

September 3rd, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 7th September 2026 at 6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre.**

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 3 August 2026

For Information

Attachment: Action Sheet 2026 08 03.pdf

Page 1

Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

4.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 August 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Council Minutes 2026-08-03.pdf

Page 3

5.0 Minutes of Special Council Meeting held 24 August 2026

Attachment: Special Council Minutes - 2026-08-24.pdf

Page 10

Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

6.0 Minutes of Audit Committee held 30 July 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Audit Committee Minute 2026-07-30.pdf

Page 23

7.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 August 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2026-08-10.pdf

Page 31

8.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 August 2026

For Approval

Attachment: Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2026-08-13.pdf

Page 37

Attachment: Full Council Cover Report Addendum to the Assessment of

Page 57

9.0	Performance 2025-26 pdf Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee <i>Meeting held on 17 August 2026</i> <i>Attachment: Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2026 08 17.pdf</i>	Page 61
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10.0	Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 August 2026 <i>Attachment: Sustainability_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2026_08-19.pdf</i>	Page 72
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11.0	Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held 27 August 2026 <i>Attachment: Special Strategy Policy Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2026-08-27.pdf</i>	Page 81
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Planning

12.0	Planning Section <i>For Information</i>
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Correspondence

13.0	Correspondence Report <i>Attachment: Correspondence Report Council 2026-09-07.pdf</i>	Page 83
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13.1	Correspondence from NILGA regarding Conference scheduled for 8 October <i>Attachment: Correspondence from NILGA.pdf</i>	Page 85
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Notices of Motion

14.0	Notice of Motion - Public Drinking Laws <i>For Decision</i>
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The following Notice of Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

"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."

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Mr Caolain Boyd

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Lorraine/Emma Burns/McParland

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Mrs Catherine Hanvey

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Ms Aileen Jones

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Sheila Kieran

Cllr Cathal King

Cllr Aurla King

Ms Elaine Kirk

Cllr Mickey Larkin

Cllr Niall Lawlor

Cllr David Lee-Surginor

Cllr Alan Lewis

Cllr Oonagh Magennis

Mr Conor Mallon

Cllr Aidan Mathers

Cllr Declan McAteer

Jonathan McGilly

Mr Martin McKibbin

Ms Tracie McLoughlin
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Cllr Declan Murphy
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Cllr Kate Murphy
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Cllr Selina Murphy
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Sinead Murphy
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Ms Patricia Murtagh
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
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Mr Andy Patterson
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Cllr Áine Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Cllr Michael Rice
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Ms Alison Robb
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Ms Maria Rogan
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Mr Conor Sage
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Mrs Amanda Smyth
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Conor Smyth
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Donna Starkey
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Sarah Taggart
.....
Cllr David Taylor
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Mr David Telford
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Ms Joanna Tierney
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
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Cllr Jill Truesdale
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Mrs Marie Ward
.....
Cllr Helena Young
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ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 1 JULY 2024

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

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 2 FEBRUARY 2026

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

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 3 AUGUST 2026

<i>Minute Ref</i>	<i>Subject</i>	<i>Decision</i>	<i>Lead Officer</i>	<i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i>	<i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i>
<i>C/107/2026</i>	<i>Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 06/07/2026</i>	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<i>Noted</i>	<i>Y</i>

C/108/2026	<i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 06/07/2026</i>	It was agreed for a formal investigation be launched into the matter through the appropriate avenue.	<i>M Hughes</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Y</i>
		The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<i>Noted</i>	<i>Y</i>
		Mrs Murphy to investigate brown bin collections in the Mournes area and report back to Councillors Reilly and Hanna directly.	<i>S Murphy</i>	<i>Actioned</i>	<i>Y</i>
C/109/2026	<i>Minutes of Special Council Meeting held 29/06/2026</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to an amendment to the attendance list.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<i>Noted</i>	<i>Y</i>
C/110/2026	<i>Planning Section</i>	There were no issues arising.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<i>Noted</i>	<i>Y</i>
C/111/2026	<i>Letter from Department for Infrastructure regarding Warrenpoint Harbour Authority Board</i>	It was agreed that the names of the nominees be submitted for the appointment to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority to the Democratic Services Manager by 5pm on Wednesday 5 August 2026.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<i>Noted</i>	<i>Y</i>
C/112/2026	<i>Correspondence Report</i>	It was agreed to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence: • Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM – Portaferry Bridge C/053/2026 • Correspondence from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re NOM – Independent Environment Protection Agency C/050/2026	<i>Democratic Services</i>	<i>Noted</i>	<i>Y</i>

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 August 2026 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor G Hanna

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor V Harte	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 O Magennis
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor H Young	

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor J Brennan	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor M Rice	

Officials in attendance:

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

C/105/2026:

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell, Hearty, Howell, Howie, Mathers and Ruane and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism.

The Chairperson advised it had been another busy period with him attending many events including the Lecale Rallye. He took the opportunity to advise he had been in Portaferry that day and was delighted to confirm a large amount of money had been secured from the Lottery Fund in partnership with Ards and North Borough Council.

C/106/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/107/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 6 JULY 2026**

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 was agreed.**

Councillor Larkin joined the meeting at this point – 6.12pm.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/108/2026: MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2026

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 (copy circulated).

C/097/2026 – Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 June 2026

In referring to his previous references to revenue being brought through from recycling, Councillor Reilly took the opportunity to highlight concerns regarding problems associated with brown bin collections in the Mourne area, with the Chairperson also expressing concern.

Mrs Murphy advised she would investigate the matter and report back to Councillors Reilly and Hanna directly.

C/093/2026 – Minutes of Council Meeting held on 1 June 2026/6 July 2026

Councillor Tinnelly referred to the personal statement he had made at the previous Council meeting stating his remarks were specific to an individual officer, not the corporate body of Council. He added he wanted Members to know he had received no correspondence from the officer since and he was happy to allow the matter to play out via a formal investigation.

Councillor Lewis advised his Party would support a formal investigation as some serious issues had been raised and it would be good to get them resolved.

Ms Kirk pointed out there was no motion before Council for a decision and the commentary was not in relation to the accuracy of the minutes.

Councillor Byrne stated it was a sensitive issue and it was important that Members protect and be fair to everybody involved while understanding what had happened. As group leader he felt there was a need to know in terms of governance what was the right thing to do in these circumstances going forward. He made reference to how information not being given because it was commercially sensitive and at other times information was brought forward, therefore there was a need to protect Councillors either through an internal investigation with the Audit Committee or whatever way was best to get clarity going forward.

Ms Kirk took the opportunity to confirm that in relation to any governance or discussions on the matter, it was an ongoing legal issue which she had advised group party leaders about earlier that day via e-mail. Members were advised the matter would have to be brought to the attention of the High Court judge in relation to the representations that were made through the case and as it was ongoing, it was inappropriate to discuss it any further.

She added there had been a number of emails advising what the position was by the applicant in those proceedings and therefore could not go into any detail in open session, but it was proceeding by way of affidavit evidence to the High Court to deal with. Members were advised that was the most appropriate forum for the matter to be dealt with and any statements from any relevant elected members that would assist that would be welcomed.

Councillor Byrne reiterated that as a political party, sides were not being taken but that he wanted to make sure that there was protection going forward and the right information given. He added when it was a legal matter it could not be discussed as it was commercially sensitive but that was not the case if somebody's name was put out there and questioned why that line was not given for that. Councillor Byrne said it was confusing and whilst he understood the legal manner that was separate from what was being discussed now, asked was it being said that Members could not discuss anything around somebody's name being used as there was an ongoing Judicial Review.

Councillor Byrne said there were two separate issues and asked if it was expected going forward that colleagues on working groups, programme boards etc when asked for information that they get, the line that it was commercially sensitive or there was a Judicial Review and that information could not be given. He said that should be consistent right throughout the process yet it had not been consistent in this case and was it because as group leaders they got information they should not have.

Ms Kirk stated they were not two separate matters as they were both interlinked and related to the same ongoing application. She went on to read out what had been advised and what was in the press.

"In relation to the Civic Centre Judicial Review, the Council's legal representatives were

advised on the 23rd of April in relation to the Councillor that they were to lodge an affidavit in support of the applicant's case but was unable to do so. The Council agreed that the case could be moved to a later date. I regret that the information was sent and it was incorrect and that the information had caused further upset and distress to the Councillor".

Ms Kirk stated Council legal representatives sought an urgent explanation from the applicant's solicitors about the contents of the letter and she had advised Members as to what their response was. The response had confirmed their position in relation to that and the most appropriate forum to discuss that in detail would be before the High Court because it was not just an issue before the Council. It was also an ongoing high court action for which there had to be answers. There was no issue in relation to providing Councillors with an update in relation to ongoing cases as that had been done and would continue to be done. If there needed to be further discussion in a closed setting there was no issue with that as well, however in relation to this particular point it could not be discussed in any detail in this setting until the High Court had considered it.

Councillor Taylor expressed concern that there had been updates provided in terms of the Judicial Review and investigations also and how some Councillors including himself and independent Councillors that sat outside the Party Group Leaders Forum were not being provided with important information on significant issues of concern to Council. He asked that it be put on record that all Councillors should be provided with such information and irrespective of whether you had group leadership or not, should be kept informed on significant issues of concern to Council.

Ms Kirk confirmed she had no issue setting up a meeting with any members that did not have any conflict with a detailed update in a closed setting.

Councillor Tinnelly stated he had witnessed a lot of gaslighting at the meeting and wished to make it clear that the Judicial Review along with the contents of the legal correspondence were nothing to do with his complaint and that it was solely on what the officer had done with that information. He therefore proposed a formal investigation be launched into the matter through the appropriate avenue, seconded by Councillor Lewis. This was agreed by all Members.

Ms Kirk advised the appropriate method would be to contact the Head of Human Resources in relation to any complaints that he wished to progress.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Tinnelly, seconded by Councillor Lewis for a formal investigation be launched into the matter through the appropriate avenue.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 were agreed as an**

accurate record and adopted.

C/109/2026: MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2026

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 29 June 2026 (copy circulated).

Ms Taggart asked Members to note an amendment to include Councillor O'Hare as being in attendance at the Council meeting.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Magennis, the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 29 June 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to an amendment to the attendance list.

C/110/2026: PLANNING SECTION

Read: Extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 1 July 2026 in relation to the Local Development Plan (Copy circulated).

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly regarding how advanced the local development plan was progressing the Chairperson advised many Councils still had a lot of work to do.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to note the extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 1 July 2026 in relation to the Local Development Plan.

C/111/2026: LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REGARDING APPOINTMENT TO WARRENPOINT HARBOUR AUTHORITY BOARD

Read: Letter dated 1 June 2026 from the Department for Infrastructure seeking Council nominees for the appointment to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority.

The Chief Executive advised Members Council were being afforded the opportunity to put forward up to 8 nominations to the Warrenpoint Harbour Authority Board and asked that those nominations be forwarded to Ms Taggart, Democratic Services Manager by email no later than 5pm on Wednesday 5 August 2026. She added that should there be more than 8

nominations they would be taken by timing of receipt with notifications confirmed thereafter.

The Chief Executive pointed out the application process would be the responsibility of Members themselves.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor O'Hare that the names of the six nominees be submitted for the appointment to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority to the Democratic Services Manager by 5pm on Wednesday 5 August 2026.**

C/112/2026: CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

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

Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM – Portaferry Bridge C/053/2026

Councillor Bowsie commented the Minister had not given any commitment for the study into the viability of a bridge over Strangford Lough and voiced disappointment that the Minister was refusing to meet with the DUP on the matter making reference to meetings held with Sinn Fein MP and Councillor who did not represent the area. He went on to outline the benefits the bridge would bring with connectivity that reflected the 21st century.

Councillor Young stated that if there was to be a feasibility study three areas would need be covered including road upgrades on either side of the Lough, viability of a more sustainable ferry and to be mindful that Strangford Lough was the largest sea inlet in the British Isles and Northern Ireland's first Marine Conservation Zone within a renowned Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the Minister's response stating it was important to look strategically at it in terms of the Newry Mourne Down Local Transport Plan 2035. She responded to Councillor Bowsie's comments about arranged meetings stating Councillors were not privy to requests into the private office and it was unfair to be calling it out in public that meetings had been declined when individuals were not there to defend their position.

Correspondence from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re NOM – Independent Environment Protection Agency (C/050/2026)

Councillor Clarke stated the response from the former Secretary of State was accurate in that the Executive and the democratic institutions should work and how it was a devolved

matter. He added there had been support for an Independent Environment Protection Agency for many decades which had been blocked and stopped from being discussed at the Executive and that democracy must allow for that to happen. He added it was fair enough for a political party not to like it but that the democratic process had to be allowed to happen.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:

- **Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM – Portaferry Bridge C/053/2026**
- **Correspondence from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re NOM – Independent Environment Protection Agency (C/050/2026)**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.38pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed:

Councillor G Hanna
Chairperson

Marie Ward
Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SC/

**Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on Monday 29 June 2026 at 6.00pm in
Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

In the Chair: Councillor G Hanna

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor A King
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor S O'Hare

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor L Devlin	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor M Hearty	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young

Officials in attendance in Chamber:

Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance in Chamber:

NI HOUSING EXECUTIVE

Ms C McFarland, Interim Chief Executive
Mr J McCartan, South Regional Manager
Ms C Crainey, South Down Area Manager
Ms S Collins, Head of South Place Shaping

Also in attendance via Teams:

NI HOUSING EXECUTIVE

Mr A Kennedy, AD Asset Strategy
Mr N Bolton, AD Project Delivery
Ms C O'Hare, Band 8 Sustainable Homes
Mr A Mawhinney, AD Strategic Partnerships

SC/008/2026: **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillors Clarke, Finn, Harte, Lewis and Magennis. Apologies were also received from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, Ms Jones, Director of Corporate Services, Mr Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, and Mr Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities.

SC/009/2026**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

SC/010/2026**NI HOUSING EXECUTIVE**

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation and invited them to make their presentation (copy appended to these minutes).

Ms McFarland thanked the Council for the opportunity to present the Housing Investment Plan and introduced the delegation. She advised that the Housing Executive regarded itself as a key partner of the Council and highlighted the close working relationship through Community Planning, the Housing Needs Working Group, rural housing initiatives, and engagement on the Local Development Plan and associated housing policies.

Ms McFarland outlined the local housing context, investment activity and future priorities, advising that the Housing Executive continued to work with the Council to identify land opportunities and facilitate the provision of affordable housing within mixed tenure developments across both urban and rural areas. She reported that as of March 2026 there were 1,340 applicants on the social housing waiting list in rural areas, and during the preceding year, 131 social housing allocations had been made in rural areas. She outlined that the five-year projected social housing need for rural areas was 946 units, representing 39% of total district need and confirmed that one rural new-build scheme had been completed in Camlough, two schemes were under construction in Forkhill and Saintfield, and eight further rural schemes comprising approximately 150 units were included in the programme for 2026-2029.

Ms McFarland noted that Co-Ownership had an active stock of 599 homes at the end of March 2026, with 28 purchases completed during 2025-26. She also highlighted the St Clare's Convent development in Newry, which would provide 18 two-bedroom intermediate rent apartments managed by Maple & May.

Ms McFarland advised that the Housing Executive had invested £53.37 million across the district during 2025-26, including £6.28 million in new-build housing and that during that period, 39 new social homes had been completed, 435 homes were under construction at the end of March 2026, and 339 units were included within the 2026-2029 development programme. She further reported that £6.55 million had been invested in planned maintenance and improvement works to 868 homes, with 975 units included within 28 planned schemes for 2026-27. She outlined a number of significant challenges facing the housing sector, including budgetary pressures, uncertainty regarding long-term investment in housing stock, increasing demand for social housing, high levels of housing stress and

homelessness, the ongoing need for temporary and emergency accommodation, shortages of social and affordable housing, and wastewater infrastructure constraints affecting housing development. She also emphasised the impact that housing conditions could have on health and wellbeing.

Looking ahead, Ms McFarland highlighted a number of opportunities and initiatives, including an initial budget allocation for 2026-27, engagement with housing associations to bring forward new schemes, consultation on amendments to the House Sales Scheme, the launch of the Rural Strategy 2026-2031, completion of a comprehensive stock condition survey, funding secured for the Foundations Programme to support young people leaving care, consultation on a new Homelessness Strategy, the Low Carbon Retrofit Pilot, and the forthcoming Warm Healthy Homes Fund aimed at tackling fuel poverty.

In conclusion, Ms McFarland emphasised that increasing housing supply remained the key issue underpinning housing need, homelessness and housing stress, and was critical to enabling the Housing Executive to maintain and improve its housing stock. She advised that a comprehensive stock survey would inform long-term investment planning and welcomed questions from Members on any aspect of the Housing Investment Plan.

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

Comments and questions from Members were as follows:

- Thanks were offered to the delegation, and the local teams were commended for their professionalism and hard work.
- Were the delegation aware of any planned discussions or legislation changes with the aim of reducing vacant homes through working with private owners to increase supply in key areas.
- The demand for housing in Downpatrick was acknowledged, with 285 units required, alongside the impact of housing stress for those on the waiting list.
- What were the initial steps needed to address the demand for housing, as the waiting list appeared not to have moved much in recent years. What was the best place to start in terms of addressing the issues.
- What were the difficulties with rural housing, especially as housing stress within the farming community could go unrecognised.
- What impact did planning permission and land availability have on the demand.
- The demand in Kilkeel was noted, and disappointment expressed that planning permission had not been granted due to the constraints with the wastewater infrastructure.
- The recent changes to the housing allocation points system were welcomed, however Members queried whether consideration could be given to awarding additional points to applicants seeking housing within their local area, noting instances where applicants remained on waiting lists while properties in their preferred location were allocated to individuals from outside the area.

- What evidence was available regarding the wastewater infrastructure as several developments within the Saintfield area had been stalled due to lack of available capacity.
- It was noted that it seemed peculiar in the group settlements that Kilmore and Loughinisland were together, and Crossgar and Annacloy were grouped. It was stated that it would be more reflective of the DEAs if Crossgar and Kilmore were grouped together, and Loughinisland and Annacloy grouped.
- What plans did the Housing Executive and housing associations have to maximise opportunities to bring forward additional housing developments to help address the chronic housing shortage.
- What impact did the recent changes to the housing allocation points system have to date.
- Had the Housing Executive's research identified a demand for more multi-unit or apartment-style developments within the Newry, Mourne and Down District, and could such developments play a greater role in meeting housing need in the future.
- Was the Housing Executive aware of any desire among local authorities to write to the Department for Communities seeking reconsideration of the housing points system, including the allocation of additional points for those wishing to remain within their local area.
- Given that the Housing Supply Strategy and Treasury negotiations regarding borrowing powers remained ongoing, had the Housing Executive considered alternative arrangements or contingency measures should those powers not be secured.
- It was noted that it appeared that of the £56m budget, £27m had been ringfenced for housing benefit – was housing benefit part of the Housing Executive's budget.
- Section 75 stated that a military veteran could not get additional points for housing, how then could an asylum seeker be granted housing before a veteran?
- What were the Housing Executive's views on the recent measures introduced by the Communities Minister to strengthen tenants' rights and security of tenure and could these measures improve protections and stability for people in the private rented sector.
- Was tenancy fraud a large risk to the available budget.
- Were there any plans to improve the right of succession for occupied houses as an example was provided of a resident who had to leave his family home due to unsigned paperwork following his mother's admission to a nursing home.
- Were all new-build homes required to meet sustainability standards.
- What role did the Housing Executive play when considering housing for those with additional needs.

The delegation responded as follows:

- Empty homes have been discussed at a Departmental level, and the impact it could have on housing supply. However, it remains a departmental policy change and any discussion on the issue was welcomed.
- The connection between housing and health was noted, and the Corporate Plan detailed that connection. A number of actions could be taken to address the shortfall

need in Downpatrick; however the issue was wider than the Housing Executive that required the utilisation of supply strategy and a departmental strategy that could be fed into.

- Rural areas were noted as an ongoing issue within the Council area having the highest need across Northern Ireland, however the Housing Executive worked closely with the local District Electoral Areas (DEAs) to identify available land for development, and to continue to assist in developing policy that would put the onus on developers to provide social housing within new developments.
- One method of addressing the shortfall in housing provision would be to ensure that housing remained a priority within the Programme for Government, as funding was linked to government priorities.
- The Housing Executive would continue to work alongside housing associations and Council to consider options that sat outside the normal processes that could bring forward opportunities to identify suitable sites for housing development.
- With regard to unrecognised demand, the Housing Executive could only work with the information that was available, so those seeking housing were encouraged to register that demand so that it could be recognised and utilised to secure any potential housing where possible.
- The housing points system was set out in legislation, and it was not possible to adjust the system by request, the matter required departmental agreement and consent.
- The Housing Executive had a good working relationship with NI Water, with ongoing discussions to address concerns, however this was also hampered by the limited role that the Housing Executive had with regard to infrastructure.
- The Housing Executive worked closely with housing associations to identify voids in property ownership to ensure available stock was used to maximum capacity.
- A large number of apartments were contained within the current programme for the District, however that had to be managed in line with the preferred house type which was a traditional house.
- With regard to the Treasury negotiations, the discussions relating to the Housing Executive being able to borrow to invest was at an advanced level, income was received through rent but that had to be balanced against the need to invest in homes to maintain the required standard of living.
- The housing benefit was included for information relating to the housing benefit within the District, there were essentially two budgets that were not in competition for spending.
- Any information provided in relation to potential tenancy fraud was investigated and addressed as necessary, while a large number of reports were received, not all were fraudulent cases.
- In relation to Section 75, Ms McFarland highlighted that the Housing Executive could only work within the point system as laid out and was unable to comment on individual cases.
- Ms McFarland welcomed measures that would strengthen tenants' rights and improve security of tenure. She advised that a significant amount of the Housing Executive's work focused on tenancy sustainment, including supporting tenants to remain in their

homes, preventing homelessness, assisting households to maintain tenancies, and promoting financial inclusion.

- Succession was a major concern across all Council areas and was constrained by policy framework. However, discussions were ongoing regarding any potential amendments that could be made to the issue of succession.
- There was a sustainable homes team that looked at retrofitting properties with sustainable features, decarbonising stock, maintenance teams, the affordable warmth scheme and that all new builds were built to the housing associations guide standards with may achieving an 'A' energy efficiency rating.
- Should someone on the waiting list not be suitable for general needs housing, the Housing Executive worked closely with the relevant Health & Social Care Trust to ensure the individual's needs could be met in an appropriate location.
- The kind words for the local Housing Executive's local teams were welcomed and would be fed back to the teams.

Cllrs Devlin, Larkin and Hearty left during the above discussions at 6.22pm, 6.54pm and 7.08pm respectively.

Councillor Hanna thanked the delegation for their presentation and time.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.12pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed:

Cllr Hanna
Chairperson

Marie Ward
Chief Executive



**Housing
Executive**

**Newry, Mourne & Down
District Council**

**NIHE Housing
Investment Plan 2026**

24th August 2026



Newry, Mourne and Down

nihe.gov.uk

1



Working in Partnership with NMD Council

- NIHE - lead partner on the **Community Planning** priority 'Access to Quality Housing' and chair the Housing Needs Working Group.
- During 2025/26 we engaged with representatives from the 7 District Electoral Areas to highlight rural housing need and encourage the identification of development opportunities.
- As statutory consultee in the **Local Development Plan** process, NIHE worked closely with NMD Council to develop Policies HOU5 and COU3 in the draft Plan Strategy which was launched in June 2026.
- Together these policies will enable the provision of affordable housing within mixed tenure developments in both urban and rural areas.

nihe.gov.uk

2



Overview

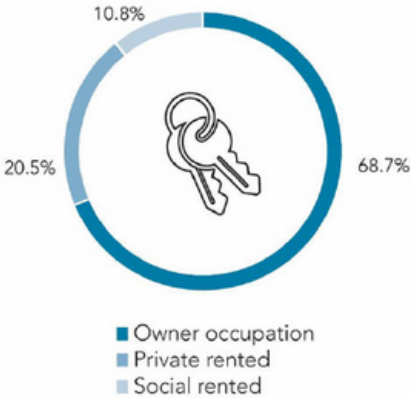
- Local Housing Context
- Key Housing Challenges
- NIHE Investment 2025/26
- Planned Investment 2026/27
- Key Housing Opportunities

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3



Housing Tenure Breakdown Newry, Mourne & Down



Tenure Type	Percentage
Owner occupation	68.7%
Private rented	20.5%
Social rented	10.8%


68,398
households

5,152

We managed a stock of approximately **5,152** homes. 6 house sales were completed.

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4



What the 15-Year Housing Market Assessment means for Newry, Mourne and Down?

- The Housing Supply Strategy 2024-2039 recognises that meeting housing need is not just about social housing, but increasing the supply of homes across all tenures through a coordinated, system-wide approach
- Over **10,600 additional homes** will be needed in Newry, Mourne and Down by **2035**.
- This includes: **6,540 market** homes, **1,570 intermediate/affordable** homes, **2,520 social** homes
- Housing will be needed across both urban and rural communities.
- Meeting this need requires a joined-up approach between planning, infrastructure, housing providers and local government.
- The Housing Executive uses this evidence to inform housing investment, land requirements and future housing supply

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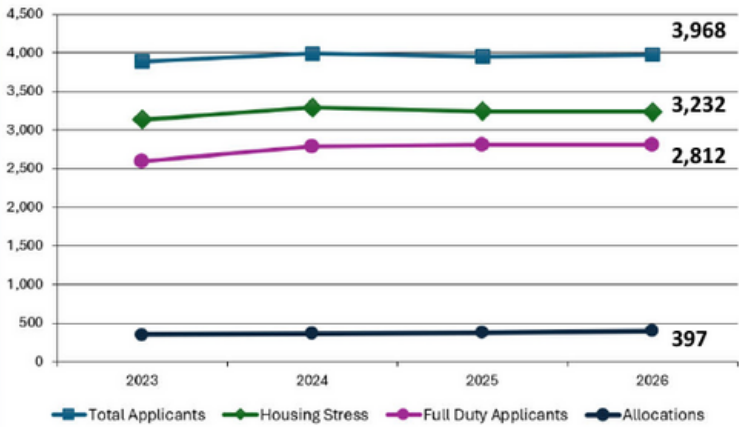
5



Social Housing Waiting List Trends 2023 – 2026

High demand for social housing continues across NMD, reflected in sustained waiting list, housing stress and homelessness levels.

Current annual social housing allocation rates equate to approximately 12% of households in housing stress.



Year	Total Applicants	Housing Stress	Full Duty Applicants	Allocations
2023	3,968	3,232	2,812	397
2024	4,000	3,300	2,850	400
2025	3,950	3,250	2,800	400
2026	3,968	3,232	2,812	397

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6



Affordable Housing Supply

Social

- **2026/29 SHDP** 339 (gross) new social housing units programmed
- Includes 189 urban units and 150 rural units.

5 Year SHDP Performance (2021/22 – 2025/26)

- Strategic Guidelines target for NMD during this period = **981 starts** (543 urban and 438 rural)
- **331 starts** (302 urban and 29 rural) were achieved against the target.
- Resulting in **650 fewer starts** (-241 urban and -409 rural)
- Delivery constrained by availability of land in areas of housing need, planning & infrastructure limitations and uncertainty around annual budget allocations.

Intermediate

- Co-ownership HA had an active stock of 599 dwellings at March 2026, 28 of which were purchased during 2025/26.
- The scheme currently under construction at St Clare's Convent, Newry with Choice HA, includes 18 two-bedroom apartments for intermediate rent, which will be managed by their subsidiary Maple and May.

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7



Rural Housing Need Newry, Mourne & Down

March 2026:

- 1,348 applicants on social housing waiting list for rural areas
- 1,101 applicants in Housing Stress
- 939 Full Duty Homeless Applicants
- 131 allocations of social homes in rural areas (April 25 – March 26)
- 5-year social housing need of **946** for rural areas, 39% of total need for District
- 2025/26 - 1 rural new build scheme completed (Camlough - **9 units**) and 2 schemes onsite (Forkhill and Saintfield - **14 units**)
- 8 Rural Schemes on SHDP 2026/29 (**150 units**)

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8



Key Housing Challenges for Newry, Mourne & Down

- Budget expenditure requirements and funding shortfalls
- Uncertainty around long-term funding for NIHE stock maintenance and modernisation
- Continued high level of social waiting list applicants and housing stress
- Levels of homelessness remain high and ongoing demand for temporary and emergency accommodation
- Shortage of social and affordable housing across urban and rural areas
- Wastewater infrastructure constraints and the impact on new housing development
- Impact of housing challenges on health and wellbeing of households

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9

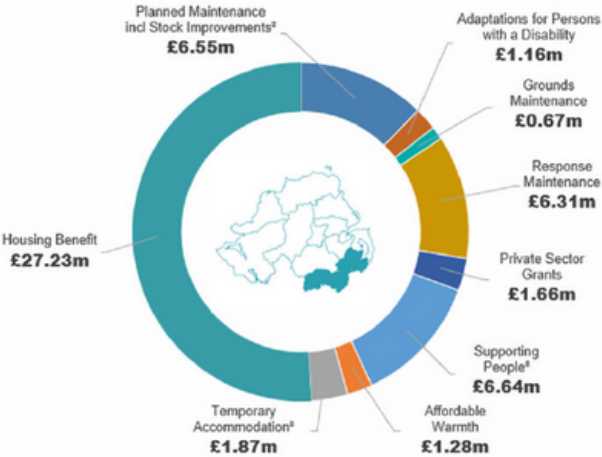


Housing Executive Spend Newry, Mourne & Down 2025/26

£53.37m

+ £6.28m invested in new build social housing across NMD (public & private finance)

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area 2025/26 Housing Executive Expenditure¹ (£m)



Category	Amount (£m)
Housing Benefit	£27.23m
Planned Maintenance incl Stock Improvements ²	£6.55m
Adaptations for Persons with a Disability	£1.16m
Grounds Maintenance	£0.67m
Response Maintenance	£6.31m
Private Sector Grants	£1.66m
Supporting People ³	£6.64m
Affordable Warmth	£1.28m
Temporary Accommodation ⁴	£1.87m

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10



New homes on site in the last year...

In 2025/26:

£6.28m invested in new build social housing (public & HA investment)

39 new social homes completed

435 new social homes under construction at end of March 2026.

339 units included on SHDP 2026-29



Planned Maintenance

In 2025/26:

£6.55m was invested in the maintenance and improvement of **868** of our homes across Newry, Mourne & Down

975 units included in 28 planned maintenance schemes 2026/27 (19% of NIHE stock NMD)

Planned Maintenance Schemes completed April 2025 – March 2026

Scheme	Units
Double Glazing	484
Revenue Replacement Kitchens	20
Doors	133
Bathroom Kitchen Rewire	124
Heating Installation	68
Low Carbon Scheme	4
Bathrooms	35
	868





- Initial SHDP budget of £208m secured for 2026/27
- Public consultation on five proposed amendments to statutory House Sales Scheme
- Launch of NIHE Rural Strategy 2026 – 2031 with an emphasis on the provision of affordable housing
- Survey of NIHE stock to set the investment requirement going forward
- Funding secured for the New Foundations Programme, aimed at helping young people leaving care to avoid homelessness, with Newry identified as a priority target area.
- Public consultation on a draft Homelessness Strategy 2027-32 in Autumn 2026.
- Low Carbon retrofit pilot underway to improve energy efficiency and reduce carbon emissions in homes across NI
- Warm Healthy Homes Strategy 2026-2036 with a new Warm Healthy Homes Fund to reduce fuel poverty

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13



Thank you

➔

Q&A

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14

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2026

Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 30 July 2026, at 2.00pm,
via MS Teams

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

Committee Members in attendance via Teams: Councillor C Bowsie Councillor P Byrne
Councillor L Devlin Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor C King Councillor K Murphy
Councillor S O'Hare

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

Officials in attendance via Teams: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital & Procurement
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director: Regeneration
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability
Ms S Trainer, Assistant Director: Environment
Ms K Hanna, Finance Manager
Mr G Ringland, IT Manager
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance via Teams: Ms C Hagan Sumer NI
Ms S Jones NIAO

AC/045/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Brennan, and from Mr Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, and Mrs Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment. An apology was also received from Ms C O'Hagan, NIAO.

AC/046/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AC/047/2026: ACTION SHEET OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 7 MAY 2026

Read: Action Sheet arising from the Audit Committee Meeting held on 7 May 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held 7 May 2026.**

AC/048/2026: AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Read: Report from Ms B Slevin, Independent Chair of Audit Committee, regarding Audit Committee Annual Report (Copy circulated)

Ms Slevin, as Independent Chairperson of the Audit Committee, presented the Audit Committee Annual Report for 2025/26, advising that it reflected the work undertaken by the Committee throughout the year. She highlighted that the Committee's self-assessment had concluded that it was operating effectively during 2025/26, noting a number of recommendations arising from the review, such as the provision of further training for Members, alongside requests for updates on cyber and digital risks and climate change, both of which would be addressed during today's meeting.

Ms Slevin also advised that engagement had taken place with key stakeholders to enhance the Committee's effectiveness, including a constructive meeting with SUMER NI representatives. She reflected that the annual review of the Chairperson's performance undertaken by Councillors Byrne and Hanlon had concluded that an appropriate standard had been applied in chairing meetings and welcomed the Council receiving an unqualified audit opinion on the 2024/25 financial statements and a satisfactory internal audit assurance opinion, describing this as positive progress from the previous year.

In closing, Ms Slevin thanked Members and officers for their support throughout the year and extended her best wishes to former officers Mrs Kelly and Mr Byrne in their future careers.

Councillor Bowsie noted the work carried out by Mrs Kelly and Mr Byrne and queried whether there was an official start date for the new Corporate Services Director.

Mrs Ward advised that a communication had been shared with a start date of 10 August 2026.

Councillor Hanlon queried whether there was a risk to the Council when staff moved on before replacement staff were in post, and whether recruitment timescales could be better aligned to facilitate an adequate handover of information.

Mrs Ward advised that, while recruitment timescales did not always allow for overlap between departing and incoming staff, she had no concerns regarding handover arrangements. She confirmed that comprehensive handover notes had been prepared, arrangements had been made for the incoming temporary Assistant Director of Finance to meet with the outgoing officer, and further handover meetings had been arranged for the

incoming Director of Corporate Services. She stated that appropriate measures had been put in place to ensure continuity of service and effective transfer of knowledge.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

PERFORMANCE

AC/049/2026: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026/27

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Ward presented the Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27, advising that it had been considered through the appropriate Council governance structures, including the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee, and had been subject to public consultation. She noted that the Plan set out five Performance Improvement Objectives for 2026/27 and was accompanied by a Consultation and Engagement Report. Mrs Ward further advised that a residents' survey would be undertaken later in the year to inform the next Corporate Planning process.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27 and Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27.**

CORPORATE SERVICES – OPEN SESSION

AC/050/2026: DIRECTORATE RISK REGISTER - AHC

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities Committee, regarding Directorate Risk Register – AHC. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Ward advised that the Active & Healthy Communities (AHC) Directorate Risk Register was presented for noting in line with the reporting arrangements for all directorate risk registers.

Councillor Bowsie queried why only the AHC Directorate Risk Register had been tabled, to which Mrs Ward confirmed that each directorate's risk register was presented to the Audit Committee on a rotational basis, with the Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register having been presented at the previous meeting.

In response to a query from Ms Slevin, Mrs Ward confirmed that the Corporate Risk Register would be presented to the next meeting of the Audit Committee, advising that, due to annual leave during July, the Senior Management Team (SMT) had been unable to complete its scheduled review.

Councillor Truesdale queried Risks AHC/03 and AHC/04 and whether any additional interventions were planned to address the ongoing concerns.

Mr Patterson advised that the risk registers were reviewed quarterly, with the most recent review undertaken in May and confirmed that AHC/04 had been considered by the AHC Committee in June with actions being agreed. In relation to Risk AHC/03, he advised that significant work had been undertaken with colleagues in the Sustainability & Environment Directorate to ensure compliance with statutory responsibilities relating to Council facilities, including community centres and leisure facilities.

Councillor Truesdale queried whether the risks should have been addressed by this stage, to which Mrs Ward advised that all risks were actively monitored and managed through the Council's risk management framework, with key controls and associated action plans identified within the risk register and subject to ongoing review.

Councillor Byrne referred to Risk AHC/04, expressed concern regarding the potential impact of reduced Executive funding on Council programmes and queried whether the Audit Committee should receive updates on the potential implications for Council budgets in advance of its next scheduled meeting.

Mrs Ward confirmed that SMT was actively considering the issue, which had also been raised at a recent Party Leaders meeting, and advised that each directorate would report to its respective Committee on programmes likely to be affected. She confirmed that discussions with Central Government departments were ongoing regarding programmes being delivered by the Council on their behalf.

Councillor Byrne welcomed this approach and requested that the issue and associated mitigating actions be reflected within the next Corporate Risk Register.

Ms Slevin noted that the Annual Governance Statement also reflected the ongoing financial challenges arising from the Executive budget position.

Councillor Bowsie queried whether the Corporate Risk Register and the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism (ERT) Directorate Risk Register could be presented at every Audit Committee meeting, given the number of significant capital projects due to commence.

Mrs Ward confirmed that, as previously mentioned, the Corporate Risk Register was ordinarily presented at each meeting of the Audit Committee and advised that the relevant capital projects would be reflected within that register.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to note the revised AHC Directorate Risk Register summary at Appendix 1 and detailed AHC Directorate Risk Register at Appendix 2.**

AC/051/2026: **PROMPT PAYMENT STATISTICS QUARTER 1 2026/27**

Read: Report from Ms K Hanna, Finance Manager, regarding Prompt Payment Statistics Quarter 1 2026/27. (Copy circulated)

Ms Hanna presented the Quarter 1 2026/27 performance update on supplier payments, advising that 90% of supplier invoices had been paid within 30 days, with 58% paid within 10 days. She noted that 10% of invoices had been paid outside the 30-day target period. She confirmed that while there had been a slight decrease in performance, with the average payment time increasing from 14.22 to 14.51 days compared with the previous quarter, the Council continued to meet its performance target.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Quarter 1 2026/27 financial year prompt payment statistics.**

AC/052/2026: NMDDC ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK AND CODE OF GOVERNANCE

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding NMDDC Assurance Framework and Code of Governance. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Ward presented the Annual Governance Statement, advising that it set out the Council's governance framework, including its governance arrangements, risk management processes and committee structures, referring Members to the Statement attached at Appendix 1.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the Council's Assurance Framework and the Code of Governance as detailed at Appendix 1.**

AC/053/2026: UPDATE OF MEMBERS' INTEREST

Read: Report from Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager, regarding Update of Members' Interest. (Copy circulated)

Miss Taggart presented the six-monthly update on Members' Register of Interests forms, advising that, in accordance with audit recommendations, all forms had been reviewed and updated, regardless of whether amendments were required. She confirmed that the latest update had been completed in July 2026 and that the next scheduled review would take place in January 2027.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the update on Members' Registers of Interest.**

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during the following items which related to exempt information by virtue of Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern**

Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during these items of business.

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

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

CORPORATE SERVICES – CLOSED SESSION

AC/054/2026: DRAFT ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Draft Annual Governance and Statement of Accounts. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, the following was agreed:

- To approve the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 at Appendix 1
- To note the draft Statement of Accounts and Financial Statements at Appendix 1.

AC/055/2026: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS REPORT

Read: Report Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital projects & Procurement, regarding Direct Award Contracts. (Copy circulated)

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

- The 2026/27 Q1 update in relation to Direct Award Contracts.
- The Direct Award Activity 2026/27 year in review (Q1) totals
- The Active Direct Award Contracts as of 31/06/2026

AC/056/2026: PROCUREMENT ACTION PLANS

Read: Report Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, presented by Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects & Procurement, regarding Procurement Action Plans. (Copy circulated)

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

AC/057/2026: UPDATE ON FRAUD AND RAISING CONCERNS

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Update on Fraud and Raising Concerns. (Copy circulated)

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

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

AC/058/2026: CYBER SECURITY AND DIGITAL RISKS - PRESENTATION

Read: Presentation from Mr G Ringland, IT Manager, regarding Cyber Security and Digital Risks.

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

AC/059/2026: AN ASSESSMENT OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability, regarding Assessment of Climate Change. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the contents of the report in relation to the assessment of climate change within the Council.

AC/060/2026: UPDATE ON CONCERN RAISED TO NIAO AND AUDIT COMMITTEE CHAIR

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Update on Concern Raised to NIAO and Audit Committee Chair. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note the letter of 18 June 2026 relating to the novation of Kilbroney Park Café to the party named in the

report was taken by Council following legal advice and scrutiny to ensure monies owing to Council were recovered, services continued and sufficient protection was in place to terminate any agreement following non-payment and/or non-performance.

INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/061/2026:

SUMER NI SUMMARY REPORT

Read:

Sumer NI Summary Report (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report, including the Internal Audit Plan.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.05pm

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed:

Mrs M Ward
Chief Executive

Signed:

Ms B Slevin
Independent Chairperson

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

31

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 10 August 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall**

Chairperson: Councillor K Feehan

Committee Members:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor Lee-Surginor
Councillor N Lawlor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor H Young

Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor W Clarke Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon

Officials in attendance: Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Ms S Stephenson, Head of Programmes
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance

via Teams: Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/073/2026: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor S Murphy and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism

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/074/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**ERT/075/2026: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 8 JUNE 2026**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 8 June 2026.
(Copy circulated)

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 8 June 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/076/2026: PEACEPLUS

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, advising members that Council had recently been advised that the funding opportunity detailed at section 2.1 had been unsuccessful and asked members to note that the application had been submitted. AS – 2.1 business cases, for approval as attached.

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

- **To note the minutes of PEACEPLUS Partnership on 30 July 2026.**
- **To note that an application for additional funding for delivery of summer programmes had been submitted.**
- **Approve the following business cases and commencement of procurement based on same:**
 - **3.2 Children’s Language Scheme (one district wide project).**
 - **3.2 Learn the Language of your Neighbour (one district wide project).**

ERT/077/2026: RING OF GULLION LPS LEGACY PROJECTS

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Scheme – Legacy phase projects. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, advising Members that the Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership had sought Expressions of Interest from its partnership members for the delivery of projects during the current financial year with those approved by the Partnership were detailed at Section 2.1 of the report, with further information on the proposed projects provided in the appendices.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to approve the issue of Service Level Agreements (SLA) for the delivery of**

three Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Legacy phase projects as set out in section 2 of the officers' report.

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

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

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

ERT/078/2026: BRCD ANNUAL REPORT

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Belfast Region City Deal – Annual Report. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the BRCD Annual Report 2025/26.

ERT/079/2026 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 1.1 & 2

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance: Call 1.1 Revenue and Call 2 Capital. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- To issue Letters of Offer to projects as per Council Policy to the groups recommended for the award of funding within the budget allocation for each theme.

- To agree that Pre-Letters of Offer conditions are to be met prior to issue of full Letter of Offer and where conditions are not satisfied, the budget will be reallocated to score and rank list if applicable.
- To issue a Letter of Offer under Community Events and Festivals theme following consideration of appeals.
- To proceed at risk to award funding under the Community Events and Festivals theme, to enable groups to deliver upon the objectives outlined in their applications.

ERT/080/2026

NEWRY CHAMBER MUSIC

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Newry Chamber Music – Ensemble in Residence & professional music programme. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

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

- To issue a Letter of Offer to Newry Chamber Music for the delivery of an Ensemble in Residence programme.
- To issue a Letter of Offer to Newry Chamber Music for the co-ordination of two Professional Music Performances: Irish Doctors Choir and the Fews Ensemble and Christmas Miscellany.

ERT/081/2026

ST PATRICKS DAY 2026/27

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding St Patricks Day 2026-27: SLA for Community Engagement and Carnival Floats. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

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

- To approve SLAs to the organisations named in the report to deliver schools engagement and enhanced float and parade content for Downpatrick and Newry St Patricks Day 2027 events.

- **To approve a pilot financial assistance call for community groups and businesses for the provision of St Patricks Day fringe activities.**

ERT/082/2026:

STRANGFORD & LECALÉ LANDSCAPE CONNECTIONS

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Strangford and Lecale Landscape Connections (NLHF application). **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Hanna, the following was agreed:

- **To note that an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the Strangford and Lecale Landscape Connections project has been successful for the initial development phase.**
- **To approve an additional match funding commitment for the Development Phase of the Strangford and Lecale Landscape Connections project, to be used only if external funding is not secured.**

FOR NOTING

ERT/083/2026:

GO SUCCEED UPDATE

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Go Succeed funding and future planning. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to note the update on Go Succeed funding and future planning.

ERT/084/2026:

NEWRY BID

Read:

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

Councillor Young placed on record her recognition and congratulations to the Newry BID team, noting that the comprehensive report demonstrated the hard work and effort undertaken and highlighted the wide range of activities delivered. She congratulated the team on their achievements.

AGREED:

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

ERT/085/2026

LOCAL GROWTH FUND CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Local Growth Fund Consultation. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to note Council's consultation response to Local Growth Fund.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.34pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026

Signed:

Councillor K Feehan
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed:

Conor Mallon
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Thursday 13 August 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic
Centre

In the Chair: Councillor C Bowsie

In Attendance in Chamber:

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor T Howie	Councillor A King
Councillor C King	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice	Councillor J Truesdale

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:

Councillor M Hearty	Councillor R Howell
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Taylor

Non-Committee Members in Attendance in Camber: Councillor T Andrews

Non-Committee Members in Attendance in via Teams: Councillor A Quinn

Officials in Attendance in Chamber:

Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Engagement
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Ms J Tierney, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance via Teams: Ms C Hughes, Head of Performance & Improvement

SPR/108/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, and Mrs Sinead Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment.

Councillor Bowsie took the opportunity to welcome Ms Jones to her role as Director of Corporate Services.

SPR/109/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

SPR/110/2026: ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2026

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 11 June 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 June 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/111/2026: OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION: ALL-ISLAND CITIZENS ASSEMBLY

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Officer Report on Notice of Motion: All-Island Citizens Assembly. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Quinn spoke of her pride at bringing the motion as a young woman from South Armagh, noting that her generation had grown up in the context of partition and the Good Friday Agreement. She said there was increasing discussion about Irish unity across all communities and emphasised the need for planning, preparation and inclusive dialogue to ensure that any future constitutional change worked for everyone.

She highlighted the aspirations of young people, farmers and workers for greater opportunity, improved services and economic security, stating that preparation was essential ahead of any future unity referendum. In response to concerns about costs, she noted that the Council had re-established the New Ireland Working Group, with an action plan already in place to support dialogue on constitutional issues and to engage with both supporters and opponents of Irish unity.

Councillor Reilly said he was opposed to the motion, stating that, while there may have been discussions about the constitutional future of the island, constituents he worked with, many within the Catholic, nationalist community, were content with the existing constitutional settlement and the benefits of being part of the United Kingdom. He expressed concern that Council funds could be used for what he considered to be a political and partisan proposal, which he believed could conflict with local government legislation. He reaffirmed his support for maintaining Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom and said that the existing constitutional settlement allowed people to express and celebrate their Irish identity and

culture, citing examples such as the Belfast Fleadh. He reiterated his objection to the motion and stated that he wished to request a recorded vote on the matter.

Councillor Taylor said he strongly opposed the motion as a committed Unionist, arguing that there was no evidence of growing support for constitutional change in Northern Ireland and that polling continued to indicate majority support for remaining within the United Kingdom. He stated that the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement provided for a border poll where sufficient evidence existed but confirmed that he did not believe that such circumstances currently existed. He said Council representatives should instead focus on issues that directly affected residents and expressed concern that the New Ireland Working Group and the motion could alienate the Unionist community. He emphasised that the Council should serve all citizens of Newry, Mourne and Down and work together on matters affecting the wider community and that Council officials should consider the implications of progressing work on constitutional matters and confirmed that he would not support the motion.

Councillor Byrne said he supported the motion and argued that, regardless of differing views on constitutional change, the Council had a responsibility to engage with its communities and prepare for any potential future changes. He said discussions through the New Ireland Working Group could address practical issues such as service duplication, infrastructure, healthcare and the wider all-island economy, noting the Council's involvement in the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC). He disagreed with Councillor Taylor's view that the conditions for a border poll were clearly defined in the Good Friday Agreement, arguing that the criteria were vague and left significant discretion to the Secretary of State. He said greater clarity was needed on what circumstances should trigger a poll and suggested that these criteria should be developed through democratic discussion across the island rather than determined solely by the UK Government.

Councillor Byrne supported the use of Citizens' Assemblies and other forums for discussion but said that stronger structures were needed to progress the work and therefore proposed an amendment to the motion as follows as a fourth bullet point:

"to write to the Irish Government to request that they establish a Ministry for a New Ireland, with a dedicated Minister to lead and advance discussions on the island's future"

This was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

Councillor Quinn accepted the amendment.

Councillor Reilly said that a similar proposal had previously been defeated in the Irish Parliament and therefore questioned the value of discussing the matter at Council level. He also raised concerns regarding the officer's assessment of the motion's potential equality and good relations implications, arguing that, from a unionist perspective, the proposal was clearly contentious and questioned the officer's conclusion that it was not likely to have an adverse effect on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Ms Kirk clarified that, when the report had been prepared, no equality issues had arisen. She noted that any decision taken by Council would subsequently be subject to equality screening where necessary, in accordance with the Council's ongoing obligations.

Councillor McAteer said he supported the motion, acknowledging that the issue could be controversial for Unionist parties. He argued that the Council had a responsibility to engage with the debate on the island's future, particularly in the interests of future generations, and said that increasing economic and social integration across Ireland made such discussions necessary. He emphasised that any potential constitutional change would be complex and required careful preparation rather than simplistic debate. Referring to Brexit, he said that inadequate preparation had resulted in difficulties afterwards and argued that similar issues should be avoided in relation to any future border poll and he therefore considered the motion necessary and was fully supportive of it.

Councillor King stated that there was an ongoing conversation about Irish unity and argued that a younger generation was seeking change and different approaches to housing, health and education. He questioned why there should be reluctance to engage with the debate when such discussions were taking place across the island. He referred to recent events such as the Belfast Féile and Belfast Fleadh that had brought people from different backgrounds together and said these demonstrated a growing sense of togetherness and an openness to alternative approaches.

Councillor Bowsie stated that conflating the Fleadh with Irish unity did a disservice to the event. He sought clarification from Councillor Quinn on what the motion would require the Council to do, particularly regarding listening to the views of residents across the district. He noted that the New Ireland Working Group was already directing Council officers to undertake work relating to Irish unity and expressed concern about the resources being devoted to what he considered to be politically motivated research, particularly given that no date had been set for a border poll.

Councillor Quinn clarified that she was not proposing any new structures or additional costs arising from the motion, rather that any research or associated work could be undertaken through the existing New Ireland Working Group, which was open to all Members.

Councillor Taylor assured Councillor King that there was also a younger generation committed to sustaining and protecting the Union and stated that support for the Union would not be relinquished easily.

Councillor Byrne clarified that the motion was not intended to direct Council officers to undertake politically charged work, but rather to ensure that the views of residents were sought. He said that residents would be able to express support, opposition or any other view on the work of the New Ireland Working Group, without being directed towards a particular position. He emphasised that the Council should use its existing engagement mechanisms, including NMD Speak, to consult residents on matters being considered by the Council and to ensure that their views were heard.

Councillor Bowsie said that, although neither he and his Party had attended the New Ireland Working Group, he had read the associated report and noted that Council officers had been asked to undertake research into planning and preparing for Irish unity, which he did not consider to be an appropriate role for Council officers or for local government.

Councillor Andrews said he had attended the New Ireland Working Group meeting and emphasised the importance of open debate and hearing different opinions. He expressed his

appreciation for Council officers, noting their professionalism and commitment to delivering work on behalf of the Council.

Ms Kirk outlined two actions arising from the discussions and requested clarification from Members, those being the writing of a letter as set out in the report, with the proposed amendment adding a fourth point calling for the establishment of a Ministry for a New Ireland; and consideration by Members of the next steps regarding engagement with residents, which could have resource implications. She sought clarification on whether the proposed engagement with residents was to be taken forward through the existing New Ireland Working Group and sought clarification on the points discussed during the debate that the final sentence was to be removed from the motion.

Councillor Quinn confirmed that any actions could be taken forward through the New Ireland Working Group and all other points were to remain as part of the motion. Regarding cost implementation, Councillor Quinn clarified that she did not anticipate any additional costs arising from the motion, stating that any work undertaken by the Council in relation to the motion would be linked to the existing New Ireland Working Group and that the motion did not specify any separate work or associated expenditure. She reiterated that the purpose was to ensure that the views of residents were heard, and the motion would remain as stated with the agreed upon amendment.

Councillor Byrne said that motions were often broad in nature and established a position of the Council, with officers subsequently tasked with considering how they should be progressed. He argued that it was premature to specify the precise nature of any future engagement with residents, reiterating that existing mechanisms, including the New Ireland Working Group and NMD Speak, could be used to communicate with residents and seek their views. He said that the proposed engagement should therefore remain within the motion, with officers bringing a further report to Members on how it could be taken forward and what resources might be available and expressed concern that an Elected Member was requested to retract an element of a motion.

Ms Kirk clarified that she had not requested any elected Member to retract a statement, explaining that her question had been solely to clarify whether the New Ireland Working Group was intended to be the mechanism for progressing the proposed engagement with residents and to clarify her understanding of the agreed upon actions following the discussion.

Councillor Bowsie agreed with Ms Kirk's clarification, stating that he did not believe she had asked any elected Member to retract their statements.

Councillor Byrne clarified that his statement related to an unrecorded discussion at the top table about what the next steps would be. He stated that, in his view, it was not necessary to determine the precise next steps before a motion could be agreed, as these could be considered and developed subsequently.

As there was dissent in the chamber, the amended motion was put to a recorded vote at the request of Councillor Reilly, the results of which were as follows:

FOR	10
AGAINST	3
ABSTENTION	2

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed that this Council notes the growing public discussion on the constitutional future of this island and recognises the provision within the Good Friday Agreement for the people of Ireland to decide that future through referendums. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Office of An Taoiseach, urging the Irish Government to plan and prepare for Irish unity through the following actions:

- **Establish an all-island Citizens' Assembly and a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish**
- **Unity;**
- **Produce and publish a plan towards Irish unity in conjunction with civic society and key**
- **stakeholders, including local government;**
- **Work to secure a date for a referendum on unity, as provided for in the Good Friday**
- **Agreement.**
- **Write to the Irish Government to request that they establish a Ministry for a New Ireland, with a dedicated Minister to lead and advance discussions on the island's future**

This Council further commits to ensuring that the voices of people across Newry, Mourne and Down are heard as part of this important conversation about the future of our island."

SPR/112/2026:

BRCD TOURISM EVENT

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, presented by Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding BRCD Tourism Event. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, advising that it provided an update on the BRCD Tourism Project and sought approval for the establishment of a project board to oversee its management, comprising seven elected Members as detailed in the report. She noted that a multidisciplinary team had been appointed in May following the April Strategy, Policy & Resources (SPR) Committee meeting and had since progressed the next steps identified at that meeting.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the proposed challenge fund for businesses but expressed disappointment that similar consideration had not been given to residents facing issues including traffic, parking, litter, anti-social behaviour, inadequate services and a lack of sustainable employment, arguing that addressing these basic issues would also help encourage

visitors to remain in the area. She raised concerns about the proposed project board, noting that no Terms of Reference (ToR) had been provided and that previous ToR had been subject to repeated changes. She sought greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the different groups, escalation arrangements, meeting frequency, chairing arrangements and reporting to SPR Committee, warning that a lack of clarity could lead to confusion and duplication.

Councillor Truesdale then proposed that meetings of the project board should be recorded, noting previous difficulties with minutes and information not being provided to SPR in a timely manner. This was seconded by Councillor Howie.

Councillor Truesdale also raised concerns regarding transparency and access to project documentation. Referring to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project, she questioned when a decision had been made not to include appendices relating to major capital projects in papers presented to SPR Committee for decision and asked whether this approach would be reconsidered to ensure greater transparency for the current project.

Councillor Byrne sought clarification from officers regarding the proposed establishment of the project board, stating that traditionally, the project board would first develop and agree its ToR, which would then be brought back to SPR for approval. He also acknowledged Councillor Truesdale's concerns about previous project boards and agreed that while improvements were needed, he emphasised that the role of a project board was to support officers in delivering an agreed capital project, rather than to revisit whether the project should proceed. He noted that Members could have differing views on aspects of a project while still working collectively to support its delivery.

Councillor Truesdale clarified that she was not seeking to set the ToR for the project board but wanted to ensure that lessons from previous arrangements were reflected in the new ToR, with greater openness and transparency. She emphasised that her role as an elected Member was to provide scrutiny, ask questions and seek clarification, particularly where she did not agree with aspects of a project, which she considered an important part of her role in considering any project or report brought before the Committee.

Mr Patterson confirmed that Councillor Byrne was correct that the proposed ToR for any programme board would be considered and agreed by the board at its first meeting and then brought back to the SPR Committee for approval.

Councillor Hanlon sought clarification on why programme board meetings were not currently recorded, noting that she had understood them to operate as working groups and had not been aware of any requirement for recording. She questioned whether agreeing to record this programme board would establish a precedent for recording other Council meetings. She also agreed with Councillor Byrne that the ToR should be established at the first meeting of the programme board. Referring to the Ulster-Scots Working Group as an example, she said that Members had recently agreed a process for developing its ToR and suggested that Members might be moving ahead of the established process by making decisions on these matters at this stage.

Mr Patterson clarified that programme board meetings could involve significant budget, risk, financial and commercially sensitive information for Members' consideration. However, he emphasised that any major decisions would still be brought back to the SPR Committee and to full Council for approval, citing an example of an investment decision between an outline business case (OBC) and full approval to appoint a contractor, noting that such decisions would return to the Committee and then proceed to full Council.

Councillor Reilly noted that a recent project board meeting had taken place at Newry Town Hall before works commenced on the Arts Centre and Town Hall, where the architects had explained the proposed works and sought Members' agreement, noting that there had been no facility to record that meeting. He expressed concern that the Alliance Party was creating the impression, through comments to the Council and local media, that there was a lack of transparency or an improper motive behind the project board process. He rejected this suggestion and stated that Members from across the political parties were working together in the interests of the District.

Councillor Bowsie sought clarification as to what Councillor Truesdale was proposing to be recorded, to which she confirmed it was solely audio.

Councillor Howie sought further clarification that any proposed ToR would be tabled at SPR for approval, to which Mr Patterson confirmed that was correct, as it outlined the layers of assurance and governance regarding programme boards.

Councillor Howie said that the questions being raised were intended to help ensure the project succeeded and that the funding delivered benefits for the district. She referred to concerns arising from the previous project, particularly regarding the recording and timely reporting of programme board discussions to SPR and said that lessons should be learned to improve transparency and oversight. She emphasised that Members had a responsibility to scrutinise projects and said that the questions were intended to help ensure the project was progressed effectively and transparently.

Councillor Howie also sought clarification on the engagement session held on 1 July, including its outcome, and asked how the planned community engagement in autumn 2026 would meaningfully inform the OBC, given that the OBC was due to return by the end of 2026 and the timeframe for incorporating community feedback appeared limited.

Mrs Smyth advised that the results of the business engagement event were not yet available, as the consultants were still compiling the information, however, early indications suggested that the event had been well received, with positive input from participating businesses and individuals. She said an update would be provided to Members at the first meeting of the new working group. In response to concerns about timescales, she explained that significant engagement would continue through the autumn and would be undertaken alongside preparation of the OBC. She confirmed that the consultants had structured the timetable to ensure that feedback from the engagement and consultation could be reflected in the OBC.

Councillor Bowsie noted that the Council's Audit Committee provided an opportunity for Members to scrutinise capital projects and the Corporate Risk Register. He referred to a

previous report tabled at July's Audit Committee which indicated that Alliance Members had the lowest attendance at the Committee and suggested that this was an available forum for the scrutiny concerns being raised.

Councillor Hanlon said that the Committee risked becoming overly focused on procedural detail and emphasised the importance of maintaining a balance between scrutiny and progressing the project positively. Drawing on her experience of SPR and audit and governance matters, she said that lessons had been learned from the previous project, particularly regarding land ownership, and welcomed the early engagement undertaken by officers. She highlighted the significant funding being brought into the district and said that Members should focus on supporting the project while continuing to provide appropriate scrutiny. She welcomed the engagement with the business and community sectors and emphasised the potential for the project to deliver significant investment in tourism across Newry, Mourne and Down.

Councillor McAteer echoed Councillor Hanlon's comments, saying that the focus should remain on the significant investment coming into the district and ensuring that the funding was spent properly. He defended Council officers against criticism, noting that major public-sector projects required careful planning, scrutiny and a longer timescale than private-sector projects. He welcomed the proposed project board and considered the timescale positive, given the complexity of bringing together a number of projects across three areas, stating that officers were right to take a cautious approach to ensure that proposals were properly developed and scrutinised before being submitted for approval.

Councillor Truesdale clarified that her comments were intended as scrutiny rather than creating a conspiracy, stating that she remained supportive of the project. She confirmed that her Party had consistently supported the project because of its potential to spread economic benefits across the district. She reiterated her request for clarification on when and where the decision had been made not to attach appendices to capital projects brought before the Committee for decision and asked whether that approach would now be reversed.

Mr Patterson said he was unaware of any formal decision to stop attaching appendices to capital project reports. He explained that, where documents were particularly lengthy or included numerous appendices, they could instead be provided as background documents and made available to Members on request.

Councillor Bowsie sought confirmation from Councillor Truesdale that she was content with the assurances regarding ToR, to which she confirmed she was and withdrew her proposal.

Councillors Andrews and Bowsie spoke in support of the planned investment for their local areas.

Cllr Howell left the meeting at this stage – 7.03pm

AGREED:

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

- **To note the ongoing work in relation to the development of the BRCD Outline Business Case (OBC) and project timeline.**
- **To agree the establishment of a Project Board for the management of the BRCD Tourism Project with 7 Councillors and membership to be formed as follows – 2 Sinn Féin, 2 SDLP, 1 DUP, 1 Alliance, 1 UUP / Independent.**

SPR/113/2026:

ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 2025/26

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, presented by Ms C Hughes, Acting Head of Performance and Improvement, regarding Assessment of Performance 2025/26. (Copy circulated)

Ms Hughes asked Members to consider and approve the assessment of performance for 2025/26 as set out in the report, confirming that the final planning statistics, once released at year-end, be incorporated into the published report and that any changes from the draft statistics currently included be circulated to Members for information.

In proposing the report, Councillor Byrne highlighted the significant increase in leisure centre usage, particularly at Newry Leisure Centre, noting that visitor numbers had risen from approximately 330,000 to 500,000 and that memberships had increased by almost 25%. He commended the AHC and Leisure Services teams for their work and said the figures demonstrated strong public confidence in the service, taking the opportunity to praise the staff and the improvements implemented at Newry Leisure Centre.

Councillor Hanlon concurred with Councillor Byrne's comments and noted the tangible improvements to Council leisure facilities. She also raised concerns regarding planning performance, saying that the volume of queries received through both her role as a councillor and the MLA Office suggested that progress remained inconsistent. While acknowledging the pressure on planning staff, she questioned whether applications should continue to be dealt with solely in the order received, suggesting that greater consideration could be given to applications that could be determined more quickly or which had significant economic value. She requested that senior management consider providing Members with a more comprehensive report on planning performance and progress, to assist elected representatives in responding to residents' concerns.

Mr Patterson noted Members' comments and advised that a detailed report on the planning service was due to be prepared for the next Audit Committee, with the possibility of it also being presented to SPR in September. He confirmed that Mr McGilly would be drafting the report for consideration by the Committee.

Councillor Truesdale echoed the positive comments regarding Council performance but noted that issues remained within the planning service. She highlighted cases that appeared to become delayed between Planning Enforcement and Legal Services, resulting in prolonged

cases and potentially increasing the scale of issues requiring resolution. She also sought clarification on the performance figure relating to 236 new jobs being “promoted”, asking whether this referred to jobs actually created.

Mrs Smyth explained that “jobs promoted” was a statutory performance indicator reported annually under the Go Succeed programme. She said the figure was calculated using an agreed formula based on the number of business plans produced through the programme and was effectively an estimate of jobs created.

Councillor Reilly raised concerns about the Council’s performance objective to improve cleanliness by addressing littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling. He said that the reference to reducing dog fouling appeared aspirational rather than practical, particularly given the level of incidents across the district. He expressed concern that the Council had been unable to secure prosecutions to deter irresponsible dog owners and stressed that performance statements needed to be supported by tangible improvements in services if they were to retain public confidence.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howie, the following was agreed:

- **The Assessment of Performance 2025-26, including the summary document ‘Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward’.**
- **That the finalised planning statistics 2025-26 be included in the final report to be published on the website and that any changes from the unvalidated data reported be sent to all members for information.**

SPR/114/2026:

AIDS TO NAVIGATION REPAIRS ON STRANGFORD LOUGH

Read:

Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, and Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Aids to Navigation Repairs on Strangford Lough. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth advised that a consultant’s review of the navigational aids along Strangford Lough had identified a number of required improvements, including the replacement of obsolete aids, repairs to existing equipment and the installation of new navigational aids at certain locations. She noted that some maintenance work had already been undertaken and that the Council was now seeking to progress the remaining recommendations, with the relevant business case and associated costs included in the report.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the business case and associated budget to enable Council to implement the key findings of the Review of Navigational Aids to improve

navigational safety and ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as the Local Lighthouse Authority for its area of Strangford Lough.

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Reilly, 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 McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/115/2026: BUSINESS CASE - IDOX IT SYSTEMS

Read: Report from Mr G Ringland, IT Manager, presented by Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Continued Use of IDOX Line of Business IT Systems. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the attached business case and approve the continued use of the IDOX line-of-business IT systems through a direct award under the Government Commercial Agency Framework Agreement RM6259 (Vertical Application Solutions), Lot 3 with the incumbent supplier. This represents a compliant procurement route and will ensure continuity of service and support for the Council's critical business systems.

SPR/116/2026: HEALTH CASH PLAN AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Read: Report from Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager, regarding Health Cash Plan and Employee Assistance Programme. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to support the continuation of the scheme and the outline business case for the scheme as outlined at appendix 1 of the officer's report.

SPR/117/2026: FMA/SLA PROPOSALS

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Community Development, regarding FMA/SLA Proposals. (Copy circulated)

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

- A one-year extension of the current FMAs and SLAs relating to community centres to facilitate a comprehensive review of contract specifications and service delivery.
- The uplift in funding allocation to community groups who currently run community facilities under an FMA or SLA based on all relevant groups fully claiming the uplifted amount.
- The incorporation of the Community Development Strategy public consultation findings into the future re-procurement strategy for the facilities.

SPR/118/2026: ANNALONG HARBOUR

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Annalong Harbour. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to approve the preferred option of the business case for the appointment of the Civil Engineering Framework Contractor to complete the recommended remedial works at the South Pier and the further investigations as outlined in section 2.6 of the officer's report.

SPR/119/2026: TYRELLA WINTER GRAZING AND KILBRONEY CONACRE

Read: Report from Ms E kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Tyrella Winter Grazing and Kilbroney Conacre. (Copy circulated)

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed that Council's agent seek to make an appointment for the following by conacre agreements:
- The conservation winter grazing of the dunes at Tyrella for 2 years.
 - The area detailed at Kilbroney Park, which is approved for 2 years but only let annually.

SPR/120/2026: CHARGED PARKING AUTOMATION AT FOREST PARKS

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Charged Parking Automation at Forest Parks. (Copy circulated)

Cllr O'Hare left the meeting at this stage – 7.44pm.

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the updated capital budget for charged parking as detailed at section 2 and 4 of the officer's report.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howie, that a workshop would be held with Members in advance of the implementation of the new charged parking automation.

SPR/121/2026: FUNDING REPAYMENT

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Funding Repayment. (Copy circulated)

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed that the organisation named in the report are permitted to apply for financial assistance on the condition that they continue their repayments.

SPR/122/2026: INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UPDATE

Read: Report from Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager, regarding Industrial Relations Update. (Copy circulated)

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

- To note the agreed IR Framework documents to date and the proposed approach to reach agreement to progress the Trade Union Co-ordinator job description.
- To note the finance and resources associated with the establishment of 2 permanent Trade Union Co-ordinator posts and approve the temporary HR and payroll posts to support the workplan activities, as set out in section 2.4 of the officer's report for a period of up to 3 years.

SPR/123/2026:

LEASE OF LIBRARY SPACE AT CROSSMAGLEN COMMUNITY CENTRE

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Lease of Library Space at Crossmaglen Community Centre. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to grant a lease of that portion of Crossmaglen Community Centre as outlined in red on the map attached to the officers report for a term of 99 years subject to the yearly market rent as set out in this report and the continued contribution towards running costs of Crossmaglen Community Centre.
It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, that officers bring further information back on third party users.

SPR/124/2026:

LEASE OF LAND ADJACENT TO MEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Lease of Land Adjacent to Meigh Community Centre. (Copy circulated)

Cllr Taylor left the meeting at this stage – 7.54pm

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to enter into a lease with the group noted in the report in respect of that portion of the lands adjacent to Meigh Community Centre as outlined in red on the map attached to the officer's report for a term of 25

years at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.

SPR/125/2026:

REQUEST FOR EASEMENT AT LIGHTHOUSE CAR PARK CASTLEWELLAN

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Request for Easement at Lighthouse Car Park Castlewellan. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor A 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 officers report to the adjoining Landowner for market value consideration, subject to payment of Council's legal and valuation costs.

SPR/126/2026:

LICENCE FOR PORTION OF BURREN VILLAGE GREEN

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Licence for Portion of Burren Village Green. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

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/127/2026:

SURRENDER OF LEASE AT BURRENBRIDGE ROAD, CASTLEWELLAN

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Surrender of Least at Burrenbridge Road, Castlewellan. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to permit the group named within the report to surrender the lease in respect of the lands at Burrenbridge Road, Castlewellan back to Council.

SPR/128/2026:

BOUNDARY RECTIFICATION AT AMERACAM LANE, CRANFIELD

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Boundary Rectification at Ameracam Lane, Cranfield. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to rectify the registered title boundary between the dwelling known detailed on the attached map and Council's private road known as Ameracam Lane, Cranfield, subject to the owner agreeing to pay Council's legal costs.

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

SPR/129/2026:

NILGA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 2026/27

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, presented by Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Annual NILGA Subscription. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the annual NILGA Subscription fee for 26/27.

SPR/130/2026:

LOCAL AUTHORITY DEEDS

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Local Authority Deeds. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.

FOR NOTING

SPR/131/2026:

SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD APRIL – JUNE 2026 AND NMD COUNCIL AND PUBLIC AUTHORITY STATUTORY, EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS DUTIES ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2025-26

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Section 75 Policy Screening Quarterly Report for Period

April – June 2026 and NMD Council and Public Authority Statutory, Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-26. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

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

- **To note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026**
- **To note NMD District Council's Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report for the period 2025 – 2026 for submission to the Equality Commission for NI by 31 August 2026.**

SPR/132/2026:

RURAL NEEDS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the rural needs impact assessments undertaken during 2025-26 reporting period (Appendix 1) details of which will be submitted to DAERA through the new online portal to meet their requested deadline of 2 October 2026.

SPR/133/2026:

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026 ON REQUESTS RELATED TO NAMING COUNCIL FACILITIES, PLANTING TREES AND TO LOCATE ARTWORKS/SCULPTURES ON COUNCIL PROPERTY

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on Requests Related to Naming Council Facilities, Planting Trees and to Locate Artworks/Sculptures on Council Property. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on Requests Related to Naming Council Facilities,

**Planting Trees and to Locate Artworks/Sculptures
on Council Property.**

**SPR/134/2026: ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING
ACTIONS AND MEASURES – DIRECTORATE BUSINESS
PLANS 2025-2026**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People,
regarding Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and
Measures – Directorate Business Plans 2025-2026 (Copy
circulated)

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by
Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note
Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions
and Measures as detailed at Appendix 1.**

SPR/135/2026: 2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM MONITORING STATISTICS

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People,
regarding 2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM Monitoring Statistics. (Copy
circulated)

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by
Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the
monitoring statistics.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 8.13pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed: _____
Councillor Callum Bowsie
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Marie Ward
Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 13/08/2026. VENUE: Mourne Room. MEETING: SPR Committee.

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Item 4 – Officer Report on Notice of Motion (as amended) – All Island Citizens Assembly.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
C Bowsie		Against		
P Byrne	For			
O Hanlon	For			
M Hearty	For			
R Howell	For			
T Howie			Abstain	
A King	For			
C King	For			
A Mathers	For			
D McAteer	For			
S O'Hare	For			
H Reilly		Against		
M Rice	For			
D Taylor		Against		
J Truesdale			Abstain	
TOTALS	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	07 September 2026
Subject:	Addendum to the Assessment of Performance 2025-26 – Finalised Planning Statistics
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward – Chief Executive
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Catherine Hughes – Acting Head of Performance and Improvement

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-														
For decision		For noting only		X										
1.0	Purpose and Background													
1.1	Part 12 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires District Councils to put in place arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the exercise of their functions. Through the Act, the Council has a statutory requirement to produce and publish an Assessment of Performance before 30 September each year. The legislation states that the Assessment of Performance must outline the Council’s progress in relation to the General Duty of Improvement, as well as planned improvements against the previous year’s: • Performance improvement objectives • Statutory performance indicators and standards for economic development, planning and waste management • Self imposed performance indicators													
2.0	Key issues													
2.1	The publication of the finalised annual planning statistics 2025-26 from the Department of Infrastructure (DfI) was delayed until the 26 August 2026. This meant that the data reported in the Assessment of Performance report 2025-26 document was in draft and unvalidated. At SPR Committee, Council proposed to include the finalised results from DfI in the publication that will be published on the website by 30 September and the Head of Performance and Improvement proposed sending through a summary of any changes from what was reported to all members of the SPR Committee, which was agreed.													
2.2	The table below provides a summary of what was reported in relation to the planning statistics at SPR Committee, the finalised annual statistics released by the Department and the difference between the two. <table><tr><td>Measures of success</td><td>Target</td><td>2025-26 Draft Statistics</td><td>2025-26 Finalised Statistics</td><td>Change</td></tr><tr><td>Average processing time for</td><td><15 weeks</td><td>60.2</td><td>45.8</td><td>-14.4</td></tr></table>				Measures of success	Target	2025-26 Draft Statistics	2025-26 Finalised Statistics	Change	Average processing time for	<15 weeks	60.2	45.8	-14.4
Measures of success	Target	2025-26 Draft Statistics	2025-26 Finalised Statistics	Change										
Average processing time for	<15 weeks	60.2	45.8	-14.4										

	local planning applications (weeks)					
	Average processing time of major planning applications (weeks)	<30 weeks	100.3	58.8	-41.5	
	Percentage of planning enforcement cases progressed within 39 weeks	70%	36.4%	58.0%	+21.6%	
	Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or more	150	Not available	519		
	Number of planning applications in the system for 12 months or less	700	Not available	977		
	Number of enforcement cases in the system 12 months or more	450	Not available	644		
2.3	The finalised statistics show a lower average processing time for local and major planning applications and a higher percentage of enforcement cases progressed, however none have achieved the statutory standard for 2025-26. A more detailed analysis and narrative for all the planning measures above is available in the Assessment of Performance report which now includes the finalised annual planning statistics. The Council will publish this on their website following full ratification by Council and before 30 September 2026.					
3.0	Recommendations					
3.1	To note the addendum to the Assessment of Performance 2025-26, including the finalised annual planning statistics.					

4.0	Resource implications
4.1	There are no financial resource implications within this report.
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> 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	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> 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) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i> Consultation not required.
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 ☐

7.0	Appendices
8.0	Background Documents
	- Local Government Act (NI) 2014 (Part 12) - Assessment of Performance 2025-26

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2026

Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 17 August 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers, Downshire Civic Centre

Chairperson: Councillor T Howie

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor P Campbell	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor A King
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor K Murphy

Committee Members in attendance via Teams:

Councillor D Finn	Councillor R Howell
Councillor N Lawlor	Councillor A Lewis

Non-Committee Members in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C King
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Non-Committee Members in attendance via team: Councillor J Tinnelly

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
Ms D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

AHC/053/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Brennan.

The Chairperson congratulated Kate O’Connor on her outstanding recent achievements, winning gold in the heptathlon at the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and gold at the European Championships in Birmingham. Her success was a remarkable achievement and one that deserved recognition and on behalf of the Committee congratulations were extended to Kate, her family, coaches and everyone who supported her along the way and everyone wished her every success in the future.

AHC/054/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

AHC/055/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2026

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 15 June 2026. (Copy circulated).

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 15 June 2026.**

AHC/056/2026: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE REPORT

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

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

- **Crotlieve DEA Forum Meeting held on 9 June 2026**
- **Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting held on 9 June 2026**
- **Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 16 June 2026**
- **Rowallane DEA Forum Meeting held on 16 June 2026**
- **Slieve Croob DEA Forum Meeting held on 23 June 2026**
- **Mournes DEA Forum Meeting held on 21 July 2026**

AHC/057/2026: CANCER EXERCISE REFERRAL AND MOVE MORE PROGRAMME

Read: Report from Conor Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding the Cancer Exercise Referral and Move More Pathway. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Mathers spoke in support of the recommendations and how he had met with those who had availed of the service and how there was a feeling of well-being and companionship among the group. He spoke of the importance of monitoring and reviewing

the new programme at an early stage to ensure that those moving to it found the classes suitable and sustainable for them.

Councillor Lee-Surginor spoke in support of the programme and the opportunities afforded to those affected by cancer. He enquired if there were any plans for the programme to be extended beyond Downpatrick and Newry to the likes of Ballynahinch, Saintfield, Newcastle etc.

Mr Haughey responded by explaining the Move More Programme was carried out with the Be Active classes and that would continue, however the main issue was resources with only one lead Council officer delivering these. He added initially it would go back to Newry and Downpatrick Leisure Centres with referrals from the South Eastern Trust the Southern Trust and if funding became available it was hoped that extension of the programme could be examined.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to approve the introduction of the revised 12-week Cancer Exercise Referral Programme from September 2026 and allow for the retention and integration of Move More within the Be Active for Life timetable as an ongoing physical activity and progression class.**

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

Read: Report from Conor Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living regarding the Notice of Motion in relation to additional training provision for Gaelic Games. (Copy circulated)

In welcoming the report, Councillor Campbell thanked officers and explained the basis of the motion was to try and utilise the amount of space that existed within Council facilities. He acknowledged that the amount of money and investment from Council in sports infrastructure had been phenomenal with an increase in the level of facilities however some were not used as much as they should. He suggested looking at alternative routes to get as much provision in place and see if Council could provide for local clubs that were experiencing growth and development in the uptake of the game and used his local club Saul GAC as an example of that.

The Chairperson said she appreciated the motion was specifically in relation to Gaelic games however all sports within District were growing and she was seeing that for soccer clubs particularly within the Rowallane area.

Councillor Jackson commented that the motion was examining provision within multi sports hubs and catering for Gaelic games and that his Party urged caution. They had concerns

that other sports would get less time on some of the pitches if there was an increase in Gaelic games activity, therefore until there was more information on how it would progress he requested a recorded vote.

Councillor A King spoke in support of the report and recommendations presented.

Mr Haughey advised that when officers examined underutilised pitches, it would be to ensure that no club would be at a deficit, regardless of whether it was a Gaelic club or a soccer club. He added that officers examined operational need and bookings to ensure all clubs had equal access to use of facilities, unless there was a lease arrangement that provided for sole use of it and that would be under Council's Service Level Agreements to clubs.

Councillor Lawlor queried whether the potential multi-use game area facility in Kilkeel, which was the subject of funding, was to be included within the review.

Mr Haughey responded by confirming the multi-use game area would be a 3G surface to facilitate all codes of sport including rugby and soccer also and would be part of that and utilised as per the booking process.

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

FOR:	10
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	2

The Chairperson declared the recommendations passed.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Mathers, the following was agreed:

- **Note the Notice of Motion and the issues raised in relation to additional training provision for Gaelic Games.**
- **Recognise the work already undertaken through the adopted Sports Facilities Strategy and Multi Sports Hub Reviews to assess existing sporting facilities and current and future Gaelic Games facility requirements.**
- **Acknowledge the programme of strategic investment supporting Gaelic Games across the district, as summarised in Appendix 1 of this report.**
- **Support continued engagement between officers, clubs, governing bodies and other**

stakeholders to identify practical opportunities to make effective use of existing Council sporting facilities, to support increased participation and to inform the future implementation and periodic review of the Council's Sports Facilities Strategy.

AHC/059/2026:

OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS (SEN) PROVISION.

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development regarding the Notice of Motion on Special Needs (SEN) Provision. (Copy circulated)

Councillor C King thanked officers for the action focused report and how on a personal note he had seen first-hand the difference the right support, opportunities and provision could make to a person's life. He spoke of his own personal understanding growing up alongside a lady called Annette and how important this access was for the individual and for the whole family. He spoke of how his role as a Councillor, and through constituency work, he had seen the same challenges being raised by families again and again with parents and carers highlighting the lack of SEN provision.

He said the recommendations firstly provided an opportunity to establish current levels of funding and investment with the recommendation to write to the Departments of Education, Health and Communities seeking a breakdown of SEN funding and investment allocated to the district, including support for rural families, specialist provision and summer schemes being extremely important. He stated there was a need to know what investment was actually reaching communities and understand where the gaps were.

Secondly, he welcomed the commitment to integrate the core objectives of the motion into the review of Council's Disability and Equality Action Plans which provided an opportunity to make SEN and disability inclusion part of how Council operated rather than treating it as a standalone issue. He pointed out Council needed to look at its own facilities, accessibility and participation and went on to use the practical example of where there was an opportunity to put those principles into practice with the new City Park, Newry. He spoke of ensuring that families with children and young people with additional needs could access the park and more importantly, that they could actually use and enjoy the facilities with accessible provision, sensory considerations and play equipment that was inclusive and allowed children of different abilities to play alongside their peers.

Thirdly he welcomed the recommendation around the Community Planning Partnership, an area where real progress could be made and how by formally asking statutory partners in Health and Education for a comprehensive update on SEN provision across the district, identifying local service gaps and looking at how statutory, community and voluntary organisations could work together and how that joined-up approach was essential.

Councillor C King welcomed the Financial Assistance grants available to the community and voluntary sector stating it was important that those organisations knew what support was

available through Council and be encouraged to bring forward initiatives that could help meet local needs.

Finally, he welcomed the commitment to continue identifying opportunities to support and promote the SEN sector through Council facilities and programme provision as he believed that was where Council could make a practical difference.

Councillor Mathers made reference to recommendation 3.1.5 within the report to consider whether a Summer Scheme for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs could be piloted in the District as a means of opening up summer scheme opportunities alongside those which were open to children without disabilities/additional needs. He stated that budget provision should be considered as part of Community Development's budget estimates for 2027/28.

He took the opportunity to highlight local fun days that had taken place recently across Newry stating a pilot scheme provided an opportunity and welcomed movement on it as soon as possible.

The Chairperson welcomed the recommendation stating it was pertinent to consider it as a Council especially with the Education Minister's decision to remove SEN summer scheme provision over the summer.

Councillor Jackson commended officers for the report stating that on behalf of himself and his party SEN provision was taken very seriously and that it was vital and important to families within the community who it affected. He added the Education Minister, Paul Givan had increased SEN classes since he had come in post and also Cheryl Brownlee, MLA, who recently launched an initiative entitled Every Child Matters. This was a guide for parents to get more clear information on the issue and local services and organisations.

Councillor Galbraith spoke in support of the report and recommendations and having worked as a youth worker for 20+ years said anything that Council could do to support those young people and adults had to be welcomed.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed to:

- **Write to the Departments of Education, Health and Communities seeking a breakdown of SEN funding and investment allocated to the Newry, Mourne and Down and South Armagh areas, including support for rural families, specialist provision and summer schemes;**
- **Corporate Policy Section to integrate the core objectives of this Notice of Motion into the upcoming review of Council's Disability and Equality Action Plans. This**

will ensure Council actively addresses the rising need for SEN support, improves facility accessibility and creates targeted opportunities for families. This aligns with the current action to promote positive attitudes and increase participation in public life;

- Formalise a request through the Community Planning Partnership asking statutory partners in Health and Education to provide a comprehensive update on current SEN provision across the District. This update should identify local service gaps and outline how statutory, community and voluntary partners can collaborate to better support families;
- Community Development can continue to raise awareness of the potential for Financial Assistance grants to support local community and voluntary groups delivering SEN-focused initiatives;
- Consider whether a Summer Scheme for children and young people with disabilities and/or additional needs could be piloted in the District as a means of opening up summer scheme opportunities alongside those which are open to children without disabilities/additional needs. Budget provision to be considered as part of Community Development's budget estimates for 2027/28;
- Officers will continue to identify opportunities to support and promote the SEN sector through facilities and programme provision where possible.

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

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Magennis, 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 Campbell, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

AHC/060/2026: **SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT WITH EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, regarding the issuing of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) (multi-annual depending on budgets) until 2029 through the Council Grants and Funding Unit, verified in line with Council procedures. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor K Murphy it was agreed to issue a Service Level Agreement (multi-annual depending on budgets) until 2029 through the Council Grants and Funding Unit, verified in line with Council procedures.**

AHC/061/2026: **RENEWAL OF NI MAPPING AGREEMENT (NIMA)**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, regarding payment of the annual charges associated with the Northern Ireland Mapping Agreement. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Mathers it was agreed to proceed with the Payment of the Northern Ireland Mapping Agreement annual charge as set out in this report.**

FOR NOTING

AHC/062/2026: **FUNDED PROGRAMME DELIVERY UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development regarding an update on Funded Programme Delivery. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mathers it was agreed to note the officer's report and attached responses.**

AHC/063/2026: GET ACTIVE NI

Read: Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living regarding officers' intention to submit an application to Sport NI under the Get Active NI 2026/27 funding programme to pilot the Council's Be Active Pathways participation framework. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mathers it was agreed to note the officer's report.**

AHC/064/2026: IPB PRIDE OF PLACE AWARDS 2027

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development regarding an update on the hosting of the Pride of Place Awards. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Mathers took the opportunity to wish Road Ahead NI the best of luck following their nomination from the Newry DEA for the competition.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mathers it was agreed to note the update regarding the initiative as set out in the officer's report.**

AHC/065/2026: NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP REPORT

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mathers it was agreed to note the attached Minutes of the Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Meeting held on 20 May 2026, approved at the Newry NRP Meeting held on 24 June 2026.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.44pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed: _____
Councillor T Howie
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 17/08/2026. VENUE: Mourne Room. MEETING: AHC Committee.

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Item 6 – Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Additional Training Provision for Gaelic Games.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
J Brennan				Absent
P Campbell	For			
D Finn	For			
C Galbraith	For			
M Gibbons				Absent
R Howell				Absent
T Howie	For			
J Jackson			Abstain	
A King	For			
N Lawlor	For			
D Lee-Surginor	For			
A Lewis			Abstain	
O Magennis	For			
A Mathers	For			
K Murphy	For			
TOTALS	10		2	3

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2026

Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 19 August 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chair: Councillor M Ruane

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:

Councillor J Brennan	Councillor D Finn
Councillor M Hearty	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young

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/094/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell and Taylor.

SE/095/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/096/2026: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2026

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 June 2026. (Copy circulated)

SE/076/2026 – Bus Shelter Requests

In response to a query on the above item from Councillor Andrews, Mr Sage advised that officers would revert to him outside of the meeting.

SE/046/2024 – Notice of Motion – Newry Market

In response to a query from Councillor Feehan regarding Newry Christmas market and whether there are any plans for this to be a permanent event, Mr Sage advised that officers would revert to him outside of the meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 June 2026.**

Although not included on the action sheet, Councillor Jackson enquired about the review of public toilets across the District. Mr Sage advised that condition surveys had been undertaken across Council facilities and that the findings would inform the prioritisation of refurbishment and replacement works. He further advised that an update would be provided to the September Sustainability and Environment Working Group.

Members commended the Cleansing Department for its work in maintaining the cleanliness and appearance of the district during several high-profile events held over the summer period.

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/097/2025: SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Update on the Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy following Public Consultation. (Copy circulated)

Mr Sage presented the report seeking approval for the publication and launch of the final Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy. He advised that the strategy had been subject to public consultation following Committee approval in October 2025 and that feedback received from Members, staff, stakeholders and the public had informed the final draft. He noted that amendments arising from the consultation process were set out in Appendix 1 and that, subject to Council ratification, the strategy was scheduled for launch in September 2026, supported by a communications and awareness campaign.

In proposing the recommendations, Councillor Andrews welcomed the broad range of contributions received during the consultation process and highlighted the importance of securing support from a variety of stakeholders on such a significant issue. This was seconded by Councillor Feehan

Councillor Jackson requested a recorded vote on the item, stating that the DUP could not support the recommendations on the basis that it did not agree with the target of achieving Net Zero by 2050, which it considered to be unachievable.

This was endorsed by Councillor Reilly, who expressed concerns regarding aspects of the Strategy and stated that he considered the images used of flooding in Downpatrick and Newry to be misleading. He argued that flooding in the Clanrye and Quoile rivers was attributable to a lack of dredging and that local carbon reduction measures would not prevent such flooding. He further stated that local decarbonisation measures would have limited impact in the context of global emissions.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the strategy and commended the work undertaken in its development. She highlighted the clear five-theme framework and noted the strategy’s focus on direct emissions reductions, alignment with statutory requirements, inclusion of baseline carbon emissions data and consideration of local climate impacts. She sought clarification on the monitoring of actions and whether budgets, ownership and implementation details would be incorporated into future iterations of the action plan.

In response, Mr Sage advised that the action plan represented the first year of implementation and would be developed further, including the identification of budgets and action owners. He noted that many actions would require business cases and funding, with priority given to measures that would deliver the greatest impact. He added that progress would be reported annually and that the action plan would be reviewed and updated on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Finn welcomed the strategy and echoed the comments regarding the work undertaken in its preparation. She highlighted the importance of the Council demonstrating leadership in addressing climate change and sought details on how the strategy would be promoted and communicated to the public.

Mr Sage advised that the launch of the strategy would be supported by a public awareness campaign developed in conjunction with the Communications and Marketing Department, together with engagement activities involving schools and community groups. He further advised that the Head of Sustainability would provide Councillor Finn with additional information on the launch arrangements outside of the meeting.

As there was dissent within the Chamber, the item was put to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows: (copy appended to minutes).

FOR	11
AGAINST	2
ABSTENTION	0

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Feehan, to note the contents of the report and the outcomes of the public consultation process and to approve progression of the final draft Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy for publication and launch.

SE/098/2025: **CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS UNDER THE TOBACCO AND VAPES ACT**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Consultation on proposals under the Tobacco and Vapes Act. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor advised the report sought approval to submit Council's response to the Department of Health and Social Care consultation on regulatory proposals under the Tobacco and Vapes Act. She advised that the consultation sought views on proposals relating to the packaging, appearance and retail display of tobacco, vaping and nicotine products.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the report, describing it as a strong and consistent response in support of tighter regulation. She noted that the protection of children and young people was a key theme throughout the response, together with the need for consistency across product types and the importance of ensuring that existing regulatory requirements did not hinder the introduction of new measures.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, the submission of the Environmental Health Department's consultation response detailed in appendix 1 of the officers' report, to the Department of Health and Social Care proposals for regulatory reform on packaging, appearance and display requirements was agreed.**

SE/099/2025: **THE TOY SAFETY REGULATIONS: CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Response to The Toy Safety Regulations: call for evidence. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor advised that the purpose of the report was to seek approval to submit the Council's response to the Office for Product Safety and Standards consultation on proposed changes to the Toy (Safety) Regulations 2011. She advised that the consultation sought views on implementing elements of the new EU Toy Safety Regulation, with the aim of enhancing child protection and reducing the number of unsafe and non-compliant toys placed on the UK market.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, to approve the submission detailed at appendix 1 of the officers' report, in response to the call for evidence from the Office for Product Safety & Standards on considerations for recognition of new**

EU product requirements to The Toy (Safety Regulations) within UK.

76

SE/100/2025:

DAERA CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT AIR QUALITY (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS

Read: Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding DAERA consultation on the Draft Air Quality (Amendment) Regulations. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Trainor advised that the purpose of the report was to seek approval to submit the Council's response to the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) consultation on proposed legislative amendments to strengthen air quality standards for particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) in Northern Ireland. She advised that the proposed amendments aimed to reduce harmful air pollution, protect public health and align local standards more closely with World Health Organisation guidance and emerging standards across the UK and Ireland. She further noted that DAERA had included 14 consultation questions, and the Council's proposed responses were set out in Appendix A of the officer's report.

In response to a query from Councillor Andrews regarding engagement with key sectors, including agriculture, Mrs Trainor confirmed that the consultation had been conducted on a public basis and that all interested organisations and stakeholders had the opportunity to submit responses.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the report and expressed support for the proposed strengthening of air quality standards. She noted the well-established health impacts of particulate matter and agreed with officers' assessment that the proposed compliance date of 1 January 2028 would be challenging to achieve. She further acknowledged that delays in progressing the wider Clean Air Strategy had contributed to the timescales facing Councils.

Councillor Truesdale confirmed her support for the report recommendations and reiterated her support for the establishment of an independent Environmental Protection Agency, recognising the importance of clean air, clean water and the natural environment to public wellbeing.

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to note the contents of the report concerning DAERA proposals to tighten annual average particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) limits, targets and objectives in Northern Ireland, approve the proposed consultation response detailed at appendix 1 of the officers report and agree that it is submitted to DAERA by the consultation deadline of 31 August 2026, subject to approval at Full Council.

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 O'Hare, 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 D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Jackson, 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/101/2026: BUSINESS CASE – VEHICLE AND GROUNDS MAINTENANCE EQUIPMENT PARTS

Read: Report from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding Business Case – Vehicle and Grounds Maintenance Equipment Parts. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, to approve the recommendations of the business case as detailed in section 2.6 of the officers' report.

SE/102/2026: BUSINESS CASE – FOREST PARK ROUTEWAYS AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE WORKS

Read: Report from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability regarding Business Case – Forest Park Routeways and Associated Landscape Works. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to approve the recommendation of the business case as detailed at section 2.5 of the officers' report.

SE/103/2026:

CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

Read:

Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Waste Management Contract Extensions. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to approve the contract extensions as detailed at Appendices 1 and 2 of the officers' report.

SE/104/2026:

MIXED DRY RECYCLABLES

Read:

Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, regarding Extension of Mixed Dry Recycling Contracts. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to approve the extension of the contract for the receipt and processing of Mixed Dry Recyclables from 30 September 2026 to 31 March 2027.

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

SE/105/2026:

ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN-COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THURSDAY 28 MAY 2026 & JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 25 JUNE 2026

Read:

Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting In-Committee Minutes of Thursday 28 May 2026 & Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin Held On 25 June 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the documents.

FOR NOTING

SE/106/2026: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY
28 MAY 2026**

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting No 106 Minutes Thursday 28 May
2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O’Hare,
seconded by Councillor K Murphy, to note the document.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.45pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed: _____
Councillor M Ruane
Chairperson

Signed: _____
Mrs Sinead Murphy
Director of Sustainability & Environment

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 19/08/2026. VENUE: Warrenpoint Town Hall. MEETING: Sustainability and Environment Committee.

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Sustainability And Climate Change Strategy

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	For			
J Brennan	For			
P Campbell				Absent
K Feehan	For			
D Finn	For			
M Hearty	For			
J Jackson		Against		
D Murphy	For			
K Murphy	For			
S O'Hare	For			
H Reilly		Against		
M Ruane	For			
D Taylor				Absent
J Truesdale	For			
H Young	For			
TOTALS	11	2	0	2

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 27 August 2026 at 5.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor C Bowsie

In Attendance in Chamber: Councillor M Rice

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor R Howell
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor J Truesdale

Non-Committee Members in Attendance in Camber: Councillor T Andrews

Officials in Attendance in Chamber:

Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Healthy Living
Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/136/2026: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors C King and Howie. An apology was also received from Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services.

SPR/137/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

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

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

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

SPR/138/2026: **LEISURE SERVICES RESOURCES – KILKEEL LEISURE CENTRE**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Leisure Services Resources – Kilkeel Leisure Centre. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the proposed structure for the Kilkeel Leisure Centre and the associated additional payroll costs as detailed in the officer’s report.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 5.20pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed: _____
 Councillor Callum Bowsie
 Chairperson

Signed: _____
 Marie Ward
 Chief Executive

Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	7 September 2026
Subject:	Correspondence to Council
Reporting Officer and Job Title:	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Contact Officer and Job Title:	Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

Purpose of Report:

For Decision

1.0	<u>Purpose and Background</u>
1.1	To provide an update on correspondence received for attention of Council.
2.0	<u>Key Issues</u>
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	<u>Recommendations</u>
	That Council considers and notes the following correspondence:
3.1	Correspondence from NILGA Council received correspondence from NILGA regarding a conference scheduled for 8 October 2026
4.0	<u>Resource Implications</u>
4.1	Not applicable
5.0	<u>Due Regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations</u>
5.1	General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations
5.2	Does the proposal relate to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision No If yes, please select one of the following: Choose an item.
5.3	Proposal initiating consultation

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



The Politics of Delivery: Leading Through Uncertainty

8 October 2026
Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn



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

24 July 2026

Dear Councillor Hanna,

The 2026 Local Government Conference will take place on Thursday, 8 October at Lagan Valley Island, Lisburn.

The conference theme, “**The Politics of Delivery: Leading Through Uncertainty**”, will explore how councils can deliver meaningful outcomes in the face of global political and financial pressures, fragile public trust, and rising expectations.

It will also highlight the role of courageous, values-driven leadership and community-focused innovation in building trust and resilience. More information on the conference is available [here](#).

As NILGA's only conference during this mandate, it provides a valuable opportunity for councillors and officers to learn from one another and help shape the future direction of local government. We have confirmed a strong line-up of expert speakers who will share insights on how councils can respond effectively to the challenges and uncertainties ahead.

NILGA encourages councillors and officers from all 11 councils to attend this flagship event in the 2026 local government calendar. To support elected members attending, NILGA will cover the cost associated with attendance of those on the NILGA Executive. Where an Executive member is unable to attend, the relevant party office bearer will nominate an alternative councillor.

As many councillors and officers are encouraged to attend and a 50% discount will apply, reducing the delegate fee to £25 (+VAT) per person. This discounted rate is intended to encourage wider attendance from elected members and officers across member councils. We would be grateful if you could ensure that this letter is considered by members at the full council meeting.

Council places can be booked using the following [booking form](#).

We look forward to welcoming you to what promises to be an excellent event.

Yours sincerely

Alderman Hazel Legge
President, NILGA

Alison Allen
Chief Executive, NILGA