

## **NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Ref: NMD/C/

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### **Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 7 September 2026 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

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**In the Chair:** Councillor G Hanna

**In attendance in Chamber:**

|                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Councillor T Andrews      | Councillor C Bowsie    |
| Councillor J Brennan      | Councillor P Byrne     |
| Councillor P Campbell     | Councillor L Devlin    |
| Councillor K Feehan       | Councillor C Galbraith |
| Councillor V Harte        | Councillor M Hearty    |
| Councillor J Jackson      | Councillor G Kearns    |
| Councillor A King         | Councillor N Lawlor    |
| Councillor D Lee-Surginor | Councillor A Lewis     |
| Councillor A Mathers      | Councillor D Murphy    |
| Councillor K Murphy       | Councillor S Murphy    |
| Councillor A Quinn        | Councillor M Rice      |
| Councillor M Ruane        | Councillor J Tinnelly  |

**In attendance via Teams:**

|                        |                     |
|------------------------|---------------------|
| Councillor C Enright   | Councillor O Hanlon |
| Councillor R Howell    | Councillor C King   |
| Councillor M Larkin    | Councillor S O'Hare |
| Councillor H Reilly    | Councillor D Taylor |
| Councillor J Truesdale |                     |

**Officials in attendance:** Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive  
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism  
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment  
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities  
Mrs A Jones, Director of Corporate Services  
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal  
Ms D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer  
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

### **C/113/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Finn, Howie, Magennis, McAteer and Young.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Reilly who had joined the meeting online after being in hospital.

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

- Skiffie Festival
- The Ulster Scots
- Downpatrick Cricket Club
- Violence against Women and Girls events including one in Craigavon
- Launch of the redevelopment of Irish Street, Downpatrick
- Retail NI High Street Heroes in Annalong and Newry
- Heart O' Down Pipe Band and Drum Major Championships Heroes
- Kilkeel Leisure Centre
- Reception Garden party at Thiepval Barracks, Lisburn
- The Mourne Chamber of Festival Music at Newcastle Cinema
- New Accessible Pathway at Dunleath Park
- Cruise ship at Warrenpoint
- Eats and Beats, Newcastle

The Chairperson took the opportunity to mention that he had met that morning with the Newry Canal Working Group and how the project was moving well and it was hoped something would be done for the development of the Canal if funding could be sourced.

**C/114/2026:                      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/115/2026:                      ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON 3 AUGUST 2026**

Read:                                      Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 3 August 2026.  
(Copy circulated)

**Agreed:**                                      **On the proposal of Councillor D Murphy,  
seconded by Councillor Andrews, the Action  
Sheet from Council Meeting held on 3 August  
2026 was agreed.**

**COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION**

**C/116/2026:                      MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 AUGUST  
2026**

Read:                                      Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 August 2026 (copy  
circulated).

**Agreed:**                                      **On the proposal of Councillor Campbell,  
seconded by Councillor K Murphy, the Minutes of  
the Council Meeting held on 3 August 2026 were  
agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

**C/117/2026: MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 AUGUST 2026**

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 24 August 2026 (copy circulated).

**Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Jackson, the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 24 August 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to an amendment to the attendance list.**

**COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION**

**C/118/2026 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 30 JULY 2026**

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 30 July 2026 (**copy circulated**).

**Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Devlin, the Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 30 July 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

**C/119/2026 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 AUGUST 2026**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2026 (**copy circulated**).

**ERT/079/2026 – FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 1.1 & 2**

Councillor Lewis enquired as to when the letters of offer would be issued to which Mr Mallon confirmed that would be once the minutes were approved by Council and following the 5 day call in period.

**Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 August 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

The Chief Executive advised an error had been made on the information the Chairperson had read out when resuming open session at the Committee Meeting.

For the purposes of correcting the recording Mrs Jones outlined that it should read as follows:

**ITEM 18 – REQUEST FOR EASEMENT AT LIGHTHOUSE CAR PARK CASTLEWELLAN**

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Aurla King, it was agreed to grant an easement for electricity cables under that portion of the Council facility known as The Lighthouse Road Car Park, Castlewellan as shown by a green line on the map attached to the officer's report to the adjoining Landowner for market value consideration, subject to payment of Council's legal and valuation costs.

**ITEM 19 – LICENSE FOR PORTION OF BURREN VILLAGE GREEN**

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to grant a licence of Burren Village Green as shown outlined in yellow on the map attached, to the group named in the officer's report for a term of 5 years at a peppercorn licence fee, subject to Departmental Consent.

**SPR/111/2026 – OFFICERS REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – ALL ISLAND CITIZEN ASSEMBLY**

Councillor Bowsie voiced his opposition to the recommendation and decision of the Committee for an All-Island Citizen Assembly. He stated all political parties had the right to fight for their political aspirations but that it was not okay to ask Council officers to engage in plans for Irish unity. He further commented that Council management should step in as it was outside the remit of local government and Council staff and that the focus should be on Council services.

Councillor Quinn responded by stating it had been well recorded at the Committee meeting that these issues were DUP's point of view and that she did not think it was necessary to drag up issues that had already been addressed at that meeting.

Councillor Bowsie pointed out the recommendation was asking Council officers to engage in politically motivated research and that this was something Council officers should not be doing, they should be focusing on leisure services, waste collection etc.

For clarity Councillor Byrne pointed out the matter had been discussed at length at Committee and it had been made clear Council that officials were not being asked to go out and carry out any politically charged work and to raise the issue again after the full discussion that had taken place was political point scoring. He added forums were used to gather the views of the Council and District and allowed everyone to share their views, whether that was unity, a stronger union or neither, and asking for views on different services such as duplication of services and the New Ireland Working Group would thrash

out the questions for the people of the District. He asked that all councillors engage in the New Ireland Working Group as SDLP and Sinn Féin engaged in the New Ulster Scots British Working Group because it was important to reach out on both sides.

Councillor Reilly spoke in agreement with Councillor Bowsie stating it was clearly a political project that Council should not be undertaking, and to compare it with the Ulster Scots British tradition was unreasonable as the latter was purely cultural. He said he was astonished with the officers' report as he felt it was controversial because 25% of the District had no affinity with Irish republicanism whatsoever yet rate money was going to be used to prepare a report that diminished their place in the United Kingdom and their national identity.

Councillor Reilly enquired about an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) that had not yet been carried out, commenting that it was akin to putting the cart before the horse to allow this to go ahead and then do an EQIA.

Councillor Taylor spoke in support of Councillor Bowsie and Councillor Reilly regarding the subject and how it was a heavily political project. He voiced disappointment at Councillor Byrnes comments regarding the Ulster Scots Committee as he believed that the two were not the same as there was nothing political about Ulster Scots as it was about the promotion and protection of cultural rights within the District.

Councillor Taylor pointed out that the motion had the real prospect of alienating the unionist community and creating the perception that Council was a cold house for the unionist community. He added Council should be focusing on local issues instead of trying to pursue constitutional political agendas.

Councillor Quinn responded by saying she would not rehash what had already been discussed at the Committee meeting. She pointed out she had been elected on a mandate, and the idea of a constitutional future was because young people were being frozen out of homes, out of jobs, immigrating and could not see a future at the minute. They needed access to proper healthcare, housing and education instead of having a two-tiered system whereby people who lived in South Armagh had a lower life expectancy than someone that lived in Dundalk. She added the whole idea was to help plan and prepare for the future because a referendum was coming and whatever the outcome was entirely up to the people and Council needed to plan for it.

Councillor Quinn stated that if Members had an issue with the constitutional question or had facts that represented a different agenda then they should come to the New Ireland Working Group to discuss these. She added she was happy to speak to anyone who had information that was going to improve the current situation.

In response to the point raised by Councillor Reilly regarding the EQIA, the Chief Executive pointed out an EQIA would be carried following a decision by Council, and one would not be completed prior to a decision being reached.

Councillor Bowsie proposed not to support the recommendation of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, seconded by Councillor Lewis.

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

|                     |           |
|---------------------|-----------|
| <b>FOR:</b>         | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>AGAINST:</b>     | <b>26</b> |
| <b>ABSTENTIONS:</b> | <b>2</b>  |

The Chairperson declared the proposal lost.

#### SPR/112/2026 – BRCD TOURISM PROJECT PROGRAMME

Councillor Tinnelly voiced his concern regarding the establishment of a project board commenting it was a premature exercise at this stage. He made reference to an MLA having said that the money for the project was no longer available and asked the Chief Executive and/or Director leading the project whether that was the case.

Councillor Tinnelly stated he was passionate about the potential project because Kilbroney was involved and spoke of how Kilbroney Park was unique within the District. He said he was raising concerns that should the money be unavailable then Council were being sent on wild goose chase which would be unacceptable because there had been no accountability on the Gondola project.

The Chief Executive said she could not comment on any MLA statement, however she confirmed that it had been reported clearly and openly through Council that all BRCD partners were in support of the development of the project and that officers would be working towards the outline business case stage for the purposes of securing the money. She added it had been very clear from all political party levels, including the Executive, that they wished to see the money stay within the District and that was what officers were trying to ensure with the outline business case.

The Chief Executive added that the purpose of having a project board was to ensure that all Elected Members were kept informed of progress and issues, and also that they were to help officers deliver on the outline business case. She confirmed that the establishment of a project board was also to ensure governance was managed appropriately.

She added that as far as the proposal for the Gateway to the Mourne, Council had responded on the RSK report and whilst it was not an agenda item, the Gateway Project had been discussed within the chamber, the National Trust had met with Members at Council and that Members had agreed to a memorandum of understanding signed with the National Trust following the RSK report. She confirmed that it had been clear that the National Trust had been involved in the development of the project and the work had been stopped by the National Trust, which the Trust themselves had confirmed with Members at the Special Council meeting.

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Agreed:</b> | <b>On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 August 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.</b> |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**C/121/2026**

**MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 AUGUST 2026**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

**AHC/058/2025 – OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – ADDITIONAL  
TRAINING PROVISION FOR GAELIC GAMES**

Councillor Tinnelly noted that while he had been in attendance at the meeting, he had missed the discussion on the above item. He voiced his disbelief at the contents of the officer's report and questioned why there had been no mention of the Kilbroney Park project and requested an update on the project.

Mr Patterson advised the report presented to Committee was a summary report with an appendix listing various capital projects and projects that were being worked on. He advised that it was not a comprehensive list of all projects that were being developed. He confirmed that work was ongoing on the Kilbroney project, with surveys having taken place over the summer months as some were seasonal and officers were awaiting that information to be compiled by the consultancy team, which would then be presented to the capital team and then submitted through to planning for further consideration.

Mr Patterson further advised a meeting would be held with DEA councillors later in the month to provide an update to that effect.

**Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17 August 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

**C/122/2026**

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 AUGUST 2026**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 August 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

**Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Hearty, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 August 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

**C/123/2026**

**MINUTES OF SPECIAL STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 AUGUST 2026**

Read: Minutes of Special Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 27 August 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

**Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Mathers, the Minutes of Sustainability and**

**Environment Committee Meeting held on 27 August 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**  
**CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

**C/124/2026:**

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

The Chief Executive advised that any Members wishing to attend the NILGA Conference scheduled for 8 October 2026 to contact Democratic Services as soon as possible.

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

- **Correspondence from NILGA re: Conference scheduled for 8 October 2026 – Members to contact Democratic Services if they wish to attend.**

**C/125/2026:      NOTICE OF MOTION – PUBLIC DRINKING LAWS**

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Trusdale:

"That this Council supports proposed changes to public drinking laws that would grant officials the authority to request the surrender of alcoholic beverages in designated public areas.

This forms part of a broader initiative led by the Stormont Department for Communities and the Department of Justice to modernize legislation addressing anti-social behaviour and alcohol consumption in public spaces.

Under the proposed amendments to the Criminal Justice (Northern Ireland) Order 2008, council officers would be empowered to ask individuals to voluntarily surrender alcoholic drinks in areas where public drinking is restricted. While council staff would not have the power to forcibly confiscate alcohol, police officers would retain the authority to enforce surrender and issue fixed penalty notices to those who refuse to comply."

This was seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.46pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 October 2026.

Signed:

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Councillor G Hanna  
Chairperson

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Marie Ward  
Chief Executive

## **NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **RECORDED VOTE**

DATE: 09/09/26. VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre & MS Teams. MEETING: Council.  
 SUBJECT OF VOTE: August SPR Meeting - Councillor Bowsie proposed not to support the recommendation of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, seconded by Councillor Lewis.

| COUNCILLOR     | FOR      | AGAINST   | ABSTAIN  | ABSENT   |
|----------------|----------|-----------|----------|----------|
| T Andrews      |          | Against   |          |          |
| C Bowsie       | For      |           |          |          |
| J Brennan      |          | Against   |          |          |
| P Byrne        |          | Against   |          |          |
| P Campbell     |          | Against   |          |          |
| W Clarke       |          |           |          | Absent   |
| L Devlin       |          | Against   |          |          |
| C Enright      |          | Against   |          |          |
| K Feehan       |          | Against   |          |          |
| D Finn         |          |           |          | Absent   |
| C Galbraith    |          | Against   |          |          |
| M Gibbons      |          |           |          | Absent   |
| O Hanlon       |          | Against   |          |          |
| G Hanna        | For      |           |          |          |
| V Harte        |          | Against   |          |          |
| M Hearty       |          | Against   |          |          |
| R Howell       |          | Against   |          |          |
| T Howie        |          |           |          | Absent   |
| J Jackson      | For      |           |          |          |
| G Kearns       |          | Against   |          |          |
| A King         |          | Against   |          |          |
| C King         |          | Against   |          |          |
| M Larkin       |          | Against   |          |          |
| N Lawlor       |          | Against   |          |          |
| D Lee-Surginor |          |           | Abstain  |          |
| A Lewis        | For      |           |          |          |
| O Magennis     |          |           |          | Absent   |
| A Mathers      |          | Against   |          |          |
| D McAteer      |          |           |          | Absent   |
| D Murphy       |          | Against   |          |          |
| K Murphy       |          | Against   |          |          |
| S Murphy       |          | Against   |          |          |
| S O'Hare       |          | Against   |          |          |
| A Quinn        |          | Against   |          |          |
| H Reilly       | For      |           |          |          |
| M Rice         |          | Against   |          |          |
| M Ruane        |          | Against   |          |          |
| D Taylor       | For      |           |          |          |
| J Tinnelly     |          | Against   |          |          |
| J Truesdale    |          |           | Abstain  |          |
| H Young        |          |           |          | Absent   |
| <b>TOTALS</b>  | <b>6</b> | <b>26</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>7</b> |