to be Raised via District Rates (Rateable)	**75,073,229**

I certify that at a meeting of the council held on 2 February 2026 these estimates, having been fully considered, and as applicable amended to the extent shown in red ink, were adopted and it was resolved to determine the rate shown here for the year commencing 1 April 2026.

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____

Chief Executive

APPENDIX 3

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Capital Strategy Report 2026/27

Introduction

This capital strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability.

Decisions made this year on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Council for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.

Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure is where the Council spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, and loans and grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets.

In 2026/27, the Council is planning capital expenditure of £43.6m as summarised below:

Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £ millions

	2024/25 actual *	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
Gross Capital Spend	20.9	15.5	43.6	45.8	21.8

** £1.2m of capital expenditure in 2024/25 arose from a change in the accounting for leases and does not represent cash expenditure*

The main capital projects in 2026/27 include (gross): Newry City Park £8.5m, Newry City Centre Regeneration Project £7m, Camlough Lake Recreational Hub £4.1m, Warrenpoint HWB Hub £3.5m, Castlewellan Forest Park (Tree-top Walk) £3.4m, Kilkeel Leisure Centre £3m and Vehicles £4.1m. The Council will not incur capital expenditure on investments.

Governance: Service managers prepare business cases on new projects which are included in the Council's capital programme. Projections are collated by the Finance Department who calculate the financing cost (which can be nil if the project is fully externally financed). The Council's Strategic Finance Working Group appraises all projects based on a comparison of service priorities against financing costs and makes recommendations to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee. The final Capital Programme is then agreed by full Council at a special meeting in February each year.

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Council's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing and leasing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:

Table 2: Capital financing in £ millions

	2024/25 actual *	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
External sources	8.2	5.3	15.6	14.3	1.0
Capital receipts	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
Revenue resources	0.6	10.1	-	-	-
Debt/New borrowing	12.0	-	28.0	31.5	20.8
TOTAL	**20.9**	**15.5**	**43.6**	**45.8**	**21.8**

Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, and this is therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP and use of capital receipts are as follows:

Table 3: Replacement of prior years' debt finance in £ millions

	2024/25 actual	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	6.9	6.8	6.5	6.7	6.7
Capital receipts	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
TOTAL	**7.0**	**6.9**	**6.5**	**6.7**	**6.7**

- The Council's full minimum revenue provision statement is shown at Appendix 6.

The Council's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £21.4m during 2026/27. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Council's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	2024/25 actual *	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
TOTAL CFR	**106.6**	**109.9**	**131.3**	**156.1**	**170.2**

** £1.2m of the CFR increase in 2024/25 arose from a change in the accounting for leases*

Asset management: To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Council has a Non-Current Assets - Accounting Policies and Procedure which was approved in 2022.

Asset disposals: When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. The Council plans to receive minimal capital receipts from asset sales in the coming financial year as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts receivable in £ millions

	2024/25 actual	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
Asset sales	0.1	0.1	-	-	-
Loans etc repaid	4.0	4.2	5.1	5.4	6.0
TOTAL	**4.1**	**4.3**	**5.1**	**5.4**	**6.0**

Treasury Management

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Council's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Council is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

Due to decisions taken in the past, at 31st December 2025 the Council had £66.3m borrowing at an average interest rate of 4.7% and £9.7m treasury investments at an average rate of 3.8%.

Borrowing strategy: The Council's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Council therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheaper short-term loans and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher.

Projected levels of the Council's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, leases and transferred debt) are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	31.3.2025 actual	31.3.2026 forecast	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget	31.3.2029 budget
Debt (incl. leases)	69.2	65.0	87.9	114.0	128.8
Capital Financing Requirement	106.6	109.9	131.3	156.1	170.2

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from table 6, the Council expects to comply with this in the medium term.

Liability benchmark: To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of up to £5m at each year-end. This benchmark is currently £66.1m and is forecast to rise to £128.4m over the next three years.

Table 7: Borrowing and the Liability Benchmark in £ millions

	31.3.2025 actual	31.3.2026 forecast	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget	31.3.2029 budget
Existing borrowing	69.2	65.0	60.5	55.9	51.3
Forecast borrowing	n/a	-	27.4	58.1	77.5
Liability benchmark	68.8	66.1	88.5	114.3	128.4

The table shows that the Council expects to remain borrowed close to its liability benchmark in the medium term.

Affordable borrowing limit: The Council is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower "operational boundary" is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 8: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £m

	2025/26 limit	2026/27 limit	2027/28 limit	2028/29 limit
Authorised limit - total external debt	157.5	141.3	166.1	180.2
Operational boundary - total external debt	147.5	131.3	156.1	170.2

- Further details on borrowing are included in the treasury management strategy, see Appendix 5.

Treasury investment strategy: Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Council's policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Council may request its money back at short notice.

Table 9: Treasury management investments in £millions

	31.3.2025 actual	31.3.2026 forecast	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget	31.3.2029 budget
Near-term investments	9.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	5.0

- Further details on treasury investments are included in the treasury management strategy

Risk management: The effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of the Council's treasury management activities. The treasury management strategy therefore sets out various indicators and limits to constrain the risk of unexpected losses and details the extent to which financial derivatives may be used to manage treasury risks.

- The treasury management prudential indicators are included in treasury management strategy.

Governance: Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Director of Corporate Services and finance staff, who must act in line with the treasury management strategy approved by Council. Bi-Annual reports on treasury management activity are presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

Revenue Budget Implications

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from rates and general government grants.

Table 10: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	2024/25 actual	2025/26 forecast	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget	2028/29 budget
Financing costs (£m)	9.2	9.1	10.4	11.3	12.7
Proportion of net revenue stream	12.5%	11.9%	13.2%	14.0%	15.4%

Sustainability: Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 40 years into the future. The Chief Financial Officer is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable.

Knowledge and Skills

The Council employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions.

Where staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Council currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly and ensures that the Council has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

Project Code	2nd Project Code	3rd Project Code	Description	2025.26 (P9) ACTUAL AUC	2025.26 FORECAST AUC	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Gross	Income/Grant	Net Budg
9192			Newry City Centre Regeneration Project (NCCR)	3,112,913	0						3,112,913	-5,000,000	(1,887,087)
9412			NCCR - Theatre Conference Building	0	0	6,000,000	10,000,000	6,208,645	500,000		22,708,645		22,708,645
9413			NCCR - Theatre Conference Public Realm	0	0		500,000	2,000,000			2,500,000		2,500,000
9414			NCCR - Theatre Conference Flood Alleviation	(42,966)	42,966	500,000	2,000,000	500,000			3,000,000		3,000,000
9415			NCCR - Civic & Regional Hub Building	0	0	500,000	10,000,000	9,000,000	500,000		20,000,000		20,000,000
9416			NCCR - Civic & Regional Hub Public Realm	0	0		500,000	1,000,000			1,500,000		1,500,000
9417			NCCR – Office Grade A Office Accommodation	0	0		1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000		3,000,000	-3,000,000	0
9932			Mourne Gateway Project (MMGP) BRCD funding	1,249,571	0					29,766,870	31,016,441	-29,766,870	1,249,571
9340	9289		Warrenpoint HWB Hub	542,892	0	3,488,047	3,308,047				7,338,986		7,338,986
-			Treetop Walk Castlewellan Forest Park - EAK	0	0	2,500,000	2,500,000				5,000,000		5,000,000
9941			Treetop Walk Castlewellan Forest Park - NON EAK	0	0	900,000	900,000				1,800,000		1,800,000
9214			Kilkeel Leisure Centre	344,769	939,046	2,970,000	356,184				4,610,000		4,610,000
9924			Castlewellan Forest Park (HLF Funded)	5,561,163	806,349	130,000					6,497,512	-1,991,110	4,506,402
-			(SFS) Sports Facility Strategy/Hub - **unalloacted**	0	0	150,000	442,285				592,285		592,285
-			(SFS) Ballykinlar	0	0	500,000					500,000		500,000
9339			(SFS) Jennings Park	8,390	2,620	474,020					485,030		485,030
-			(SFS) Crotlieve Multi sports Hub review warrenpoint	0	0	250,000	250,000				500,000		500,000
			(SFS) Rowallane Multi sports Hub review	0	0	250,000	250,000				500,000		500,000
			(SFS) Downpatrick Multi sports Hub review	0	0	250,000	250,000				500,000		500,000
9110			Play Strategy Sep24-Dec24	1,906,541	73,934	254,228	610,000				2,844,703		2,844,703
9155			Newry City Park	940,865	541,512	8,550,200	8,601,518	17,685			18,651,780	-16,200,000	2,451,780
9161	9309		Camlough Lake - Recreational Hub	283,290	98,946	4,399,156	412,500				5,193,892	-2,820,554	2,373,338
-			Residual Waste Treatment Project	0	0			1,947,306			1,947,306		1,947,306
9376			Ballynahinch Community Centre -Reconfiguration	1,030,243	85,043						1,115,286		1,115,286
9945			Financial Assistance for Tourist Accommodation	0	0	500,000	500,000				1,000,000		1,000,000
9399	9254		Tyrella Amenity Building	758,441	19,141						777,582		777,582
9844			Warrenpoint Front Shore P.R. Scheme (Phase 1&3)	2,194,032	305,758						2,499,790	-1,988,993	510,797
			Struell Cemetery Extension		40,000	400,000					440,000		440,000
9196	9197		Sports Facility Strategy - Financial Assistance	40,972	321,388	250,000					612,360		612,360
9921			Downpatrick Regeneration - Church Street & DeCourcy	142,391	1,491,007	1,334,521					2,967,919	-2,569,042	398,877
9389			(SFS) 3G UPGRADE - DONARD PK - 3G Pitch (SFS-Mournes DEA)	1,266,243	(72,549)	29,000					1,222,694	-792,285	430,409
			Donard Park Vehicle Barriers		150,000						150,000		150,000
9210			Community Engagement Capital Build - Financial Assistance	(1,649)	255,363	250,000					503,714		503,714
9351			Newcastle Centre - to planning permission /RIBA stage 3	53,479	65,305	261,216					380,000		380,000
-			Upgrade 6 council facilities CCTV cameras	0	20,000	150,000	100,000	100,000			370,000		370,000
9341			Newcastle Rock Pool	0	0	98,940	98,941				197,881		197,881
9374			Dundrum PF Pavilion Car Park	1,825	(1,825)	117,286					117,286		117,286
9453			Delamont Country Park development	0	10,000	185,000					195,000		195,000
9164			Forest Park Investment Programme	173,909	16,092						190,000		190,000
-			Replacement of Play Park Surfaces Bunkers Hill, Annsbourough & Leitrim	0	180,000						180,000		180,000
			Greenway Active Travel (DFI funded)		180,000	180,000					360,000	-180,000	180,000
9446			Lock 6, Newry Canal Restoration	0	5,000	155,000					160,000		160,000
-			Down Leisure Centre new lift	0	150,000						150,000		150,000
9315			Kilbroney Pitches	112,229	27,771						140,000		140,000
9447			Kilkeel Lower Square & River Walk EI Scheme	0	35,000	100,000					135,000		135,000
9400			Dunleath Pump Track & Skatepark	474,972	98,588						573,560	-444,176	129,384

Project Code	2nd Project Code	3rd Project Code	Description	2025.26 (P9) ACTUAL AUC	2025.26 FORECAST AUC	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Gross	Income/Grant	Net Budg
9892	9292	9927	Kilbroney Park, Various schemes	0	20,000	79,361					99,361		99,361
9169			Community Centre Renewable Energy Projects	0	70,000	26,279					96,279		96,279
9306			Playpark Signage	0	15,000	70,142					85,142		85,142
9420			E Vehicle Chargers - council	0	80,000						80,000		80,000
9442			Cloughreagh Community Centre Upgrade	0	0	77,000					77,000		77,000
9316			New Barriers and walkways at HRC's - DEARA Improvement Funding to be sought	0	75,000						75,000		75,000
9324			Delamont Trails Plan	53,315	11,686						65,000		65,000
9382			Shimna Retaining Wall	35,615	24,385						60,000		60,000
9387			Narnia Experience - Kilbroney Park	52,353	147						52,500		52,500
9355			Small Towns Programme (DFC /DAERA)	8,749	36,801						45,550		45,550
-			Active Travel Masterplan	0	40,000						40,000		40,000
9933			Castlewellan Forest Park (DEARA)	0	38,404						38,404		38,404
9345			Multi Sports Hubs Strategy	34,395	(2,395)						32,000		32,000
9448			Quoile carpark resurface and upgrade	0	29,000						29,000		29,000
9159			Carlingford lough Greenway	3,020,556	202,145						3,222,701	-3,194,552	28,149
-			Touring in the trees castlewellan	0	25,000						25,000		25,000
9451			Meigh CC Refurbishment	0	65,630						65,630	-49,630	16,000
-			Castle park install height restriction barrier	0	15,000						15,000		15,000
9377			External Signage Newry Museum	0	15,000						15,000		15,000
9934			GREENWAYS - NEWRY AND Warrenpoint	0	8,905						8,905		8,905
9346			Trojan Horse/ Pgrd Upgrade Flying Horse Downpatrick	1,655	4,846						6,500		6,500
9443			Bessbrook Mini Digi Hub	7,265	32,735	117,760					157,760	-157,760	0
9942			REFCUS - LEP Productivity Capital	0	0	165,000	660,000				825,000	-825,000	0
9943			REFCUS - LEP Commercial Property Revive	0	0	150,000	1,900,000				2,050,000	-2,050,000	0
9944			REFCUS - LEP Property Façade Revive	0	0	120,000	480,000				600,000	-600,000	0
-			Peaceplus Strand 1.2 Upgrade to facilities			980,825.44	49,238.14				1,030,064	-1,030,064	(0)
-			Peaceplus Strand 1.3 outdoor spaces			746,358					746,358	-746,358	0
9458			Survey of Lock 2,3,4,7 & 8 Newry Canal		10,000						10,000	-10,000	0
9380			PF - Warrenpoint Breakwater Upgrade	61,768	0						61,768		61,768
9349			PF - Newcastle Pontoon	6,917	0						6,917		6,917
			LAND & BUIDLINGS	23,437,102	6,703,744	38,609,339	45,668,713	21,773,636	2,000,000	29,766,870	167,959,404	(73,416,394)	94,543,010
			PLANT & EQUIPMENT	15,512	714,522	162,400	30,000				922,434	-41,000	881,434
			VEHICLES	707,007	340,572	4,137,765					5,185,344		5,185,344
9185	9397	9392	**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**	884,406	784,071	490,007	0		0	0	2,158,484		2,158,484
			VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY COSTS	0	0						0		0
			GRAND TOTAL	25,044,026	8,542,909	43,399,511	45,698,713	21,773,636	2,000,000	29,766,870	176,225,665	-173,457,394	£102,768,271

APPENDIX 5

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2026/27

Introduction

Treasury management is the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Council has and will be borrowing and investing substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Council's prudent financial management.

Treasury risk management at the Council is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Council to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. In addition, the former Department of the Environment (DoE) issued Guidance on Local Authority Investments in October 2011 that requires the Council to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Council's legal obligation under the *Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011* to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the DoE Guidance.

Revised strategy: In accordance with the DoE Guidance, the Council will be asked to approve a revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement should the assumptions on which this report is based change significantly. Such circumstances would include, for example, a large unexpected change in interest rates, in the Council's capital programme or in the level of its investment balance.

External Context

Economic background: The most significant impacts on the Council's treasury management strategy for 2026/27 are expected to include: the influence of the government's 2025 Autumn Budget, lower short-term interest rates alongside higher medium- and longer-term rates, slower economic growth, together with ongoing uncertainties around the global economy, stock market sentiment, and geopolitical issues.

The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) cut Bank Rate to 3.75% in December 2025, as expected. The vote to cut was 5-4, with the minority instead favouring holding rates at 4.0%. Those members wanting a cut judged that disinflation was established while those preferring to hold Bank Rate argued that inflation risks remained sufficiently material to leave rates untouched at this stage.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics showed that the UK economy expanded by 0.1% in the third quarter of the calendar year, this was unrevised from the initial estimate. The most recent Monetary Policy Report (November) projected modest economic growth, with GDP expected to rise by 0.2% in the final calendar quarter of 2025. Annual growth is forecast to ease from 1.4% before improving again later, reflecting the delayed effects of lower interest rates, looser monetary conditions, stronger global activity, and higher consumer spending. The view of modest economic growth going forward was echoed by the Office for Budget Responsibility in its Economic and fiscal outlook published in line with the Autumn Statement which revised down its estimate of annual real GDP to around 1.5% on average between 2025 and 2030.

CPI inflation was 3.2% in November 2025, down from 3.6% in the previous month and below the 3.5% expected. Core CPI eased to 3.2% from 3.4%, contrary to forecasts of remaining at 3.6%. Looking forward, the MPC continues to expect inflation to fall, to around 3% in calendar Q1 2026, before steadily returning to the 2% target by late 2026 or early 2027.

The labour market continues to ease with rising unemployment, falling vacancies and flat inactivity. In the three months to October 2025, the unemployment rate increased to 5.1%, higher than the level previously expected by the BoE, while the employment rate slipped to 74.9%. Pay growth for the same period eased modestly, with total earnings (including bonuses) growth at 4.7% and while regular pay was 4.6%.

The US Federal Reserve also continued to cut rates, including reducing the target range for the Federal Funds Rate by 0.25% at its December 2025 meeting, to 3.50%-3.75%, in line with expectations. The minutes of the meeting noted that most Fed policymakers judged that further rate cuts would be likely in 2026 if inflation continues to ease, however they were still divided in their assessment of the risks between inflation and unemployment.

The European Central Bank (ECB) kept its key interest rates unchanged in December for a fourth consecutive meeting, maintaining the deposit rate at 2.0% and the main refinancing rate at 2.15%. The ECB maintained that future policy decisions will remain data-dependent, that inflation is close to its 2% target and that the euro area economy continues to expand despite a challenging global environment, including heightened geopolitical risks and trade tensions.

Credit outlook: Credit Default Swap (CDS) prices, which spiked in April 2025 following President Trump's 'Liberation Day' tariff announcements, have since trended lower, returning to levels broadly consistent with their 2024 averages. Although CDS prices rose modestly during October and November, the overall credit outlook remains stable, and credit conditions are expected to remain close to the range seen over the past two years.

While lower interest rates may weigh on banks' profitability, strong capital positions, easing inflation, steady economic growth, low unemployment, and reduced borrowing costs for households and businesses all support a favourable outlook for the creditworthiness of institutions on (the Council's treasury management advisor) Arlingclose's counterparty list. Arlingclose's advice on approved counterparties and recommended investment durations is kept under continuous review and will continue to reflect prevailing economic and credit conditions.

Interest rate forecast (22nd December 2025): Arlingclose, the Council's treasury management adviser, currently forecasts that the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee will continue to reduce Bank Rate in 2026, reaching around 3.25%. This forecast reflects amendments made following the Autumn Budget and an assessment of the fiscal measures and their market implications and following the BoE MPC meeting held on 18th December.

Long-term gilt yields, and therefore interest rates payable on long-term borrowing, are expected to remain broadly stable on average, though with continued volatility, and to end the forecast period marginally lower than current levels. Yields are likely to stay higher than in the pre-quantitative tightening era, reflecting ongoing balance sheet reduction and elevated bond issuance. Short-term fluctuations are expected to persist in response to economic data releases and geopolitical developments.

A more detailed economic and interest rate forecast provided by Arlingclose is in Appendix A.

For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new treasury investments will be made at an average rate/yield of 4%, and that new long-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 5.9%.

Local Context

On 31st December 2025, the Council held £66.3m of borrowing and £9.7m of treasury investments. This is set out in further detail at ***Appendix B***. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	31.3.25 Actual £m	31.3.26 Estimate £m	31.3.27 Forecast £m	31.3.28 Forecast £m	31.3.29 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	106.6	109.9	131.3	156.1	170.2
Less: External borrowing *	-69.2	-65.0	-60.5	-55.9	-51.3
Internal borrowing	**37.4**	**44.9**	**70.8**	**100.2**	**118.9**
Less: Balance sheet resources	-46.8	-46.8	-46.8	-46.8	-46.8
Treasury investments (or New borrowing)	**9.4**	**1.9**	**-24.0**	**-53.4**	**-72.1**

** shows only loans to which the Council is committed at 31.3.25 and excludes optional refinancing*

The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying sums available for investment. The Council's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.

The Council has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme, but minimal investments and will therefore be required to borrow up to £72.1m over the forecast period.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Council's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Council expects to comply with this recommendation during 2026/27

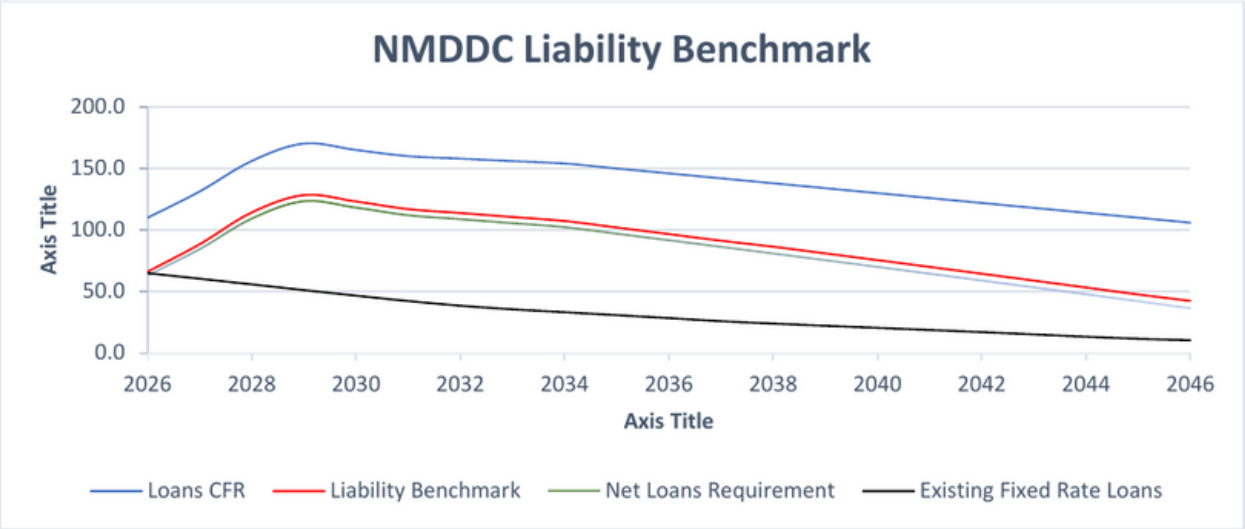
Liability benchmark: To compare the Council's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as table 1 above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of up to £5m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

Table 2: Prudential Indicator: Liability benchmark

	31.3.25 Actual £m	31.3.26 Estimate £m	31.3.27 Forecast £m	31.3.28 Forecast £m	31.3.29 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	106.6	109.9	131.3	156.1	170.2
Less: Balance sheet resources	-46.8	-46.8	-46.8	-46.8	-46.8
Net loans requirement	59.8	63.1	84.5	109.3	123.4
Plus: Liquidity allowance	9.0	3.0	4.0	5.0	5.0
Liability benchmark	**68.8**	**66.1**	**88.5**	**114.3**	**128.4**

Following on from the medium-term forecasts in table 2 above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £20.6m a year on average, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on a 40 year asset life (buildings) and income and expenditure increasing by estimated inflation each year and reserves by inflation from 2029. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the Council's existing borrowing:



The black line shows how the Council's existing debt portfolio will mature over the long-term; this is the effect of no capital expenditure in the future.

The other three lines show estimated forecasts of different borrowing strategies for the financing of planned future capital expenditure, as follows:

- the blue line is the CFR or gross external borrowing requirement i.e. Borrowing without utilisation of any internal resources.
- the green line is the net external borrowing requirement i.e. borrowing only the amount required after the use of all internal resources.
- the red line is the liability benchmark, which is the borrowing required after the use of internal resources which are not required to be held for liquidity and treasury management purposes. The Council uses this forecast for .budget setting purposes.

The Loans CFR can be described as the maximum permitted level of borrowing and the Net Loans Requirement is the minimum possible level of borrowing. The Liability Benchmark is then the 'sweet spot' between the two, where an appropriate balance of risk can be struck between these two extremes. The chart also shows a comparison of current borrowing against the need to borrow. The Liability Benchmark exceeds existing loans over time therefore the Council can take additional long-term borrowing.

Borrowing Strategy

The Council currently holds £66.3 million of loans at 31/12/25, an increase of £1 million on the previous year, as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. The Council expects to borrow up to £28m in 2026/27. The Council may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £141.3 million.

Objectives: The Council's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Council's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

Strategy: Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Council's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. Short-term interest rates have fallen over the past year, and are expected to fall a little further, and it is therefore likely to be more cost effective over the medium-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead. The risks of this approach will be managed by keeping the Council's interest rate exposure within the limit set in the treasury management prudential indicators, see below.

By doing so, the Council is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal/short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. Arlingclose will assist the Council with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Council borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2026/27 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

The Council has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Government Loans Fund via the Department of Finance but may consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code.

Alternatively, the Council may arrange forward starting loans, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

In addition, the Council may borrow further short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.

Sources of borrowing: The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:

- Government Loans Fund
- National Wealth Fund Ltd (formerly UK Infrastructure Bank Ltd)
- any institution approved for investments (see below)
- any bank, building society or insurance company authorised to operate in the UK
- any other UK public sector body

- UK public and private sector pension funds except the Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland)
- capital market bond investors
- retail investors via a regulated peer-to-peer platform
- special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

Other sources of debt finance: In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- leasing
- hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- sale and leaseback
- similar asset based finance

LOBOs The Council currently holds no LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Council has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. Total borrowing via LOBO loans, should the Council decide to use this source of finance, will be limited to £3m.

Short-term and variable rate loans: These loans leave the Council exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below. Financial derivatives may be used to manage this interest rate risk (see section below).

Debt rescheduling: The Government allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Council may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk.

Treasury Investment Strategy

The Council holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. During the 2026/27 financial year funds will be utilised to contribute to the financing of the capital investment programme. In the past 9 months, the Council's treasury investment balance has ranged between £0.1m and £15.2 million, and similar levels are expected in the forthcoming year, with levels higher when funds are borrowed initially.

Objectives: Both the CIPFA Code and the DoE Guidance require the Council to invest its treasury funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Council's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Council will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested. The Council aims to be a responsible investor and will consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues when investing.

Strategy: As demonstrated by the liability benchmark above, the Council expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments will therefore be made primarily to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments.

ESG policy: Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations are increasingly a factor in global investors' decision making, but the framework for evaluating investment opportunities is still developing and therefore the Council's ESG policy does not currently include ESG scoring or other real-time ESG criteria at an individual investment level. When investing in banks and funds, the Council will prioritise banks that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking and funds operated by managers that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, the Net Zero Asset Managers Alliance and/or the UK Stewardship Code.

Business models: Under the IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Council's "business model" for managing them. The Council aims to achieve value from its treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.

Approved counterparties: The Council may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 3 below, subject to the limits shown.

Table 3: Treasury investment counterparties and limits

Sector	Time limit †	Counterparty limit	Sector limit
The UK Government	50 years	Unlimited	n/a
Local authorities & other government entities	25 years	£3m	Unlimited
Secured investments *	25 years	£3m	Unlimited
Banks (unsecured) *	13 months	£3m	Unlimited
Building societies (unsecured) *	13 months	£3m	£6m
Registered providers (unsecured) *	3 years	£3m	£5m
Money market funds *	n/a	£3m	Unlimited

This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below

*** Minimum credit rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than A-. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account. For entities without published credit ratings, investments may be made where external advice indicates the entity to be of similar credit quality.

† Time limits: These start on the earlier of date that the Council is committed to make the investment and the date that cash is transferred to the counterparty.

UK Government: Sterling-denominated investments with or explicitly guaranteed by the UK Government, including the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility, treasury bills and gilts. These are deemed to be zero credit risk due to the government's ability to create additional currency and therefore may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

Local authorities and other government entities: Loans to, and bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by, other national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks.

These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk.

Secured investments: Investments secured on the borrower's assets, which limits the potential losses in the event of insolvency. The amount and quality of the security will be a key factor in the investment decision. Covered bonds, secured deposits and reverse repurchase agreements with banks and building societies are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty credit rating will be used. The combined secured and unsecured investments with any one counterparty will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments. A higher limit applies for investments fully secured on UK or other government collateral.

Banks and building societies (unsecured): Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. See below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts.

Registered providers (unsecured): Loans to, and bonds issued or guaranteed by, registered providers of social housing or registered social landlords, formerly known as housing associations. These bodies are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (in England), the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Welsh Government and the Department for Communities (in Northern Ireland). As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed.

Money market funds: Pooled funds that offer same-day or short notice liquidity and very low or no price volatility by investing in short-term money markets. They have the advantage over bank accounts of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a small fee. Although no sector limit applies to money market funds, the Council will take care to diversify its liquid investments over a variety of providers to ensure access to cash at all times.

Operational bank accounts: The Council may incur operational exposures, for example though current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept, where practical, below £3m per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Council maintaining operational continuity.

Risk assessment and credit ratings: Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Council's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. The credit rating agencies in current use are listed in the Treasury Management Practices document. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:

- no new investments will be made,
- any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be, and
- full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.

Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as "negative watch") so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.

Other information on the security of investments: The Council understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Council's treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.

Reputational aspects: The Council is aware that investment with certain counterparties, while considered secure from a purely financial perspective, may leave it open to criticism, valid or otherwise, that may affect its public reputation, and this risk will therefore be taken into account when making investment decisions.

When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008, 2020 and 2022, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Council will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Council's cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government, or with other local authorities. This will cause investment returns to fall but will protect the principal sum invested.

Investment limits: The Council's revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be approximately £45 million on 31st March 2026. In order that no more than 10% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent unsecured to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £3 million. A group of entities under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes.

Credit risk exposures arising from non-treasury investments, financial derivatives and balances greater than £20,000 in operational bank accounts count against the relevant investment limits.

Limits are also placed on fund managers, investments in brokers' nominee accounts and foreign countries as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries.

Table 4: Additional investment limits

	Cash limit
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£3m per manager
Investments held in a broker's nominee account	£3m per broker
Foreign countries	£4m per country

Liquidity management: The Council uses cash flow forecasting to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis to minimise the risk of the Council being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Council's medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast.

The Council will spread its liquid cash over at least four providers (e.g. bank accounts and money market funds) where practical , of which at least one will be UK domiciled, to ensure that access to cash is maintained in the event of operational difficulties at any one provider.

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

The Council measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

Security: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA=1, AA+=2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating	A

Liquidity: The Council has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three month period, without additional borrowing.

Liquidity risk indicator	Target
Total cash available within 3 months	£5m

Interest rate exposures: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise in interest rates	£300,000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% fall in interest rates	£300,000

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at new market rates.

Maturity structure of borrowing: This indicator is set to control the Council's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of borrowing will be:

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	0%	20%
12 months and within 24 months	0%	20%
24 months and within 5 years	10%	30%
5 years and within 10 years	10%	30%
10 years and above	30%	55%

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.

Long-term treasury management investments: The purpose of this indicator is to control the Council's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management investments will be:

Price risk indicator	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	No fixed date
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£2m	£1m	£1m	£1m

Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds and real estate investment trusts but exclude money market funds and bank accounts as these are considered short-term.

Related Matters

The CIPFA Code requires the Council to include the following in its treasury management strategy.

Financial derivatives: Local authorities have previously made use of financial derivatives embedded into loans and investments both to reduce interest rate risk (e.g. interest rate collars and forward deals) and to reduce costs or increase income at the expense of greater risk (e.g. LOBO loans and callable deposits). The general power of competence in section 79 of the *Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014* removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e. those that are not embedded into a loan or investment).

The Council will only use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options) where they can be clearly demonstrated to reduce the overall level of the financial risks that the Council is exposed to. Additional risks presented, such as credit exposure to derivative counterparties, will be taken into account when determining the overall level of risk. Embedded derivatives, including those present in pooled funds and forward starting transactions, will not be subject to this policy, although the risks they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.

Financial derivative transactions may be arranged with any organisation that meets the approved investment criteria, assessed using the appropriate credit rating for derivative exposures. An allowance for credit risk calculated using the methodology in the Treasury Management Practices document will count against the counterparty credit limit and the relevant foreign country limit.

In line with the CIPFA Code, the Council will seek external advice and will consider that advice before entering into financial derivatives to ensure that it fully understands the implications.

Government Guidance: Further matters required by the DoE Guidance are included in Appendix C.

Financial Implications

The budget for investment income in 2026/27 is £0.18 million, based on an average investment portfolio of £4.725 million at an interest rate of 3.8%. The budget for debt interest paid in 2026/27 is £3.8 million, based on an average debt portfolio of £76 million at an average interest rate of 4.7%; this average rate assumes that new loans are borrowed at 5.9%. If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

Other Options Considered

The CIPFA Code does not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Chief Financial Officer, having consulted the Assistant Director of Finance and Performance, believes that the above strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

Alternative	Impact on income and expenditure	Impact on risk management
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

Appendix A – Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast – 22nd December 2025

Underlying assumptions:

- The Bank of England duly delivered on expectations for a December rate cut, but, despite softer economic data over the past two weeks, the minutes highlighted increased caution surrounding both the inflation outlook and the speed of future easing. With a close vote of 5-4 in favour of a rate reduction, this suggests that the bar for further monetary easing may be higher than previously thought despite the possibility of the CPI rate falling to target in 2026.
- Budget policies and base effects will mechanically reduce the CPI rate in 2026, on top of the downward pressure arising from soft economic growth and the looser labour market. However, many policymakers appear concerned that household and business inflation and pricing expectations are proving sticky following recent bouts of high price and wage growth, which may allow underlying inflationary pressure to remain elevated. While, the Bank's measure of household expectations ticked lower in December, it remains above levels consistent with the 2% target at 3.5%.
- While policymakers hold valid concerns, these appear somewhat out of line with current conditions; CPI inflation fell to 3.2% in November, private sector wage growth continued to ease amid the highest unemployment rate since the pandemic, and the economy contracted in October after barely growing in Q3. Business surveys pointed to marginally stronger activity and pricing intentions in December but also suggested that the pre-Budget malaise was not temporary. These data are the latest in a trend suggesting challenging economic conditions are feeding into price and wage setting.
- Risks to the growth and inflation outlook lie to the downside, which may ultimately deliver lower Bank Rate than our central case. However, the minutes suggest that the bar to further rate cuts beyond 3.25% is higher and the near-term upside risks to our Bank Rate forecast have increased. Having said that, we believe inflation expectations will naturally decline alongside headline inflation rates.
- Investors appear to have given the UK government some breathing space following the Budget, with long-term yields continuing to trade at slightly lower levels than in late summer/early autumn. Even so, sustained heavy borrowing across advanced economies, the DMO's move towards issuing more short-dated gilts and lingering doubts about the government's fiscal plans will keep short to medium yields above the levels implied by interest rate expectations alone.

Forecast:

- In line with our long-held forecast, Bank Rate was cut to 3.75% in December.
- Continuing disinflation, rising unemployment, softening wage growth and low confidence suggests that monetary policy will continue to be loosened.
- Arlingclose expects Bank Rate to be cut to 3.25% by middle of 2026. However, near-term upside risks to the forecast have increased.
- Medium and long-term gilt yields continue to incorporate premia for UK government credibility, global uncertainty and significant issuance. These issues may not be resolved quickly and we expect yields to remain higher.

	Current	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27	Mar-28	Jun-28	Sep-28	Dec-28
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Central Case	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
3-month money market rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
Central Case	3.82	3.55	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.35	3.35	3.35
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50	-0.50
5yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
Central Case	3.96	3.85	3.80	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.80	3.80	3.80
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.70	-0.80	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85
10yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
Central Case	4.52	4.40	4.35	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.30	4.35	4.35	4.35
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.70	-0.80	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85
20yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
Central Case	5.16	5.00	4.95	4.90	4.90	4.90	4.90	4.90	4.90	4.90	4.95	4.95	4.95
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.70	-0.80	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85
50yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.60	0.65	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70	0.70
Central Case	4.74	4.65	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.60	4.65	4.65	4.65
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.70	-0.80	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85	-0.85

Department Standard Rate = Gilt yield + 1.00%
National Wealth Fund (NWF) Rate = Gilt yield + 0.40%

Appendix B – Existing Investment & Debt Portfolio Position

	31/12/25 Actual portfolio £m	31/12/25 Average rate %
External borrowing:		
Government Loans Fund	59.3	
Local authorities	7.0	
Total gross external debt*	**66.3**	**4.7%**
Treasury investments:		
Banks (unsecured)	1.5	
Money market funds	8.2	
Total treasury investments	**9.7**	**3.8%**
Net debt	**56.6**	

Leases of c.£0.9m held in addition to above

Appendix C - Additional requirements of the Government Investment Guidance

Specified investments: The DoE Guidance defines specified investments as those:

- denominated in pound sterling,
- due to be repaid within 12 months of arrangement,
- not defined as capital expenditure by legislation, and
- invested with one of:
    - the UK Government,
    - a UK local authority, parish council or community council, or
    - a body or investment scheme of "high credit rating", and
- where the principal sum to be repaid at maturity is the same as the initial sum invested, other than investments in the UK Government.

The Council defines "high credit rating" organisations and securities as those having a credit rating of A- or higher that are domiciled in the UK or a foreign country with a sovereign rating of AA+ or higher. For money market funds and other pooled funds "high credit rating" is defined as those having a credit rating of A- or higher.

Non-specified Investments: Any investment not meeting the definition of a specified investment is classed as non-specified. The Council does not intend to make any investments denominated in foreign currencies, nor any that are defined as capital expenditure by legislation, such as unlisted bonds and shares. Non-specified investments will therefore be limited to long-term investments, i.e. those that are due to mature 12 months or longer from the date of arrangement; investments with bodies and schemes without high credit ratings; and investments where the principal sum to be repaid at maturity is not the same as the initial sum invested, for example corporate bonds. Limits on non-specified investments are shown in table C1 below.

Table C1: Non-specified investment limits

	Cash limit
Total long-term investments	£1m
Total investments without credit ratings or rated below A- (except UK Government and local authorities)	£2m
Total investments (except pooled funds) with institutions domiciled in foreign countries rated below AA+	£1m
Total investments where the principal amount varies (other than those with the UK Government)	£1m
Total non-specified investments	£5m

Investment training: The needs of the Council's treasury management staff for training in investment management are assessed annually and additionally when the responsibilities of individual members of staff change.

Staff regularly attend training courses, seminars and conferences provided by Arlingclose and CIPFA. Relevant staff are also encouraged to study appropriate professional qualifications.

Investment advisers: The Council has appointed Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers and receives specific advice on investment, debt and capital finance issues.

Investment of money borrowed in advance of need: The Council may, from time to time, borrow in advance of need, where this is expected to provide the best long-term value for money. Since amounts borrowed will be invested until spent, the Council is aware that it will be exposed to the risk of loss of the borrowed sums, and the risk that investment and borrowing interest rates may change in the intervening period. These risks will be managed as part of the Council's overall management of its treasury risks.

The total amount borrowed will not exceed the authorised borrowing limit of £141.3 million. The maximum period between borrowing and expenditure is expected to be two years, although the Council is not required to link particular loans with particular items of expenditure.

APPENDIX 6

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2026/27

Where the Council finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), although there is no statutory minimum. The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council to have regard to the former Department of Environment's *Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision* (the DoE Guidance) most recently issued in 2011.

The broad aim of the DoE Guidance is to ensure that capital expenditure is financed over a period that is either reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits.

The DoE Guidance requires the Council to approve an Annual MRP Statement each year and provides a number of options for calculating a prudent amount of MRP but does not preclude the use of other appropriate methods. The following statement incorporates options recommended in the Guidance as well as locally determined prudent methods.

MRP is calculated by reference to the capital financing requirement (CFR) which is the total amount of past capital expenditure that has yet to be permanently financed, noting that debt must be repaid and therefore can only be a temporary form of funding. The CFR is calculated from the Council's balance sheet in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Prudential Code for Capital Expenditure in Local Authorities*, 2021 edition.

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April 2012, MRP will be equal to the principal repayments of the associated borrowing.

- For capital expenditure incurred after 31st March 2012, MRP will be determined by charging the expenditure over the expected useful life of the relevant asset as the principal repayment on an annuity with an annual interest rate equal to the average relevant PWLB rate for the year of expenditure, starting in the year after the asset becomes operational. MRP on purchases of freehold land will be charged on a similar basis up to 50 years. MRP on expenditure not related to fixed assets but which has been capitalised by regulation or direction (e.g. public realm schemes) will be charged over an appropriate period.

- For assets acquired by leases or the Private Finance Initiative, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.

- Where former operating leases have been brought onto the balance sheet due to the adoption of the *IFRS 16 Leases* accounting standard, and the asset values have been adjusted for accruals, prepayments, premiums and/or incentives, then the annual MRP charges will be adjusted so that the overall charge for MRP over the life of the lease reflects the value of the right-of-use asset recognised on transition rather than the liability.

Capital expenditure incurred during 2026/27 will not be subject to a MRP charge until 2027/28 or later.

Based on the Council's latest estimate of its capital financing requirement (CFR) on 31st March 2026, the budget for MRP has been set as follows:

	31.03.2026 Estimated CFR £m	2026/27 Estimated MRP £m
Capital expenditure funded from borrowing	108.34	5.84
Leases	1.02	0.10
Expenditure subject to DfC Capitalisation Direction	0.59	0.59
Total	**109.95**	**6.53**

Capital receipts

Proceeds from the sale of capital assets are classed as capital receipts and are typically used to finance new capital expenditure. Where the Council decides instead to use capital receipts to repay debt and hence reduce the CFR, the calculation of MRP will be adjusted as follows:

Capital receipts arising from assets which form an identified part of the Council's MRP calculations will be used to reduce the MRP charge in respect of assets, categories to be determined by the Assistant Director of Finance and Performance, over their remaining useful lives, starting in the year after the receipt is applied.

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 1 DECEMBER 2025

Minute Ref	***Subject***	**Decision**	***Lead Officer***	***Actions taken/ Progress to date***	***Remove from Action Sheet Y/N***
C/189/2025	*Notice of Motion – Water Courses*	The Motion was referred to the Sustainability and Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6	*S Murphy*	*Ongoing*	*N*
C/190/2025	*Notice of Motion – Water Quality*	The Motion was referred to the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6	*C Mallon*	*Ongoing*	*N*

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 12 JANUARY 2026

Minute Ref	***Subject***	**Decision**	***Lead Officer***	***Actions taken/ Progress to date***	***Remove from Action Sheet Y/N***
C/003/2026	*Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 01/12/25*	It was agreed to note the action sheet	*Democratic Services*	*Noted*	*Y*
C/004/2026	*Minutes of Council Meeting held on 01/12/2025*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted	*Democratic Services*	*Agreed*	*Y*

C/005/2026	*Minutes of Special Council held 24/11/2025*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to the amendment.	*Democratic Services*	*Agreed*	*Y*
C/006/2026	*Minutes of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held 08/12/2025*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted	*Democratic Services*	*Agreed*	*Y*
C/007/2026	*Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held 11/12/2025*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted	*Democratic Services*	*Agreed*	*Y*
C/008/2026	*Minutes of Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held 15/12/2025*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted	*Democratic Services*	*Agreed*	*Y*
C/009/2026	*Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held 17/12/2025*	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted	*Democratic Services*	*Agreed*	*Y*
C/010/2026	*Planning Section*	It was agreed that a report would be requested providing details on Judicial Reviews and presented at a future Planning Committee Meeting.	*C Mallon*	*Ongoing*	*N*
C/011/2026	*Correspondence Report*	It was agreed to note the correspondence report *Correspondence from Derry & Strabane District Council regarding their Notice of Motion* It was agreed that Council write to the British Government and, in particular, to the British Justice Secretary, David Lammy MP, to express Council's deep concern regarding the condition and treatment	*Democratic Services* *Democratic Services*	*Noted* *Letters sent*	*Y* *Y*

		of the hunger strikers and to urge the Justice Secretary to engage urgently with their legal representatives to find a resolution before any loss of life occurred. It was also agreed also to write to First and deputy first minister			
		Correspondence from Irish Health Minister regarding NOM CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025) It was agreed to write to the Irish Minister for Health to seek clarity regarding the capacity for the treatment of blood cancer patients from the North and to also write to the Minister for Health within the Executive to request an update on the progress of facilitating treatment in Belfast for these patients, as referenced in his prior correspondence.	*Democratic Services*	*Letters sent*	*Y*
		Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure re NOM – Resurfacing of main A Route between Kilkeel and Newcastle (C/137/2025) It was agreed to decline the meeting with officials and request a meeting with the Infrastructure Minister.	*Democratic Services*	*Letters sent*	*Y*
C/012/2026	*Notice of Motion – Anti-Dumping Initiative – Solar Powered CCTV*	The following Notice of Motion was received from Councillor C King: *This Council recognises the ongoing issue of illegal dumping across our district and the associated environmental, health, and financial costs. We note the recent steps taken by Louth County Council to introduce solar-powered CCTV cameras as part of their anti-dumping strategy and believe similar measures should be explored locally. Therefore, this Council will investigate the feasibility of deploying solar-powered CCTV at known dumping hotspots within Newry, Mourne Down and South Armagh, engage with Louth County*	*S Murphy*	*Referred to S&E*	*Y*

		Council to learn from their approach, and bring forward a report detailing potential locations, costs, funding options, and legal considerations, with a view to implementing this as part of a wider anti-dumping initiative. Furthermore, this Council will write to the DAERA Minister requesting information on all available support and funding for such measures to tackle illegal dumping effectively across the district. **The Motion was referred to the Sustainability & Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**			

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 12 January 2026 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair:	Councillor P Campbell	
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
	Councillor P Byrne	Councillor L Devlin
	Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
	Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
	Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
	Councillor M Hearty	Councillor T Howie
	Councillor J Jackson	Councillor G Kearns
	Councillor A King	Councillor C King
	Councillor M Larkin	Councillor N Lawlor
	Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
	Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
	Councillor D Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
	Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
	Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
	Councillor M Ruane	Councillor D Taylor
	Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young
In attendance via Teams:	Councillor J Brennan	Councillor C Enright
	Councillor M Gibbons	
Officials in attendance:	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive	
	Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism	
	Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Health Communities	
	Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager	
	Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer	

C/001/2026 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Clarke, Howell, Magennis, K Murphy and Tinnelly. An apology was also received from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment.

The Chairperson extended congratulations to Dromintee Minors on their Ulster Championship win on New Year's Day, on behalf of Councillor Larkin, and to St. Monica's Boxing Club on the occasion of its ten-year anniversary, on behalf of Councillor Kearns.

The Chairperson offered his sincere condolences to the family of Mr Bill Donnelly, a member of the Council's Leisure Facilities staff, who had sadly passed away shortly before Christmas.

The Chairperson advised that the Chairperson's Civic Awards had recently been announced and encouraged members of the public and Councillors alike to submit nominations, noting that the awards aimed to be inclusive and to recognise individuals within the community

who volunteered or contributed significantly but may not seek recognition, despite being deserving of it.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Niall Lawlor to the Chamber on the occasion of his first meeting having replaced Leeanne McEvoy.

He also noted that an emergency Notice of Motion had been received, which would be dealt with at the appropriate time during the meeting.

C/002/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

C/003/2026 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2025

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025 was agreed.**

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/004/2026 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2025

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Kearns, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/005/2026 MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2025

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 24 November 2025 (copy circulated).

Councillor Reilly expressed his disappointment that the issues raised by Councillors at a previous Special Council meeting with DFI had not yet received a response, while noting that NI Water had already replied to all queries raised.

Mrs Ward confirmed that Democratic Services had requested a response to the outstanding issues and advised that this would be followed up again.

Councillor Devlin requested that the minutes be amended to refer to the "Marguerite area"

rather than "Marguerite Park," to reflect that the issues affected the wider area.
The Chairperson confirmed that the amendment would be made.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 24 November 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to the above amendment.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/006/2026 **MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 8 December 2025 (copy circulated).

ERT/128/2025: Ulster Fleadh 2026
Councillor Hanna wished to raise a point regarding the above item in the minutes, noting that he would not address financial concerns directly.

The Chairperson advised that any discussion of financial matters would require the meeting to go into a closed session.

Councillor Hanna then advised that he would be discussing financial matters therefore the Chairperson called for a proposer and seconder to go into closed session.

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 D Murphy, 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 Byrne, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

The Chairperson advised that, while in closed session, a discussion had taken place regarding ERT/128/2025, during which Councillor Hanna proposed that the item be referred to the Equality and Good Relations Forum. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Taylor.

The proposal had been put to a show of hands vote, with the results as follows:

FOR	6
AGAINST	30
ABSTENTIONS	0

The Chairperson declared the proposal fallen and confirmed that the minutes, as presented, were agreed.

ERT/123/2025: Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Revitalisation Project
Councillor Byrne requested clarity on the Local Economic Partnership criteria for funding, noting that two businesses in the Crossmaglen area believed that they were ineligible.

Mr Mallon advised that the revitalisation grant did not have specific area-based eligibility and was available to all areas within the District. He noted that work was ongoing to audit vacant and derelict buildings in certain areas, but this did not affect geographical eligibility for the grant.

Councillor Byrne requested that communications regarding the revitalisation project be updated to ensure that no business missed out on funding due to misunderstanding.

Mr Mallon stated that funding was anticipated to be released by May 2026, and that Council was progressing an action plan with newly appointed personnel who would develop application forms and criteria. He advised that all communications would be updated once the new resources were in place.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 8 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/007/2026 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 December 2025 (copy circulated).

SPR/214/2025: Planning Update
Councillor Truesdale noted that a report had been requested on resource implications and queried when it would be tabled, highlighting that she had received numerous calls from applicants concerned about processing times.

Mr Mallon advised that the report related specifically to the Higher-Level Apprenticeship and confirmed that it would be tabled in due course. He noted that there had been three successful candidates, two of whom had accepted the posts and were due to commence prior to the course start date of 27 January 2026.

SPR/193/2025: Recruitment Director: Corporate Services:
Councillor Byrne queried when the role would be advertised, the composition of the assessment panel, and when Members would be advised of these details.

Mrs Ward confirmed that the role would be advertised around the end of January 2026 and that the assessment panel would be arranged through Party Leaders.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor McAteer, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/008/2026 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 15 December 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Jackson, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 15 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/009/2026 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 December 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/141/2025: Christmas and New Year Arrangements – Refuse Collections and Household Recycling Centres

Councillor Lewis queried whether the information regarding alternate collection dates could be clarified for the Slieve Croob area, noting that the area fell outside of the legacy Newry and Down Council areas and was part of the old Ballyward DEA. He stated that some bins had not been presented on the appropriate alternate collection dates as there was confusion as to when the bins would be collected.

Councillor Reilly stated that he had received numerous complaints from residents regarding the provision of information on alternate collection dates and requested that this be addressed. He also raised concerns about motorised vehicles damaging fauna on beaches in Kilkeel, noting that Council was unable to provide deterrents at present and that coastal repairs were subject to weather erosion and funded by ratepayers.

The Chairperson advised that the motorised vehicle issue raised by Councillor Reilly was not on the agenda and therefore could not be discussed.

Mrs Ward advised Councillor Reilly to speak with the Sustainability & Environment Director, who could table the motorised vehicle issue for discussion at a future Committee meeting.

Councillor Reilly expressed his disappointment, stating that this was an opportunity for Council to secure funding for the issues he wished to raise but felt Council was not interested. Mrs Ward suggested that he could share the information with her after the meeting, but Councillor Reilly declined to do so.

Councillor Hanna noted that there had been a lack of bin stickers distributed within the Mournes area, resulting in unclear bin collection arrangements, with some housing estates only partially serviced. He also stated that the pier at Annalong Harbour had partially collapsed into the sea and needed to be addressed.

The Chairperson advised that the pier issue was not on the agenda and should be raised with the relevant officer. Councillor Hanna responded that he had raised his concerns with the relevant officer but that no action had been taken.

Councillor Reilly voiced his objection to not being able to raise concerns at full Council, to which Councillor Campbell reiterated that issues not on the agenda could not be discussed, as per Standing Orders.

Mrs Ward confirmed that a report would be tabled at a future Sustainability & Environment Committee meeting to enable formal discussion of the Christmas and New Year bin collection arrangements.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/010/2026 **PLANNING SECTION**

Councillor Hanna requested a report providing details of Judicial Reviews over the past number of years, noting his belief that a number had been conceded.

Mrs Ward advised that Council acted in accordance with legal advice regarding Judicial Reviews and confirmed that a report would be requested and tabled through the Planning Committee.

Agreed: **It was agreed that a report would be requested providing details on Judicial Reviews and presented at a future Planning Committee Meeting.**

C/011/2026 **CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

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

Correspondence from Derry & Strabane District Council regarding their Notice of Motion

Councillor Hearty welcomed the correspondence from Derry and Strabane District Council regarding their motion, stating that the matter was urgent and important, and expressed the view that similar motions should be considered across Ireland, particularly given Ireland's history with hunger strikes. He emphasised that consideration of the motion should avoid polarisation around wider issues in Gaza and genocide, focusing instead on the specific demands of the hunger strikers.

Councillor Hearty noted that the hunger strikers were not seeking special treatment, release, or dropped charges, but were requesting the fair application of English law, highlighting that one demand was for immediate bail, consistent with existing English custody time limits, and that some individuals had been held on remand for over a year, with further delays expected. He added that another demand concerned the closure of Elbit Systems in England, which he stated was not an exceptional request.

Following an interruption from Councillor Reilly, the Chairperson asked Members to respect their fellow Councillors, the Chair, and the decisions made within the Chamber.

Councillor Hearty continued, stating that the British Government, as a signatory to the Genocide Convention, was legally obliged not to permit the production or supply of materials used in genocide. He reiterated that, in discussing the hunger strikers, the focus should remain on their request for the fair and consistent application of English law. He proposed that this Council echo the sentiments expressed in the correspondence and further proposed that the Council write to the British Government, specifically to the British Justice Secretary, David Lammy MP, to express the Council's deep concern regarding the condition and treatment of the hunger strikers and to urge the Justice Secretary to engage urgently with their legal representatives to find a resolution before any loss of life occurred. This was seconded by Councillor C King.

The Chairperson reminded Members to respect the rules of the Chamber and to make use of the microphone queueing system to ensure an opportunity to speak. He also advised that Members were personally responsible for any statements they made and should respect the views and opinions of others while speaking.

Councillor Byrne confirmed that the SDLP Party would support both the correspondence received and the proposals outlined by Councillor Hearty, noting that Council had consistently demonstrated solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank and stressed that the matter should be considered a human rights issue rather than a political one. He emphasised that the focus should be on protecting life, safeguarding human rights, and ensuring that individuals in state custody had access to appropriate medical care and that their rights were not infringed.

Councillor Byrne welcomed the decision of Derry City and Strabane District Council to write to Councils across the North, encouraging them to contact the Justice Minister and the UK Government. He further proposed that correspondence also be sent to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, noting that pressure should be applied collectively at both local and central government levels. He stated that it was the responsibility of the UK Justice Minister to protect the lives of those in custody, ensure access to medical care, and safeguard their wellbeing.

Councillor Taylor stated that he would not be supporting the proposal and questioned the basis for treating the matter as an emergency motion when it had been tabled on the agenda under the correspondence, expressing his concern that Council would only revisit discussions and restate positions on matters where views were unlikely to change. He commented that the issue under discussion related to events outside the district, while local representatives were experiencing difficulty in having local matters raised and debated, such as Annalong Harbour pier.

Councillor Taylor stated that Council had no authority over the UK Justice Minister and expressed his doubt that any correspondence from the Council would influence decisions at

that level. While acknowledging the right of Councillors to bring forward motions, he reiterated his concern regarding the focus on international issues rather than matters directly affecting the District and concluded by seeking clarification on the procedural basis for the emergency motion.

The Chairperson reiterated that there should be no cross talk within the Chamber and asked Members to be respectful of everyone within the Chamber.

The Chairperson reminded Councillors Hanna and Reilly that the minutes from Committee Meetings were tabled for confirmation and any matters arising from the content within those minutes could be discussed, but that was not as an opportunity to raise new issues that would fall under the remit of a particular Committee. He reminded Members that there was a process should they wish to bring any issues to the attention of Council, to ensure the issue was tabled on the relevant agenda for discussion.

Councillor Reilly stated that he believed that the Chairperson was displaying political bias.

The Chairperson stated that, following Councillor Taylor's request for clarity, it would be at Councillor Hearty's discretion whether to proceed with the Emergency Notice of Motion, which would be considered following a show of hands vote on Councillor Hearty's proposal.

As there was dissent within the Chamber, Councillor Hearty's proposal was put to a show of hands vote, with the results as follows:

FOR	26
AGAINST	6
ABSTENTION	4

The Chairperson declared the proposal passed.

Councillor Hearty stated that he believed the substantive detail within his emergency motion had been agreed and he was therefore content to withdraw his emergency motion.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor C King, that Council write to the British Government and, in particular, to the British Justice Secretary, David Lammy MP, to express Council's deep concern regarding the condition and treatment of the hunger strikers and to urge the Justice Secretary to engage urgently with their legal representatives to find a resolution before any loss of life occurred. It was also agreed also to write to First and deputy first minister**

Correspondence from Irish Health Minister regarding NOM CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025)

Councillor Feehan noted that the correspondence did not address the key point he had hoped to raise, namely facilitating access to treatment from the Irish Department of Health for blood cancer patients in the North. He proposed to write to the Irish Minister for Health to seek clarity regarding capacity for treatment of blood cancer patients from the North and to also write to the Minister for Health within the Executive to request an update on the

progress of facilitating treatment in Belfast for these patients, as referenced in his prior correspondence on the issue.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to write to the Irish Minister for Health to seek clarity regarding the capacity for the treatment of blood cancer patients from the North and to also write to the Minister for Health within the Executive to request an update on the progress of facilitating treatment in Belfast for these patients, as referenced in his prior correspondence.**

Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure re NOM – Resurfacing of main A Route between Kilkeel and Newcastle (C/137/2025)

Councillor Devlin expressed her thanks to officials within DFI with whom she was regularly in contact, commending them for their hard work. She stated, however, that she believed the issue warranted a meeting with the Minister rather than officials, and proposed to respond to the invitation by declining a meeting with officials and requesting a meeting with the Minister. She noted that Members could contact officials at any stage, but emphasised that that this issue was particularly important, as this was a unique road where, in the event of an accident or extreme weather, residents in the Mournes area could be effectively cut off. This was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Councillor Rice requested that any potential meeting be scheduled for the afternoon if possible.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to decline the meeting with officials and request a meeting with the Infrastructure Minister.**

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

- **Correspondence from Derry & Strabane District Council regarding their Notice of Motion.**
- **Correspondence from Irish Health Minister re NOM CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025)**
- **Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM Resurfacing of Main A Route (C/137/2025)**

C/012/2026 **NOTICE OF MOTION – ANTI-DUMPING INITIATIVE – SOLAR POWERED CCTV**

The following Motion was received from Councillor C King:

This Council recognises the ongoing issue of illegal dumping across our district and the associated environmental, health, and financial costs. We note the recent steps taken by Louth County Council to introduce solar-powered CCTV cameras as part of their anti-dumping strategy and believe similar measures should be explored locally. Therefore, this Council will investigate the feasibility of deploying solar-powered CCTV at known dumping hotspots within Newry, Mourne Down and South Armagh, engage with Louth County Council to learn from their approach, and bring forward a report detailing potential locations, costs, funding options, and legal considerations, with a view to implementing this as part of a wider anti-dumping initiative. Furthermore, this Council will write to the DAERA Minister requesting information on all available support and funding for such measures to tackle illegal dumping effectively across the district.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

Agreed: **The Motion was referred to the Sustainability and Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.08pm

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

Signed: _____

Chairperson

_____

Chief Executive

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 19 January 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson:	Councillor O Hanlon	
Committee Members in attendance:	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor G Hanna
	Councillor V Harte	Councillor G Kearns
	Councillor S Murphy	Councillor M Ruane
	Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor H Young
Committee Members in attendance via Teams:	Councillor W Clarke	Councillor K Feehan
	Councillor G Galbraith	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
	Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Quinn
Non-Committee Members In attendance via Teams:	Councillor D Finn	Councillor D McAteer
Officials in attendance:	Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism	
	Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism	
	Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration	
	Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer	
Officials in attendance via Teams:	Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer	

ERT/001/2026 **APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

As both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were unable to attend the Committee in person, Councillor Hanlon assumed the role of Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Hanlon offered condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Mickey Brady, former MP for Newry and Armagh who died recently.

Condolences were also offered to Councillor Magennis on the recent passing of her father, and it was agreed to send a letter of condolence to her family.

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/002/2026 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Tinnelly declared an interest in Item 9 – Warrenpoint Pontoon and Breakwater, and requested a dispensation to speak on the matter given its importance.

Councillor Hanlon and Mr Mallon advised that it was for the Member to declare any interest, and Councillor Hanlon read the relevant opening remarks regarding declarations of interest for clarity. Councillor Tinnelly confirmed his declaration of interest in item 9 on the agenda.

ERT/003/2026 **ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING OF MONDAY 8 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 8 December 2025 **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/124/2025 - Belfast City & Region Place Partnership
ERT/126/2025 - St Patrick's Day 2026 SLAs
ERT/127/2025 - Delamont Caravan Park & Touring in the Trees Kilbroney Park
In response to a query on the above items from Councillor Andrews, Mr Mallon advised that Belfast City & Region Place Partnership would take place in June and that an update regarding the other items would be brought back to committee in due course.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 8 December 2025.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/004/2026 **OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – FESTIVAL FOR NEWRY CITY (C/173/2025)**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism on Notice of Motion: Festival for Newry City. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Finn welcomed the Council paper and thanked officers for their work. She stated that the motion had arisen from recognising Newry's untapped potential and noted that, while events such as Footsteps in the Forest and Eats and Beats were valuable locally, Newry's cultural offering compared poorly.

She expressed disappointment that the Fireside Stories event had replaced a standalone arts festival for Newry and, given the modest funding involved, considered it unacceptable that the event had been diluted across the district.

Councillor Finn emphasised that Newry was the District's city and should be treated accordingly. She highlighted the need for initiatives that supported local businesses and showcased the city, referencing potential venues including the Albert Basin site, the covered market space, and the canal. She welcomed engagement with the newly formed Canal Regeneration Group. She described Newry as a city rich in natural beauty and artistic talent and welcomed the referral of this work to the Arts Working Group, which she chaired, expressing her commitment to progressing efforts to regenerate and revitalise the city.

Councillor Finn proposed to accept the officers' report and recommendation, with an amendment requesting that a progress update be brought to the Committee within six months.

Councillor Hanlon clarified that Councillor Finn was not a member of the Committee and therefore could not make a proposal.

Councillor Feehan subsequently proposed to accept the officer's recommendation together with the amendment, seconded by Councillor Andrews.

Councillor Young welcomed the motion and, as a member of the Arts Working Group, expressed enthusiasm to begin work on a festival for Newry City.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed that the request for the establishment of a festival for Newry City be tabled for consideration by the Arts Working Group and that a paper is brought back to the Committee within six months to provide an update on progress made.**

ERT/005/2026 **DOWNPATRICK GROWING TOGETHER (GROVE)**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Downpatrick Growing Together (GROVE – Growing Relationships Over Vibrant Environments). **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth reported that, in partnership with the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group, funding had been secured for works at The Grove in Downpatrick. She advised that this had been a Council-led application and that funding had recently been confirmed, with project details outlined in Section 2 of the report. She noted that Appendix 1, a restricted item, contained further information on the funding secured.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the paper and noted that, since 2019, she and Downpatrick DEA colleagues had been meeting with officials to progress the rejuvenation of The Grove, which had become increasingly dilapidated. She stated that the project represented a positive step forward for the area and welcomed the opportunity for full community involvement, adding that she looked forward to its development.

Councillor Andrews described the project as excellent and noted that the programme of work would involve engagement with local groups and organisations.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to accept a Letter of Offer for Downpatrick Growing Together funded via PEACEPLUS 1.2 Empowering Communities, and to approve the implementation of the project including any necessary procurements was also agreed.**

ERT/006/2026 **MAKE IT LOCAL**

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

Mrs Smyth advised that the Make It Local campaign had been running for several years to promote the shop-local message to visitors across the district. She reported that 104 businesses had been profiled since 2021 and that a renewal exercise was now proposed, including an expression of interest to refresh the list and allow additional businesses to participate.

She further advised that approval was sought to procure a consultancy firm to manage the Make It Local campaign for 2026–27. She noted that the campaign was funded by the Council, with external funding pursued where possible.

Councillor Andrews welcomed the paper, describing Make It Local as a good campaign for supporting local shops and businesses.

In response to enquiries from Councillor Young regarding the communication of expressions of interest and assessment criteria, Mrs Smyth advised that expressions of interest had been advertised on all Council social media platforms and that eligibility applied to any business located within town centres across the district.

Councillor Hanna requested a list of all participating businesses, clarification on how businesses had been selected for the most recent campaign, whether representation had been evenly spread across the District, and whether the campaign was retail-focused or open to all sectors.

Mrs Smyth reported that businesses from all towns and villages across the district had participated and that significant effort had been made to recruit businesses to ensure representation from all areas. She noted that businesses were invited to put themselves forward.

Mr Mallon advised that he would gather information on the selection process for the most recent campaign and provide it to Councillor Hanna outside of the meeting.

Mrs Smyth further confirmed that rural businesses were eligible to participate, noting that businesses from rural areas were involved in the Make It Local campaign. She confirmed she would provide Councillor Hanna with a full list of participating businesses and clarified that the campaign was open to all businesses operating within commercial cores and town centres.

Councillor Hanlon encouraged all interested parties to utilise the expression-of-interest process, noting that businesses in Downpatrick and rural areas had benefitted from participation in the Make It Local campaign.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of a creative communications consultancy to engage and support Council with delivery of a Make It Local campaign throughout 2026/27.**

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

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

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

ERT/007/2026 **ERT FACILITY HIRE CHARGES**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding ERT Facility Hire Charges. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- **To approve the updated hire charge fee structure for Caravan / Camping as set out in section 2 of the officer's report.**
- **To approve the updated hire charge fee structure for Circus fees for use of Council / ERT lands, as set out in section 2 of the officer's report.**
- **To approve the updated hire charge fee structure for Down County Museum, Bagenal's Castle, Down Arts Centre and Warrenpoint Town Hall as set out in section 2 and appendix 1 of the officer's report.**

ERT/008/2026 **NEWRY CITY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the following was agreed;**

- **To approve the pilot 2-day music festival in Newry City at Albert Basin site and to enter in discussions on hire of the site for the event;**

- **To approve the financial support for the event as set out in section 4.1 of the officer's report, subject to approval in the 2026/27 budget.**

ERT/009/2026 **WARRENPOINT PONTOON AND BREAKWATER**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Warrenpoint Pontoon & Breakwater License. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- **Approve the removal of the Pontoon at Warrenpoint breakwater;**
- **Progress the provision of access to the water on Carlingford Lough through the Shared Island Project;**
- **Renew the license agreement for pedestrian access to the Breakwater promenade subject to WHA agreeing to carry out the necessary inspections, surveys and repairs to the sheet pile wall.**
- **Continue engagement between Council and all key stakeholders.**

Having declared an interest, Councillor Tinnelly left during the above discussion (6.41pm) and rejoined the meeting at 7.08pm

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

ERT/010/2026 **NEWRY BID REVOTE 2026**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Newry Business Improvement District (BID) – Revote Business Plan – 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Hanna, the following was agreed;**

- **To note the receipt of the Business Plan for the Newry BID renewal for period 2025-2031**
- **To note the issue of the ballot notice to Newry BID by the 29th January 2026.**
- **The appointment of the named organisation with the procurement and cost met by Newry BID.**

FOR NOTING

ERT/011/2026 **PLANNING FILE MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION**

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding Planning File Management and Retention Extension to Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to note the extension of the current contract, under the EPSO framework, with Iron Mountain UK Ltd for a further 12 months, from 16 January 2026 to 15 January 2027.**

ERT/012/2026 **RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Harte, the update on the 2025/26 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme was noted.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.14pm.

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

Signed: **Councillor D Lee-Surginor**
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

_____

Signed: **Conor Mallon**
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

_____

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 22 January 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon

In Attendance in Chamber:
Councillor P Byrne, Councillor T Howie
Councillor A King, Councillor C King
Councillor A Mathers, Councillor D McAteer
Councillor S O'Hare, Councillor M Rice

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:
Councillor M Hearty, Councillor R Howell
Councillor A Lewis, Councillor H Reilly
Councillor D Taylor

Non-Committee Members In Attendance: Councillor T Andrews

Non-Committee Members In Attendance via Teams: Councillor C Bowsie

Officials in Attendance in Chamber:
Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital & Procurement
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mrs V Keegan, Assistant Director of Digital & Communications
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms A Robb, Assistant Director of Healthy Communities
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in Attendance Via Teams: Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Health Living

SPR/001/2026: **APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS**

There were no apologies.

Councillor Hanlon took the opportunity to welcome Ms E. Kirk to her new post as Assistant Director of People and Legal.

SPR/002/2026: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/003/2026: **ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 11 December 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

SPR/213/2025 – Planning update
In response to an enquiry from Councillor Reilly regarding the above item, Mr McGilly advised that officers were aware of the issues raised and a response from NI Water was awaited.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 December 2025.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/004/2026: **REGIONAL INNOVATION HUB QUB MOU**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Regional Innovation Hub, QUB MoU. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon presented the report and advised that approval was sought for the recommendations at section 3.1, relating to the proposed signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Queen's University in respect of the Regional Innovation Hub, a key pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

Councillor Byrne asked whether the MOU would provide scope for the Council to work more closely with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). Mr Mallon confirmed that opportunities existed through Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), the strategic alliance with Louth, BRCD and any future partnership with Queen's University as its collaboration with DkIT developed.

In response to a query from Councillor McAteer regarding broadening engagement to include institutions such as Dublin City University, Mr Mallon advised that DCU was already a DBEC partner, working closely with Queen's University and maintaining partnerships and MOUs with universities across the island.

Councillor McAteer also sought clarification on the potential impact of the Judicial Review relating to the Newry Civic and Regional Hub. Mr Mallon advised that the Council was not in a position to comment on the Judicial Review, which was scheduled to be heard in March 2026.

Councillor Reilly highlighted the extensive collaborative work between the East Border Region and several universities in the field of life sciences and suggested that engagement be explored.

Councillor Reilly further expressed concern regarding the proposed location of the Regional

Innovation Hub within the Newry Civic and Regional Hub, given the possibility that the project might not receive approval to proceed, and suggested that a contingency location be identified.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to note the update on the development of a Regional Innovation Hub and approve the establishment of a MoU with Queen's University to promote further co-operation and collaboration between Queen's and NMDDC.**

SPR/005/2026: **DFI GREENWAYS OFFER OF FUNDING**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding DFI Greenways Offer of Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon outlined the report and advised that approval was sought for 50% match funding, with the remaining 50% to be provided by Department for Infrastructure (DfI) as set out in section 4.1. He confirmed that approval was also sought to accept the DfI Letter of Offer and the Business Case, and to appoint consultants from the Belfast City Deal Framework to undertake feasibility and design work for the three Greenways.

Councillor King proposed to accept the officer's recommendation, noting that Greenways were a valuable asset for the District and referred to the success of the Newry to Omeath Greenway.

Councillor Howie seconded the proposal stating that Greenways encouraged and promoted green spaces and emphasised the importance of community engagement.

Councillor McAteer also welcomed the report, highlighting the tourism benefits and wider opportunities associated with Greenways.

In response to a query from Councillor Byrne regarding whether the £90,000 represented additional capital, Mr Mallon confirmed that it did not and advised that, if approved, the project would be added to the capital programme.

Councillor Bowsie expressed support for Greenways but raised an issue regarding a footpath between Crossgar and Saintfield. Councillor Hanlon advised that this matter was not on the agenda and should be raised with officers outside the meeting.

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly regarding the definition of a Greenway, Mr Mallon advised that DfI defined Greenways as strategic routes providing safe off-road walking and cycling opportunities as part of a wider active travel network linking communities, workplaces and leisure facilities.

Councillor Hanlon requested that this definition be circulated to all Members.

Councillor Bowsie referred to the proposed Ballynahinch Spur Greenway, noting that the Ballynahinch bypass would run through the old railway corridor and that early engagement with the DfI design team would therefore be required.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Howie, the following was agreed:**

- **That Council approve capital match funding for this project with a contribution over 2 years including as set out in section 4.1.**
- **That Council accept the DFI Letter of Offer for the 3 projects: Newry to Poyntzpass Greenway (Newry Canal Towpath), Downpatrick to Ardglass Greenway and Ballynahinch Spur Greenway (Saintfield to Ballynahinch).**
- **That Council approve the Business Case (attached), to appoint consultants from the Belfast City Deal Framework to look at the feasibility & design work for the 3 Greenways.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Rice, 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 Howie, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

SPR/006/2026: **DAERA FUNDING – AIR QUALITY MONITORING EQUIPMENT**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, presented by Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, regarding DAERA funding for air quality equipment. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to note the report and approve the procurement and installation of the additional air quality monitor.**

Councillor Andrews joined the meeting during above item – 6:30pm

SPR/007/2026: **CARLINGFORD GREENWAY FINAL FUNDING APPROVAL**

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding Carlingford Lough Greenway Northern Section 3 Final Funding Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, that Council note the Final Letter of Offer available to the project from the EU Interreg Programme, DFI Active Travel Blue / Green Fund and the Shared Islands Fund; and the Final agreed Business Case for the Project works on the Northern Section.**

SPR/008/2026: **DONARD PARK WORKS**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding Donard Park Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Howie, to approve the appointment of contractors for the installation of automated barriers and lighting infrastructure at Donard Park in line with Council procurement policies; and the required capital budget for delivery of the works as set out in the officer's report.**

SPR/009/2026: **LEISURE CENTRE CAPITAL WORKS**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities, presented by Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Healthy Living regarding Leisure Centre Capital Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to proceed with the capital works in line with Council procurement policies and approve the required capital budget for delivery of the works as set out in the officer's report.**

SPR/010/2026: **ANNALONG COMMUNITY CENTRE – CONTRACTOR PROCUREMENT AND APPOINTMENT**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Services, regarding Community Centre Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Reilly, to procure and appoint a contractor to undertake the required works as outlined in the officer's report.**

SPR/011/2026: **KILKEEL TOWN HALL**

Read: Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects, regarding Disposal of Kilkeel Town Hall. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, to defer this item to be tabled at a future Committee meeting.**

SPR/012/2026: **COLLECTING TOGETHER: COMMUNITIES AS CURATORS PROJECT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Collecting Together: Communities as Curators Project. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to approve:**

- **The Letter of Offer from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for its Collecting Together: Communities as Curators project**
- **The recruitment of a funded part-time project officer to support the project.**
- **The implementation of the project including any necessary procurements.**

SPR/013/2026: **PEACEPLUS STAFF RECRUITMENT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding PEACEPLUS Staff Recruitment. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, to approve, under the ERT Department, AONB and Geo Park Structure, the creation of an additional post and associated recruitment for one FTE staff resource to deliver the associated PeatPlus project actions.**

SPR/014/2026: **LEASE OF THE GENERATOR HOUSE, NEWCASTLE HARBOUR**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Lease of the Generator House, Newcastle Harbour. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to extend the term of the lease as outlined in the officer's report to 33 years from 1st September 2023, subject to Departmental Consent.**

SPR/015/2026: **RENEWAL OF LEASE FOR CAR PARK AT GREENBANK, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Lease of Car Park at Greenbank Industrial Estate, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to enter into a further lease of the Lands with the party named for a term of 3 years subject to the rent set out in the officer's report.**

SPR/016/2026: **SURRENDER OF LEASE AT MAIN AVENUE, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Surrender of Lease of lands at Main Avenue, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to permit the Club named in the officer's report to surrender the sub-lease in respect of the Lands at Main Avenue, Newry.**

SPR/017/2026: **ACQUISITION OF LAND AT CAMLOUGH LAKE**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Proposed Acquisition of Land adjacent to Camlough Lake. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to purchase the Lands shown on Map 2 outlined in green from the Private Landowner referred to in the officer's report at the purchase values quoted, subject to retention of right of way.**

SPR/018/2026: **EXTENSION OF IT CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance and Performance, regarding Finance & Performance – IT Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to extend the current contract for Performance Management System for a one-year license period; and to recontract the Purchase to Pay system via the G-Cloud for a 2-year license period.**

SPR/019/2026: **CAPITAL WORKS DUNLEATH PARK**

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Healthy Living, regarding Capital Works Dunleath Park. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor A King, to approve the submission of a grant funding application; the required Council match-funding; and the appointment of a contractor for the delivery of Capital Works at Dunleath Park as set out in the officer's report.**

SPR/020/2026: **KILBRONEY CAFÉ AND CASTLEWELLAN FOREST PARK**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Synge and Byrne Abbey Limited Agreements for Kilbroney Café and Castlewellan Forest Park. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Rice, to grant a Deed of Variation and Novation Agreement in relation to Kilbroney Café and Castlewellan Forest Park and to agree the proposed repayment plan.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Rice that the Chief Executive contact all Members of Council to advise agreement had been sought and given at SPR Committee held on 22 January 2026 and if full agreement from all Members is forthcoming the Chief Executive can proceed to engage with the company.

FOR NOTING

SPR/021/2026: **STATUTORY REPORTING - SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Statutory reporting - Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

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

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.10pm.

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

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**
Chairperson

Signed: **Marie Ward**
Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2026

Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 26 January 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers, Downshire Civic Centre

Chairperson: Councillor C Bowsie

In attendance in Chamber:
Councillor J Brennan
Councillor J Jackson
Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor A Mathers
Councillor K Murphy
Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor A King
Councillor Lee-Surginor
Councillor D Murphy

Committee Members in attendance (via Teams):
Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor R Howell

Officials in Chamber:
Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development
Mr D Telford, Communications and Marketing Officer
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance (via Teams): Ms M Flynn, Head of Engagement

AHC/001/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Finn and Magennis.

Councillor Bowsie requested that all Members of the Committee ensure their cameras remained switched on for the duration of the meeting to enable full engagement.

AHC/001/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AHC/003/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2025

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 15 December 2025. **(Copy circulated)**.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 15 December 2025.**

AHC/004/2026: **DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUM UPDATE**

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

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

- **Crotlieve DEA Forum Meeting held 9 December 2025**
- **Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting held 9 December 2025**
- **Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 9 December 2025**
- **Slieve Croob DEA Forum Meeting held on 9 December 2025**
- **Rowallane DEA Forum Meeting held on 9 December 2025**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following items, which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

AHC/005/2026: **LEASING OF COUNCIL LAND AND FACILITIES**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Development, regarding Leasing of Council Land and Facilities. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to progress the request to lease Council lands at Meigh Community Centre through the Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy.**

AHC/006/2026: PROCUREMENT FOR PCSP CONTRACTED SERVICES

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Development, regarding Procurement for PCSP Contracted Services. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to approve the procurement for PCSP Contracted Services for 2026/27 as detailed within the Officer's Report.**

AHC/007/2026: USAGE AGREEMENT FOR AHC FACILITY

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living, regarding Usage Agreement for AHC Facility. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to approve the sporting clubs sole use of the Council facility for the duration of their development works until March 2027, subject to agreed terms and periodic review.**

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

AHC/008/2026: GOOD RELATIONS ACTION PLAN 2026-27

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Development, regarding Good Relations Action Plan 2026-27. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the report and the attached draft of the NMDDC Good Relations Action Plan for 2026/27.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.16pm.

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

Signed: **Councillor C Bowsie**
Chairperson

Signed: **Andrew Patterson**
Director Active and Healthy Communities

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2025

Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 28 January 2026 at 6pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

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

SE/001/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, Magennis and K Murphy.

SE/002/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/003/2026: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2025

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 December 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 December 2025.

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Reilly, 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 Ruane, seconded by Councillor Reilly, 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/004/2026: **BUSINESS CASE FOR FUEL CARDS**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Business Case for the use of fuel cards. (**Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Reilly, to approve the business case for the procurement of a contract to facilitate the use of the fuel cards across the entire district.**

SE/005/2026: **BUSINESS CASE FOR SMALL EV VAN**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Fleet Procurement Programme 2025-26. (**Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Feehan, to approve the Business case as outlined in Appendix 1 of the officer's report for the purchase of a small BEV Van.**

Councillor Larkin joined the meeting during above discussion – 6.08pm.

SE/006/2026: **FACILITIES MANAGEMENT CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Facilities Management Contract. (**Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Larkin, to note the content of the report and approve the contract modification as detailed in section 2 of the officer's report.**

SE/007/2026: **PROCUREMENT OF SPECIALIST SERVICES**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Procurement of Specialist Services. (**Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor Young, to approve the procurement of specialist services for radiochemical analysis for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, facilitated by Fermanagh & Omagh District Council for a 3-year period.**

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

SE/008/2026: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN – 29 JANUARY 2026**

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting In-Committee Minutes Of Thursday 30 October 2025 & Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin Held On 2 December 2025. (**Copy circulated)**

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

FOR NOTING

SE/009/2025: **REFUSE CHRISTMAS COLLECTIONS UPDATE**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Refuse Collections Update. (**Copy circulated)**

Councillor Reilly thanked Mrs Trainor for having addressed concerns regarding refuse collections over the Christmas period prior to the meeting. He nevertheless wished to record his discontent and stressed that lessons needed to be learned for Christmas 2026

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

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.19pm.

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

Signed: **Councillor Martin Hearty**
Deputy Chairperson

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

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	2 February 2026
Subject:	Correspondence to Council
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	**x**	**For noting only**	

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 Minister Givan MLA re NOM Voting at 18** Council received correspondence from Education Minister Givan regarding Notice of Motion Voting at 18.
3.2	**Correspondence from Minister Muir MLA re NOM ReGen Waste Warrenpoint** Council received correspondence from DAERA Minister Muir regarding Notice of Motion ReGen Waste Warrenpoint.
3.3	**Correspondence from Education Authority Chief Executive Richard Pengelly re NOM Voting at 18** Council received correspondence from Education Authority Chief Executive Richard Pengelly regarding Notice of Motion Voting at 18.
4.0	**Resource implications**
4.1	Not applicable.
5.0	**Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)**
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	***Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision***

	Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened	☐
	The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation	☐
5.3	***Proposal initiating consultation*** Consultation will 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	☐
	Consultation period will be 12 weeks	☐
	Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided)	☐
	Rationale:	
6.0	**Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)**	
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed	☐
	If no, please complete the following: The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs	☐
7.0	**Appendices**	
8.0	**Background Documents**	
	None	

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

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www.education-ni.gov.uk

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Marie Ward
Chair of NMDDC

By e-mail:
conor.smyth@nmandd.org
CC: democratic.services@nmandd.org

15 January 2026

COR-0008-2026

Dear Marie

Thank you for your email of 22 December regarding a Notice of Motion received from pupils at St Louis' Grammar School, Kilkeel and the Members' query about how the Department is supporting schools to ensure that young people were informed given the voting age is to be lowered for upcoming elections.

Citizenship education is already a statutory part of the Northern Ireland Curriculum and provides pupils with a range of opportunities to develop political literacy. Embedded across primary and post-primary learning, its aim is to at equip young people with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to engage in democratic life and contribute to inclusive, cohesive communities both locally and globally.

At post-primary level, building on knowledge already embedded at primary level through the Personal Development and Mutal Understanding (PDMU) area of learning, 'Local and Global Citizenship' is delivered through the Learning for Life and Work (LLW) area of learning. It enables pupils to critically explore issues including democracy, participation, diversity, inclusion, prejudice and racism, promoting inclusion and reconciliation, mutual respect, equality and human rights, and social justice and exclusion, through local and global examples. Pupils are also given opportunities to develop their understanding of the role of society and government in safeguarding individual and collective rights in order to promote equality and an awareness of key democratic institutions and their role in promoting inclusion, justice and democracy. Teachers utilise a number of resources to support their delivery of the Northern Ireland Curriculum which can include resources developed by Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment (CCEA).

The UK Government was elected with a manifesto commitment to lower the voting age for reserved elections (which includes all elections in Northern Ireland) to 16. The commitment was not included in the first King's Speech of the new Parliament, but the Government says it still plans to legislate before the next general election. The House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee has recommended that political education in the UK, particularly in England, be

overhauled. It said lowering the voting age is a good opportunity for the development of a new school curriculum for political education in England and to engage new young voters in democracy. The school curriculum for Northern Ireland is a devolved matter, and my Department is already developing a new curriculum framework for Northern Ireland.

The Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Curriculum, published on 3 June 2025, provided a compelling case for comprehensive curriculum reform. My Department responded formally to the review on 9 July 2025.

The Review made a number of recommendations including the rebranding and redesigning of Learning for Life and Work, as well as the need for a new Citizenship, Employability and Personal Development Programme.

In August 2025, I announced the full membership of the Curriculum Taskforce Advisory Committee (TAC). The Committee includes a wealth of experience of curriculum design, classroom practice, evaluation and implementation. They have commenced an ambitious programme of work to develop and design a new curriculum framework, addressing key recommendations from the review.

Throughout this process, the TAC will be supported by a series of subject working groups made up of local teachers and subject specialists that will develop relevant capabilities and content, linked to specific curricular strands and subjects.

A draft curriculum framework will be issued for public consultation by spring 2026. Implementation of the new curriculum will be phased from September 2027.
In June 2025, I also met with officials from the Electoral Commission Northern Ireland and discussed how my Department can assist with raising awareness of any future information regarding the proposed lowering of voting age.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

From the Office of the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
An Roinn Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe
Depairtment o' Fairmin, Environment an' Kintra Matthers
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Our Ref: INV-0006-2026
Date: 20 January 2026

Dear Marie

MEETING TO DISCUSS REGEN WASTE STORAGE OPERATION AT WARRENPOINT.

Thank you for your correspondence of 5th January 2026, again requesting a meeting to discuss ReGen waste storage operation at Warrenpoint.

As advised in my previous correspondence of the 14th November, I am conscious of the regulatory responsibility of the NIEA in monitoring and assessing complaints regarding odour from the above site, and any subsequent enforcement action which may, or may not be necessary, as determined by that on-going assessment.

I am also aware that the NIEA holds regular meetings with the Environmental Health team from NMDDC, given their related statutory responsibility under the Clean Neighbourhoods Act (NI) 2011 in assessing statutory nuisance.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with both the Chair and the Chief Executive of Council. I believe this approach would be helpful at this time in understanding any broader concerns.

Please let me know if you would agree to that approach. If so, my Diary Manager, Lauri Hutton, will contact you in due course to make the necessary arrangements

Yours sincerely

ANDREW MUIR MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

If you are deaf or have a hearing difficulty you can contact the Department via the Next Generation Text Relay Service by dialling 18001 + telephone number.

INVESTORS IN PEOPLE
We invest in people Standard

Our Ref: CEO 2-01-26

26 January 2026

Issued via Email:
Marie Ward
democratic.services@nmandd.org

Dear Marie

Notice of Motion – Young People Need to Be Better Prepared Before Voting At 18

I refer to your correspondence dated 5 January relating to the above Notice of Motion, received from pupils from St Louis' Grammar School, Kilkeel.

I would be pleased to assist the Council by drawing this initiative to the attention of post-primary and special schools in the area through the three Area Learning Communities, and by encouraging their engagement. Participation, however, will remain at the discretion of individual schools.

Thank you for bringing the Motion to our attention.

Yours sincerely

RICHARD PENGELLY CB
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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