



February 7th, 2024

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 5th February 2024** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre & MS Teams.**

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 To set a District Rate for the Financial Year 2024/25

For Decision

- [📄 Council Report re District Rate 2024-25.pdf](#) Page 1

- [📄 Appendix 1 - MTFP For Council 2024-25.pdf](#) Page 9

- [📄 Appendix 2.pdf](#) Page 10

- [📄 Appendix 3 - NMDDC Capital Strategy Report 2024-25.pdf](#) Page 12

- [📄 Appendix 4 - NMDDC Capital Programme 2024-2031.pdf](#) Page 17

- [📄 Appendix 5 - NMDDC Treasury Management Strategy - 2024-25.pdf](#) Page 19

- [📄 Appendix 6 - Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024-25.pdf](#) Page 36

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

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

- [📄 Appendix 7 - SFWG Rate Setting Action sheets.pdf](#) Not included

4.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024

For Information

- [📄 Action Sheet Council Meeting 2024 01 08.pdf](#) Page 37

Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

5.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024

For Approval

- [📄 Council Minutes 2024 01 08.pdf](#) Page 45
-

Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

6.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 15 January 2024

For Approval

[📄 Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2024-01-15.pdf](#)

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7.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2024

For Approval

[📄 Draft Strategy Policy Resources Meeting Minutes 2024-01-18.pdf](#)

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8.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2024

For Approval

[📄 Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2024 01 22.pdf](#)

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9.0 Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 24 January 2024

For Approval

[📄 Sustainability_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2024_01_24.pdf](#)

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10.0 Planning Section

There were no issues arising

Correspondence

11.0 Response from Department of Health re: Notice of Motion C/250/2023 Cystic Fibrosis Medication

For Information

Copy correspondence dated 22 January 2024 attached.

[📄 Response from Dept of Health and Social Care re NOM C.250.2023 Cystoc Fibrosis Medication.pdf](#)

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12.0 Letters from Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and Fermanagh & Omagh District Council re: Cystic Fibrosis Medication

For Information

Copy correspondence dated 18 January and 22 January 2024 attached.

 **C-250-2023 - Copy letter from Causeway Coast and Glens to Heath Perm Sec re Cystic Fibrosis Medication.pdf** **Page 92**

 **C.250.2023 Letter from Fermanagh ad Omagh District Council re NOM Cystic Fibrosis.pdf** **Page 93**

13.0 Response from AIB re: C/249/2023: Notice of Motion, Euro ATMs

For Information

Copy correspondence dated 17th January 2024 attached.

 **Letter from AIB Re C.249.2023 Euro ATMs.pdf** **Page 94**

14.0 Responses from Southern Health & Social Care Trust and Permanent Secretary, Department of Health re: Daisy Hill Hospital

For Information

Copy correspondence dated 3rd February and 31 January 2024 attached.

 **C-010-2024 response from SHSCT re Daisy Hill Hospital.pdf** **Page 96**

 **Response from Perm Sec Dept of Health re Daisy Hill Hospital c.203.2023 and C.217.2023.pdf** **Page 99**

15.0 Response from Education Authority re: Notice of Motion C/226/2023 Bereavement Support

For Information

 **Response from Education Authority Bereavement Support.pdf** **Page 101**

16.0 Response from Permanent Secretary, Department of Education re: Notice of Motion, Childcare Strategy ERT/154/2023 & C/005/2024

For Information

 **Response from the Perm Secr Dept of Education re ERT.154.2023 and C.005.2024 ELC Strategy.pdf** **Page 102**

17.0 Northern Ireland Environment Forum 2024

For Information

Northern Ireland Environment Forum 2024

[Northern Ireland Environment Forum 2024 \(nienvironmentforum.com\)](http://nienvironmentforum.com)

Europa Hotel, Belfast

Thursday 18th April 2024

Early bird delegate rate £195 + VAT= £234 (ends Thursday 15th February 2024)

Normal delegate rate £245 + VAT= £294

(Councillor Enright has indicated he would like to attend)

Notices of Motion

18.0 Notice of Motion - Re-affirming October 2019 Climate Change Emergency Motion

Notice of Motion was received from Councillor Enright:

"Council re-affirms its climate change emergency motion passed unanimously in October of 2019 and desires concrete actions to arise from this motion in Newry Mourne and Down Council. In particular to implement Councils 2019 direction to the SMT that "Every plan or target that Council produces needs to have concrete measures to reflect this emergency"

As a result:

Council directs that a 'Climate Emergency Response Plan' be brought forward within 6 months based on the October 2019 motion similar to English Councils like Durham, East Sussex, Cambridgeshire or Worcester and many others. That the 2024-2027 Corporate Plan not be issued for consultation until it reflects the above plan. That the 2015 Area Development plans be amended on an emergency basis to reflect a Council policy of 'Climate Change Emergency' and ensure that 'the energy transition' is given serious weight in all current planning applications, following the example of English Councils like South Lakeland's Interim planning statement, or Cornwall's emergency amendment of its 2016 Development plan, or other English Councils who have both amended their existing Area Plans and modified their proposed development plans with the purpose of "Fast-tracking the energy transition and slashing emissions before 2030s" (United Nations)

That Council Management bring a significant financial target to Council within 3 months based on;

a. An ambitious energy savings program like Counties Louth or Cavan who have already achieved over E300,000 pa,

b. generating and using or selling its own renewables like South Suffolk or Warrington and

c. expanding the rates base by £5 million per annum by 2030 by attracting renewable projects to our District on a similar scale to what Fermanagh & Omagh Council had already achieved by 2020. This may require the ERT Directive and Planning Team to work with NIE to upgrade the District's electricity grid.

19.0 Notice of Motion - Ethical Public Procurement

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Hanlon:

"Newry, Mourne and Down Council deplores those corporations that profit from protracted armed conflict and systematic violations of human rights, particularly in the context of Israel's continuing brutal assault on the people of Gaza and escalating settler terrorism in the West Bank; Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine; and other conflicts around the world. With this motion, the Council encourages companies to meet their obligations to avoid contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and to prevent or mitigate human rights abuses linked to their operations.

The Council is aware of the crucial role of local authorities and their public procurement procedures in ensuring respect for human rights by companies, as well as their obligations under widely accepted business and human rights norms - as laid down in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the Global Sullivan Principles (1999) - to promote respect for human rights by companies with which they do business.

The Council affirms that every endeavour is made to ensure that Council's tender processes are consistent with the above principles, including under the Fourth Geneva convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary international humanitarian law, prohibiting the importation or sale of goods or services originating in occupied territories.

This Council resolves to adopt a rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy (EPP) that takes fully into account existing obligations and standards. The EPP will incorporate widely accepted and precisely formulated international standards and explain clearly how the policy will be implemented. The primary aim of the EPP is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged, observed and respected at all stages of the procurement process."

20.0 Notice of Motion - Daisy Hill Hospital

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Feehan:

"Newry, Mourne and Down District Council strongly opposes the decision by the Department of Health's Permanent Secretary to withdraw emergency general surgery from Daisy Hill Hospital and will write to the Minister for Health, Robin Swann requesting that he receives a cross party delegation from Council to face due scrutiny on this decision. Council reaffirms its position that major decisions on the future of Daisy Hill can and should only be made by a Health Minister who is accountable to the public, and calls upon the Health Minister, Robin Swann, to reinstate emergency general surgery at Daisy Hill Hospital with immediate effect."

21.0 Notice of Motion - Violence against Women and Girls

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Galbraith:

"Noting with concern findings that 98% of women in Northern Ireland have experienced at least one form of violence or abuse in their lifetime, with 50% experiencing this before they were 11 years old, this Council upholds its commitment to ending violence against women and girls; reaffirms that violence, abuse and harm against women and girls cuts across all generations and communities; calls for the delivery of a fully-funded strategy to end violence against women and girls; and commits to instituting November 25th as Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls Day across the District with a series of events to help educate, raise awareness and end this abhorrent humanitarian abuse."

22.0 Notice of Motion - Peatlands

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Truesdale:

"That this Council believes peatlands are a critical part of our ecosystems, regulating the water cycle, purifying water and supporting biodiversity; further recognises that peatlands store more carbon for long periods than any other ecosystem worldwide; and therefore resolves to protect peatlands and to end its purchase and use of peat-based compost by the end of 2024."

23.0 Notice of Motion - MMR Vaccinations

Notice of Motion from Councillor Devlin:

"Welcoming that between January and June 2023 that there were no cases reported of measles in the North, noting with concern the increase in measles across England and Wales, and emphasising the importance of having children up to date with MMR vaccinations, this Council affirms its support to maintain Northern Ireland as measles-free, and will undertake a public information and education campaign via print and social media to highlight to parents and guardians the importance of MMR vaccinations."

Invitees

- Cllr Terry Andrews
- Cllr Callum Bowsie
- Mrs Fionnuala Branagh
- Cllr Jim Brennan
- Cllr Pete Byrne
- Mr Gerard Byrne
- Cllr Philip Campbell
- Mr Andrew Cassells
- Cllr William Clarke
- Cllr Laura Devlin
- Ms Louise Dillon
- Cllr Cadogan Enright
- Cllr Killian Feehan
- Cllr Doire Finn
- Cllr Aoife Finnegan
- Ms Joanne Fleming
- Cllr Conor Galbraith
- Cllr Mark Gibbons
- Cllr Oonagh Hanlon
- Cllr Glyn Hanna
- Cllr Valerie Harte
- Cllr Roisin Howell
- Ms Catherine Hughes
- Cllr Jonathan Jackson
- Cllr Geraldine Kearns
- Miss Veronica Keegan
- Mrs Josephine Kelly
- Cllr Tierna Kelly
- Mrs Sheila Kieran
- Cllr Cathal King
- Cllr Mickey Larkin
- Cllr David Lee-Surginor
- Cllr Alan Lewis
- Cllr Oonagh Magennis
- Mr Conor Mallon
- Cllr Aidan Mathers
- Cllr Declan McAteer
- Cllr Leeanne McEvoy
- Jonathan McGilly
- Cllr Andrew McMurray
- Maureen/Joanne Morgan/Johnston
- Cllr Declan Murphy

Sinead Murphy
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Cllr Kate Murphy
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Cllr Selina Murphy
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
.....
Mr Andy Patterson
.....
Cllr Áine Quinn
.....
Cllr Henry Reilly
.....
Cllr Michael Rice
.....
Ms Alison Robb
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Mr Peter Rooney
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin
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Donna Starkey
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Sarah Taggart
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Paul Tamati
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Cllr David Taylor
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Cllr Jarlath Tinnelly
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Cllr Jill Truesdale
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Mrs Marie Ward
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Report to:	Council
Date of Meeting:	5 February 2024
Subject:	District Rate 2024-25
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Marie Ward, Chief Executive Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Gerard Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance

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

For decision	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	For noting only	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Members are asked to approve the recommendations at 3.1 below.

1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	District councils are obliged under legislation to fix for the next financial year the amount estimated to be required to be raised by means of rates made by the Council before 15 February each year; section 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Regulation 3 of Part 2 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 refer.
2.0	Key issues
2.1	<p>Chief Executive's submission to Council on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and robustness of the revenue estimates.</p> <p>In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Chief Executive, as Chief Financial Officer is required to provide assurance to Members on the robustness of the revenue estimates and the adequacy of the Council's reserves position as part of the rate setting process prior to submission to the Department of Communities (DfC).</p> <p>Detailed estimates have been formulated, presented to and scrutinised by Members at Strategic Finance Working Group. These have taken into account outturns from previous years, corporate pressures, planned savings and efficiencies, current spending plans and projected future investment and that adequate funding is available to protect frontline services.</p> <p>There have been four SFWG since November 2023 in preparation for this year rates process. The action sheets for each meeting are attached at Appendix 7.</p> <p>As a result of this extensive process and the detailed analysis that has been undertaken I am satisfied that the estimates presented should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2024/25 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council have been made in the preparation of the estimates.</p>

Significant uncertainties highlighted by the Chief Executive

Future impact of current Economic Climate

We continue to operate in unprecedented times, with high levels of inflation and increasing costs which has the equivalent adverse impact on Council as it does on our ratepayers. A recent report from Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (*16 January 2024*) highlights that it takes approximately 18-24 months for the full impact of interest rate rises to fully transfer through to the economy and therefore many of the more recent rises are yet to have an effect. Although Northern Ireland growth is starting to pick up again in Q1 2024 after a challenging final quarter to 2023, if the Bank of England mis-judge and are too slow in bringing rates down, then Ulster University predict a contraction becomes more likely.

The future impact of inflation and interest rates rises on Council's operations, on our rate base and on our finances remains uncertain, and many assumptions are included within our budgets for 2024/25 (see 2.3).

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

Workforce and Trade Union Uncertainties

Staff costs are in excess of 50% of Council's expenditure. Any increases in rates of pay therefore can have a material impact on Council finances.

The Council was able to reach agreement on a local Pay Award for 2022/23 which has recurring impacts going forward. The National pay award for 2023/24 was also agreed in October 2023. However, with the rates of inflation still high, the Council, like other employers, is likely to receive pay demands for 2024/25 reflecting the economic environment.

In setting the Rate for 2024/25, pay assumptions have had to be made as the Pay Award for 2024/25 will not be known until later in the year. The outcome of any pay processes will have been to be managed in year, if the Pay Award exceeds the working assumptions made.

On the 24 November 2023 following a period of intensive negotiations between Management and the recognised Trade Unions, the principles of an agreement have been reached. However as of the 5 February the Conciliation Agreement still has not been signed by the Joint Trade Union Sides. Therefore, some uncertainties still exist when setting 2024/25 budgets.

Draft budget at NI Executive level

With the return of the Assembly on Saturday, a budget will now be developed at Executive Level. Prior to the collapse of the Assembly, Ministers were determining a three-year budget for NI (2022-25), with a draft budget out for consultation in December 2021. This would have been a significant help to Local Councils in determining the Annual District Rate. In the absence of an agreed and legislated budget at this point, some significant uncertainties remain at the time of striking the district rate.

Included within our 2024/25 estimates are various areas of funding received from central government. We have included amounts on the basis of our previous

arrangements with Central Government. However, it is important to note that until such times as a budget is agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive these funding streams are uncertain. Also the Regional Rate for 2024/25 has not yet been set agreed.

Rates Support Grant (RSG)

Council submitted a detailed response to the Department for Communities (DfC) Equality Impact Assessment in relation to the Budget for 2023/24, this was presented at the June 2023 SP&R Committee. Rates Support Grant was devised to assist the least wealthy and most deprived and rural Councils to provide equality of service provision equal to the wealthier Councils. Seven Councils are impacted by the cuts and four Councils not impacted. NMDDC is significantly impacted with a **16.42%** share of the regional pot.

These cuts will fall across a range of services but given the correlation between low income/deprivation and S.75 groups and inequality it will fall hardest on the poorest within these areas. The Rate Support Grant has been significantly eroded over the years to the point where it is now essentially ineffective in delivering the policy objective. See table below to show how the grant (total NI regional pot) has been reduced over the years;

Year	NI Recurrent baseline allocation £000	Notes
2008/09	20,497	
2015/16	18,300	First year following Local Government Reform
2016/17	18,300	
2017/18	17,568	4% reduction
2018/19	16,865	4% reduction
2019/20	15,865	6% reduction
2020/21	15,865	
2021/22	11,924	25% reduction
2022/23	8,924	25% reduction
2023/24	4,900	45% reduction

Until an NI Executive Draft Budget is agreed for 2024/25, the total amount of RSG to be awarded to the Local Government sector will not be known. However, the table above demonstrates a worrying trend of significant reductions in the level of RSG being granted to the relevant Councils. This will have a significant impact on the Council's finance for future years also.

Council's allocation for 2023/24 was £745k and Council had a 15.15% share of the regional pot of £4.9m. On the 14 December 2023, DfC communicated to Councils the details of the percentages of eligibility of RSG, Council's share has increased to **16.42%** for **2024/25**. However, the level of the RSG budget for 2024/25 will not be set until the Departmental Budget has been confirmed, however DfC have advised Council's to use the prior year regional pot as the maximum available.

	<p>Uncertainties surrounding Brexit and the Windsor Framework Various uncertainties remain as to the impact of Brexit and the implementation of the Windsor Framework on the NI Economy, the NMDDC rate base and funding streams. No provision has been made in the estimates for any financial implications arising. Furthermore, included within our 2024/25 estimates are various areas of funding received from the European Union under programmes which we have been advised will continue during the 2024/25 year.</p> <p>Councils Rates Base going forward In November 2023 our Council Area was subject to unprecedented flooding and our two major urban centres (Newry and Downpatrick) were most impacted, with many properties severely damaged. 114 Small and Medium sized Businesses were entitled to avail of the first tranche of the Flood Damage Business Grant Scheme payment which was provided by the Department for Economy and administered by Council. The risk is that some of these businesses may not find it viable to trade going forward. The impact would be two-fold, our rates bases would inevitably fall if there were an increase in vacant non-domestic properties. Council may also struggle to attract business investment into these areas if these premises are unable to secure flood insurance going forward.</p> <p>Another significant uncertainty for Council is the number of non-Domestic Revaluation Challenges outstanding with Land and Property Services Northern Ireland (LPSNI) at December 2023. 20.5% (£24.5m) of the 2020 non-domestic revaluation list is still under challenge and 3.6% (£4.1m) of the 2023 list is currently under challenge. If a significant proportion of these challenges are successful, this will have a negative impact on our estimated and actual penny product which would devalue our ratebase.</p>
	<p>Sustainability Considerations One of the eight strategic objectives of the Councils 'draft' Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 is to "Protect and enhance our environment and address the climate change emergency to secure a sustainable future". In advancing the following actions are planned / in progress: -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To develop and implement the following strategies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Change and Sustainable Development Strategy • Local Climate Change Adaptation Plan • Biodiversity Strategy • Tree Strategy 2. Undertake a baseline assessment of the Council's carbon footprint and set targets to reduce our carbon emissions. 3. Further support the implementation of new Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points. 4. Keep under review the actions to address sustainability and the climate change emergency declared by Council. 5. Contribute to the delivery of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Management Action Plans and the Marine Protected Area Management Plans. 6. Develop and implement a District Enforcement Action Plan for controlling

	<p>environmental crime and reducing littering, fly tipping and dog fouling incidents.</p> <p>7. Develop and implement the Local Development Plan.</p> <p>8. Implementation of Building Regulations and licensing obligations in partnership with our customers and stakeholders.</p> <p>9. Establish accurate data collection arrangements to inform actions related to sustainability and climate change as recommended by NIAO in their 2023 / 24 Audit & Assessment Report.</p> <p>These actions will be developed in the annual business and service plans supporting the corporate plan for the period 2024 – 2027 and where there are budgetary implications these are/ will be included in the annual estimates process for the appropriate financial year.</p> <p>In addition, in 2024/2025 the Council is seeking to recruit two posts Head of Sustainability and an Energy Officer to give focus and direction to reviewing energy requirements as well the initiatives like a pilot of PV instalments eg at the Drumanakelly and Aughnagun sites. It is planned to present a report on initial findings on this pilot at the S&E Committee in February.</p>
<p>2.2</p>	<p>Long Term Financing of Council</p> <p>I am satisfied that the estimates presented, subject to the significant uncertainties noted above, should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2024/25 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council as known to us have been made in the preparation of the estimates.</p> <p>The minimum prudent level of reserves that the Council should maintain is a matter of judgement. CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) guidance does not set a statutory minimum level but advised Councils to have reserves appropriate to meet the medium term financial commitments. Therefore, it is up to the Council itself, taking into account all the relevant local circumstances, to make a professional judgement on what the appropriate level of reserves and balances should be. As advised previously reserves are not to be used for paying for the normal operations of the Council. This is not prudent financial management.</p> <p>Reserves are the Councils safety net for unforeseen circumstances, the consequences of not keeping a prudent minimum level of reserves can be serious. In the event of a major problem or a series of events, the Council would run a serious risk of a deficit or of being forced to cut spending during the year in a damaging and arbitrary way.</p> <p>It is generally accepted and considered reasonable that 1 month's expenditure is a minimum level of prudence which must be maintained which equates to approximately £9.5m. This is based on the projected salaries for 2025/25 and actual spend to suppliers for the last four quarters.</p> <p>As noted above, there remains many significant financial uncertainties facing Council. The impact of inflation and rising interest rates and the current challenges</p>

	<p>to LPSNI valuation lists could have a significant impact on our rate base, presently the impact is unknown. Members may think it prudent to consider ring fencing a reserve to deal with this financial uncertainty going. A paper will be brought on this to the S&PR Committee in 2024/25 for consideration.</p> <p>The Capital Strategy Report 2024/25 (see Appendix 3) give a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed in the implications for future financial sustainability.</p> <p>Council’s capital programme (see Appendix 4) is a corporate priority to ensure investment within the District. Council reserves will assist with any economic impacts in relation to the increasing costs of construction and future economic challenges. Officers will provide a draft policy for Members’ consideration on how the capital reserves ringfenced for major projects might be utilised to the SP&R Committee in early 2024/25 as agreed at SFWG.</p> <p>Overall Position on Reserves</p> <p>I am therefore content that the current reserves held by the Council are adequate to meet the medium-term financial commitments of NMDDC.</p>
<p>2.3</p>	<p>Key factors contributing to proposed rate increase in 2024/25</p> <p>The impact of Cost-of-Living crisis, inflation and rising interest rates will continue to affect Council services in 2024/25, with assumptions made and included within budgets as to the continuing impact on our trading operations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2022/23 National and Local Pay award and the 2023/24 National Pay Award are recurring costs which have a significant impact on the 2024/25 estimates. Council has allowed for a 4% National Pay award in 2024/25. The exact pay award will not be known until later in the year; however, it is in line with what other Local Authorities are predicting. • An allowance has been included within our estimates for vacancies within salaried posts. The vacancy allowance is evaluated at 4% of gross payroll costs for salaried staff. The assumption is that front line posts cannot afford to be vacant, or service provision will be impacted, therefore no vacancy allowance for front line posts. • The increased tonnages and associated costs of waste and recycling across the District have been factored into the 2024/25 budgets. Waste contracts are linked with CPI, which was 4% in December 2023. • The Council Insurance budget has increased by £370k based on 2023/24 actuals. Our Brokers stressed that we are in unprecedented times, and the current increasingly hardening market is accelerating across a range of covers. The restricted market for Local Authority risks is reflecting the hardening of the wider market - with few potential new entrants to what is an already limited market. A new allowance for excess payments has also been allowed for.

3.0	Recommendations
3.1	<p>Members are asked to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group in relation to the 2024/25 rate setting process (see Appendix 7) and, having regard to the Chief Executive's statement as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 (see 2.1 & 2.2 above):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approve an increase in the district rate for 2024-25 of 6.41% based on an estimated penny product of 2,473,259 meaning a non-domestic rate of 29.0334 pence and a domestic rate of 0.4676 pence; 2. Approve the Medium Term Financial plan and authorise the 2024/25 expenditure included in the estimates (Appendix 1); 3. Approve the Capital Strategy Report for 2024/25 as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code. (See Appendix 3); 4. Approve the Capital Programme (see Appendix 4); 5. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 (see Appendix 5); 6. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 (see Appendix 6). 7. Approve the action sheets of the Strategic Finance Working Group relating to the rate setting process. (see Appendix 7: Restricted item) 8. Recommend officers present a draft Capital Reserves policy for Members consideration.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	Resource implications are as detailed in the appendices.
5.0	Equality and good relations implications
5.1	No equality or good relations implications have been identified.
6.0	Rural Proofing implications
6.1	Due regard to rural needs has been considered in making the recommendation.
7.0	Appendices
	<p>Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Plan Appendix 2: General Estimates of Rate 2024/25 – DfC Return Appendix 3: Capital Strategy Report 2024/25 Appendix 4: Capital Programme at 31/1/2024 Appendix 5: Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 Appendix 6: Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 Appendix 7: Action Sheets of meetings of Strategic Finance Working Group to consider rate setting process 2024/25 [Restricted item].</p>

8.0	Background documents
	Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Medium Term Financial Plan

Appendix 1

	Actual 2023/24	Proposed Rate 2024/25
	£	£
Revenue Income	-13,346,371	-14,731,790
	-13,346,371	-14,731,790
Revenue Expenditure	33,695,578	34,106,435
Payroll	42,676,872	44,770,996
MRP	5,303,000	5,873,000
Loan Interest	2,357,000	2,957,500
PFF MRP costs	464,000	1,008,000
PFF (Reserve Net Off)	0	-1,008,000
Total Net Spend	71,150,079	72,976,141
Rate Support Grant	-753,437	-804,580
RSG loss - from reserves	-720,422	-364,430
Economic Recovery Reserve	-2,250,000	
Net to be raised	67,426,220	71,807,131
Est'd product of 1 penny	2,471,219	2,473,259
ND District Rate (pence)	27.2846	29.0334
Conversion factor for DR	0.016107	0.016107
Domestic Rate (pence)	0.4395	0.4676
	5.99%	6.41%

**Department for Communities - General Estimates of Rates
2024/2025**

Council:- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Total Amount to be Raised	72,976,141	
Reduced by Rates Support Grant	-1,169,010	Zero or negative amount to be entered
*/- Balance Applied		
Amount to be Raised <i>(via District Rates, De-rating and Transferred Functions Grants)</i>	71,807,131	
Total Penny Product <i>(from table below)</i>	2,473,259	
Non-Domestic District Rate	29.0334	
Council Specific Conversion Factor	0.016107	
Domestic District Rate	0.4676	

Penny Product Information	
Estimated Penny Product (Rateable) - <i>(To be based on figure provided by LPS, DoF, which is total of non-domestic and domestic penny products, with rating policy reductions applied; as this is for rate setting the council specific conversion factor will have been applied to domestic capital values)</i>	2,339,690
Estimated Penny Product (De-rated) <i>(To be based on figure provided by DoF)</i>	107,230
Derived Penny Product (Transferred Functions Grant) (Fixed amount)	26,339
Total Penny Product	2,473,259

Grants payable by DfC	
Estimated De-rating Grant (DRG) <i>(De-rating Grant payable by DfC during year will be Estimated PP (De-rated) x Non-domestic District Rate)</i>	3,113,251
Transferred Functions Grant (TFG) <i>(includes NI Local Government Commissioner for Standards Costs) (Derived Penny Product (TFG) x Non-domestic District Rate)</i>	764,711
Rates Support Grant	1,169,010

Amount payable by DoF	
Estimated Amount to be Raised via District Rates (Rateable)	67,929,169

I certify that at a meeting of the council held on _____ these estimates, having been fully considered, and as applicable amended to the extent shown in red ink, were adopted and it was resolved to determine the rate shown here for the year commencing 1 April 2024.

Signed: _____
Chief Executive

Date: _____

APPENDIX 3

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Capital Strategy Report 2024/25

Introduction

This capital strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It has been written in an accessible style to enhance members' understanding of these sometimes technical areas.

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

Capital Expenditure and Financing

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

In 2024/25, the Authority is planning capital expenditure of £37.7m as summarised below:

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

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
Gross capital spend	11.8	20.2	37.7	38.6	16.8
Add: Leasing	-	-	2.2	-	-
Capital investments	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	11.8	20.2	39.9	38.6	16.8

** £2.2m of capital expenditure in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases and does not represent cash expenditure*

The main capital projects in 2024/25 include (gross): City Centre Regeneration Project £15.5m, Castlewellan Forest Park £5.4m, Newry City Park £2.3m, Mourne Gateway Project £1.8m, Carlingford Lough Greenway £1.8m and Vehicles £1.7m. Following a change in the Prudential Code, the Authority will not incur capital expenditure on investments.

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

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

Table 2: Capital financing in £ millions

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
External sources	2.7	2.7	9.1	12.2	8.1
Capital receipts	1.0	-	-	-	-
Revenue resources	8.1	7.5	2.2	-	-
Debt	-	10.0	28.6	26.4	8.7
TOTAL	11.8	20.2	39.9	38.6	16.8

* £2.2m of debt financing in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases and does not represent cash expenditure

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

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

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	4.2	5.3	6.9	6.6	6.6
Capital receipts	1.0	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	5.2	5.3	6.9	6.6	6.6

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

The Authority's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £24m during 2024/25. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Authority's estimated CFR is as follows:

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

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget *	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
TOTAL CFR	94.4	106.6	130.6	150.3	152.4

* £2.2m of the CFR increase in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases

Asset management: To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Authority has an asset management strategy in place.

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

Table 5: Capital receipts receivable in £ millions

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
Asset sales	1.0	-	-	-	-
Loans etc repaid	10.3	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.2
TOTAL	11.3	4.1	4.4	4.8	5.2

Treasury Management

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

Due to decisions taken in the past, the Authority currently has £62.3m borrowing at an average interest rate of 4.75% and £2.4m treasury investments at an average rate of 5.19%.

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

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

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

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	59.4	65.3	89.5	111.1	114.6
Capital Financing Requirement	94.4	106.6	130.6	150.3	152.4

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

Liability benchmark: To compare the Authority's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of up to £5m at year-end. This benchmark is currently £65.8m and is forecast to rise to £114.6m over the next three years.

Table 7: Borrowing and the Liability Benchmark in £ millions

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
Forecast borrowing	59.4	65.3	89.5	111.1	114.6
Liability benchmark	52.6	65.8	90.8	111.5	114.6

The table shows that the Authority expects to remain borrowed close to its liability benchmark.

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

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

	2023/24 limit	2024/25 limit	2025/26 limit	2026/27 limit
Authorised limit - total external debt	130.0	140.6	160.3	162.4
Operational boundary - total external debt	120.0	130.6	150.3	152.4

- Further details on borrowing are included in the treasury management strategy.

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

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

Table 9: Treasury management investments in £millions

	31.3.2023 actual	31.3.2024 forecast	31.3.2025 budget	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget
Near-term investments	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0

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

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

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

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

Revenue Budget Implications

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

Table 11: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream

	2022/23 actual	2023/24 forecast	2024/25 budget *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget
Financing costs (£m)	£6.1m	£7.2m	£9.8m	£10.9m	£11.8m
Proportion of net revenue stream	9.3%	10.6%	13.4%	14.6%	15.4%

** £0.05m of the increase in financing costs in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases and does not represent additional cost to the authority*

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

Knowledge and Skills

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

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

Project	Description	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Gross	Income/Grant	Net Budget
0152	Newry City Centre Regeneration Project	2,322,447	15,485,295	22,626,512	0	0	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	43,437,254	-8,000,000	35,437,254
0682	Moonee Gateway Project	200,000	1,848,085	1,042,168	3,940,287	7,927,142	11,522,168	18,076,402		44,554,232	-20,795,870	14,757,362
0104	Castlewells Forest Park (H.L.F. Funded)	408,500	5,411,092	110,750						5,931,242	-1,803,831	4,037,411
0214	Kilkeel Leisure Centre	230,000	100,000	1,500,000	1,500,000					3,330,000		3,330,000
	Sports Facility Strategy/Hub	850,000	340,000	1,000,000	800,000					2,800,000		2,800,000
	Newry City Park	250,000	2,258,405	6,900,000	3,000,000	243,375				18,651,780	-18,420,000	2,231,780
	Roadside Waste Treatment Project	0	0				1,947,308			1,947,308		1,947,308
0161	Comlough Lake - Recreational Hub	200,184	1,385,656	2,220,743	55,770					3,862,353	-2,620,554	1,041,799
	Financial Assistance for Tourist Accommodation		500,000	500,000						1,000,000		1,000,000
0376	Ballynahinch Community Centre - Reconfiguration	24,250	881,339							905,589		905,589
0313	Monks Hill Cemetery - Extension	825,918								825,918		825,918
0844	Warrenpoint Foot Path P.R. Scheme (Phase 1&2)	3,265,040	1,270,039							4,500,088	-3,677,253	827,835
	3G UPGRADE - DONARD PK - 3G Pitch (SFS-Moonee DCA)	62,594	1,131,000	29,000						1,222,594	-500,000	722,594
0293	16 The Square Restroom - Refurbishment	590,400								590,400		590,400
0340	Warrenpoint HWB Hub	300,000	200,000	0	0					500,000		500,000
	Tynally Arsenals Building	20,000	470,000							490,000		490,000
0351	Newcastle Centre - DEMOLITION & re-build Project	450,000	0							450,000		450,000
0627	Kilrosney Park - Phase 2 - Falls Scheme	1,066,733	0							1,066,733	-628,713	440,000
0366	Newcastle Public Conveniences Refurb + new changing rooms	0	440,000							440,000		440,000
0355	Small Towns Programme (DFC /DAE/RA)	3,832,548	500,000							4,382,548	-4,002,000	380,548
0202	Kilrosney Cemetery Ph 2	317,626								317,626		317,626
0288	Kilkeel Bowling Pavilion	306,517								306,517		306,517
0210	Community Engagement Capital Build - Financial Assistance	280,774								280,774		280,774
0106&0137	Sports Facility Strategy - Financial Assistance	143,859	131,101							275,000		275,000
0388	Castlewells - Carwan Park Upgrade	250,000								250,000		250,000
	Dunstrum PF Pavilion Car Park		200,000							200,000		200,000
0164	Forest Park Investment Programme	30,000	160,000							190,000		190,000
0169	Community Centre Renewable Energy Projects	186,000								186,000		186,000
	Swanfield Hockey Pitch Floodlights upgrade		165,000							165,000		165,000
0000	Dowpatrick Household Recycling Centre	155,000								155,000		155,000
0395	CCTV Camera - Digital Transformation		150,000							150,000		150,000
0620	GREDWAYS - Dowpatrick, James Shaw(2022)	233,498								233,498	-123,499	110,000
0315	Kilrosney Pitches	110,000								110,000		110,000
0110&0258	Kilkeel Training Pitch Play Strategy	94,740	105,380							105,390		106,390
0892/9232/0827/REPC	Kilrosney Park, Various schemes	184,000								184,000	-90,000	94,000
0306	Playpark Signage	30,000	60,000							90,000		90,000
0360	Glynor Castlewells C.C.	83,400								83,400		83,400
0316	New Banks and walkways at HRC's - DEARA Improvement Funding to be sought	75,000								75,000		75,000
0263	Warrenpoint Graveyard Extension	75,000								75,000		75,000

Project	Description	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Gross	Income/Grant	Net Budget
9301	Don Rice Hall - Rep. Windows	60,000								60,000		60,000
9324	Diamond Trails Plan	65,000								65,000		65,000
9360	Warrenpoint Breakwater Upgrade	61,768	0							61,768		61,768
9397	Grants Management System	60,000								60,000		60,000
9382	Shinnis Retaining Wall		60,000							60,000		60,000
9571	Dowdpatrick Regeneration - Church Street & DeCounty	59,000								59,000		59,000
9387	Norma Experience - Kilsenny Park	52,500								52,500		52,500
9345	Multi Sports Hubs Strategy	50,000								50,000		50,000
9311	Diamond Masterplan	50,000								50,000		50,000
9508	RDP - Match Funding Various Capital Schemes	45,172								45,172		45,172
9259	Carlingford Lough Greenway	656,582	1,800,000							2,456,582	-2,410,582	46,000
	Active Travel Masterplan	0	40,000							40,000		40,000
	Durleath Park Track & Skatepark		40,000							40,000		40,000
	Newry L.C. Pool Tile Repairs		36,000							36,000		36,000
9318	Planning - IT System	35,000								35,000		35,000
	Automatic Weighbridge at Drumahaire	25,000								25,000		25,000
9523	Derrymore Domain Improvement Scheme - 25 year lease - REFCLUS	50,000								50,000	-26,000	24,000
9341	Newcastle Rock Pool	5,340	15,000							20,340		20,340
9083	Bus Shelters	18,200								18,200		18,200
9170	Community Centre Enhancements	17,575								17,575		17,575
9257	Derrykeogh Complex Football Pitch	15,350								15,350		15,350
9786	Play Areas - New Equipment	15,000								15,000		15,000
9377	External Signage Newry Museum	15,000								15,000		15,000
	Financial Assistance - Life Saving Equipment		15,000		15,000					30,000		30,000
9034	GREENWAYS - NEWRY AND Warrenpoint	13,300								13,300		13,300
	Water Fountains	9,250								9,250		9,250
9349	Newcastle Parkour	7,000								7,000		7,000
9314	Wi-Fi Community Centres	5,000								5,000		5,000
	Newcastle Centre - enabling work & M.U. Space		4,000							4,000		4,000
9920	P.H. Enhancement (re Grant)	43,599								43,599	-43,599	0
9398	Marian Pk- Play Equip. N.	6,276								6,276	-6,276	0
9126	Forkhill Regeneration	45,750								45,750	-45,750	0
Σ		38,823,939	35,170,282	35,929,173	15,311,057	8,170,517	14,469,474	18,376,402	1,000,000	147,948,844	(70,460,988)	77,487,856
	PLANT & Equipment	71,440	24,900	0	0					126,340		96,340
	VEHICLES	6,365,163	1,726,000	1,905,200	1,551,265					11,547,628		11,536,618
	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	1,590,134	700,000	700,000	0	0		0	0	2,990,134		2,990,134
	VOLUNTARY REDUNDANCY COSTS	1,631,749								1,631,749		1,631,749
	GRAND TOTAL	26,480,420	37,690,182	38,614,373	16,862,322	8,170,517	14,469,474	18,076,402	1,000,000	154,305,590	(70,460,600)	83,844,990

APPENDIX 5

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25

Introduction

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

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

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

External Context

Economic background: The impact on the UK from higher interest rates and inflation, a weakening economic outlook, an uncertain political climate due to an upcoming general election, together with war in Ukraine and the Middle East, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2024/25.

The Bank of England (BoE) increased Bank Rate to 5.25% in August 2023, before maintaining this level for the rest of 2023. In December 2023, members of the BoE's Monetary Policy Committee voted 6-3 in favour of keeping Bank Rate at 5.25%. The three dissenters wanted to increase rates by another 0.25%.

The November quarterly Monetary Policy Report (MPR) forecast a prolonged period of weak Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth with the potential for a mild contraction due to ongoing weak economic activity. The outlook for CPI inflation was deemed to be highly uncertain, with upside risks to CPI falling to the 2% target coming from potential energy price increases, strong domestic wage growth and persistence in price-setting.

Office for National Statistics (ONS) figures showed CPI inflation was 3.9% in November 2023, down from a 4.6% rate in the previous month and, in line with the recent trend, lower than expected. The core CPI inflation rate declined to 5.1% from the previous month's 5.7%, again lower than predictions. Looking ahead, using the interest rate path implied by financial markets the BoE expects CPI inflation to continue

falling slowly, but taking until early 2025 to reach the 2% target before dropping below target during the second half 2025 and into 2026.

ONS figures showed the UK economy contracted by 0.1% between July and September 2023. The BoE forecasts GDP will likely stagnate through 2024. The BoE forecasts that higher interest rates will constrain GDP growth, which will remain weak over the entire forecast horizon.

The labour market appears to be loosening, but only very slowly. The unemployment rate rose slightly to 4.2% between June and August 2023, from 4.0% in the previous 3-month period, but the lack of consistency in the data between the two periods made comparisons difficult. Earnings growth has remained strong, but has showed some signs of easing; regular pay (excluding bonuses) was up 7.3% over the period and total pay (including bonuses) up 7.2%. Adjusted for inflation, regular pay was 1.4% and total pay 1.3%. Looking forward, the MPR showed the unemployment rate is expected to be around 4.25% in the second half of calendar 2023, but then rising steadily over the forecast horizon to around 5% in late 2025/early 2026.

Having increased its key interest rate to a target range of 5.25-5.50% in August 2023, the US Federal Reserve appears now to have concluded the hiking cycle. It is likely this level represents the peak in US rates following a more dovish meeting outcome in December 2023. US GDP grew at an annualised rate of 4.9% between July and September 2023, ahead of expectations for a 4.3% expansion and the 2.1% reading for Q2. But the impact from higher rates has started to feed into economic activity and growth will weaken in 2024. Annual CPI inflation was 3.1% in November.

Eurozone inflation has declined steadily since the start of 2023, falling to an annual rate of 2.4% in November 2023. Economic growth has been weak and GDP contracted by 0.1% in the three months to September 2023. In line with other central banks, the European Central Bank has increased rates, taking its deposit facility, fixed rate tender, and marginal lending rates to 3.75%, 4.25% and 4.50% respectively.

Credit outlook: Credit Default Swap (CDS) prices were volatile during 2023, spiking in March on the back of banking sector contagion concerns following the major events of Silicon Valley Bank becoming insolvent and the takeover of Credit Suisse by UBS. After then falling back in Q2 of calendar 2023, in the second half of the year, higher interest rates and inflation, the ongoing war in Ukraine, and now the Middle East, have led to CDS prices increasing steadily.

On an annual basis, CDS price volatility has so far been lower in 2023 compared to 2022, but this year has seen more of a divergence in prices between ringfenced (retail) and non-ringfenced (investment) banking entities once again.

Moody's revised its outlook on the UK sovereign to stable from negative to reflect its view of restored political predictability following the volatility after the 2022 mini-budget. Moody's also affirmed the Aa3 rating in recognition of the UK's economic resilience and strong institutional framework.

Following its rating action on the UK sovereign, Moody's revised the outlook on five UK banks to stable from negative and then followed this by the same action on five rated local authorities. However, within the same update the long-term ratings of those five local authorities were downgraded.

There remain competing tensions in the banking sector, on one side from higher interest rates boosting net income and profitability against another of a weakening economic outlook and likely recessions that increase the possibility of a deterioration in the quality of banks' assets.

However, the institutions on our adviser Arlingclose's counterparty list remain well-capitalised and their counterparty advice on both recommended institutions and maximum duration remain under constant review and will continue to reflect economic conditions and the credit outlook.

Interest rate forecast (December 2023): Although UK inflation and wage growth remain elevated, the Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose forecasts that Bank Rate has peaked at 5.25%. The Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee will start reducing rates in 2024 to stimulate the UK economy but will be reluctant to do so until it is sure there will be no lingering second-round effects. Arlingclose sees rate cuts from Q3 2024 to a low of around 3% by early-mid 2026.

Arlingclose expects long-term gilt yields to be broadly stable at current levels (amid continued volatility), following the decline in yields towards the end of 2023, which reflects the expected lower medium-term path for Bank Rate. Yields will remain relatively higher than in the past, due to quantitative tightening and significant bond supply. As ever, there will undoubtedly be short-term volatility due to economic and political uncertainty and events.

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

For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new treasury investments will be made at an average rate/yield of 2.7%, and that new long-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 5.5%.

Local Context

On 31st December 2023, the Authority held £62.3m of borrowing and £2.4m of treasury investments. This is set out in further detail at **Appendix B**. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1 below.

Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast

	31.3.23 Actual £m	31.3.24 Estimate £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m	31.3.27 Forecast £m
Capital financing requirement	94.4	106.6	130.6	150.3	152.4
Less: Other debt liabilities *	-	-	-2.2	-	-
Loans CFR	94.4	106.6	128.4	150.3	152.4
Less: External borrowing **	-59.4	-55.3	-51.4	-47.6	-43.8
Internal borrowing	35.0	51.3	77.0	102.7	108.6
Less: Balance sheet resources	-42.8	-42.8	-42.8	-42.8	-42.8
Treasury investments (or New borrowing)	7.8	-8.5	-34.2	-59.9	-65.8

* leases and PFI liabilities that form part of the Authority's total debt

** shows only loans to which the Authority is committed and excludes optional refinancing

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

The Authority has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme, but minimal investments and will therefore be required to borrow up to £65.8m over the forecast period.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Authority expects to comply with this recommendation during 2024/25.

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

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

Table 2: Prudential Indicator: Liability benchmark

	31.3.23 Actual £m	31.3.24 Estimate £m	31.3.25 Forecast £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m	31.3.27 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	94.4	106.6	130.6	150.3	152.4
Less: Balance sheet resources	-42.8	-42.8	-42.8	-42.8	-42.8
Net loans requirement	51.6	63.8	87.8	107.5	109.6
Plus: Liquidity allowance	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0
Liability benchmark	52.6	65.8	90.8	111.5	114.6

Following on from the medium-term forecasts in table 2 above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £18m a year on average, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on a 40 year asset life (land and buildings) and income, expenditure and reserves all increasing by inflation of 2.5% a year. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the Authority's existing borrowing:



The Loans CFR can be described as the maximum permitted level of borrowing and the Net Loans Requirement is the minimum possible level of borrowing. The Liability Benchmark is then the 'sweet spot' between the two, where an appropriate balance of risk can be struck between these two extremes.

The chart also shows a comparison of current borrowing against the need to borrow. The Liability Benchmark exceeds existing loans over time therefore the Council can take additional long-term borrowing.

Borrowing Strategy

The Authority currently holds £62.3 million of loans, an increase of £2.9 million on the previous year, as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. The balance sheet forecast in table 1 shows that the Authority expects to borrow up to £34.2m in 2024/25. The Authority may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £140 million.

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

Strategy: Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. Short-term interest rates are currently at a 15-year high but are expected to fall in the coming years and it is therefore likely to be more cost effective over the medium-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead.

By doing so, the Authority is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal / short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. Arlingclose will assist the Authority with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Authority borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2024/25 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

The Authority has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Government Loans Fund via the Department of Finance but will consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code. Government loans are no longer available to local authorities planning to buy investment assets primarily for yield; the Authority intends to avoid this activity in order to retain its access to PWLB loans.

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

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

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

- Government Loans Fund
- UK Infrastructure Bank Ltd
- any institution approved for investments (see below)
- any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- any other UK public sector body including local authorities
- UK public and private sector pension funds except the Local Government Pension Scheme (Northern Ireland)
- capital market bond investors
- retail investors via a regulated peer-to-peer platform
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

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

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

Municipal Bonds Agency: UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association. It issues bonds on the capital markets and lends the proceeds to local authorities. This is a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a guarantee to refund their investment in the event that the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. Any decision to borrow from the Agency will therefore be the subject of a separate report to full Council.

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

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

Debt rescheduling: The PWLB allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Authority may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk. The recent rise in interest rates means that more favourable debt rescheduling opportunities should arise than in previous years.

Treasury Investment Strategy

The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 9 months, the Authority's treasury investment balance has ranged between £12.5m and £1 million, levels are expected to be similar in the forthcoming year, with levels higher when funds are borrowed initially.

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Treasury investment counterparties and limits

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

This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below

*** Minimum credit rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than A-. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account.

For entities without published credit ratings, investments may be made either (a) where external advice indicates the entity to be of similar credit quality.

Government: Loans to, and bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by, national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks. These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk. Investments with the UK Government are deemed to be zero credit risk due to its ability to create additional currency and therefore may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Investment limits: The Authority's revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be £37 million on 31st March 2024. In order that no more than 10% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £3 million. A group of entities under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes. Credit risk exposures arising from non-treasury investments, financial derivatives and balances greater than £3m in operational bank accounts count against the relevant investment limits.

Limits are also placed on fund managers, investments in brokers' nominee accounts and foreign countries as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries. *Table 4: Additional investment limits*

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

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

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

Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

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

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

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating	A

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

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

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

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	£170,000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£170,000

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

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

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	15%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	15%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	20%	10%
5 years and within 10 years	30%	15%
10 years and above	55%	40%

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

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

Price risk indicator	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27	No fixed date
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£2m	£1m	£1m	£1m

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

Related Matters

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

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

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

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

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

Markets in Financial Instruments Directive: The Authority has retained retail client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers and fund managers, allowing it access to a smaller range of services but with the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the Authority's treasury management activities, the Chief Financial Officer believes this to be the most appropriate status.

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

Financial Implications

The budget for investment income in 2024/25 is £80k, based on an average investment portfolio of £2 million at an interest rate of 4%. The budget for debt interest paid in 2024/25 is £3 million, based on an average debt portfolio of £77 million at an average interest rate of 4.75%. If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

Other Options Considered

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

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

Appendix A - Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast - December 2023

Underlying assumptions:

- UK inflation and wage growth remain elevated but have eased over the past two months fuelling rate cuts expectations. Near-term rate cuts remain unlikely, although downside risks will increase as the UK economy likely slides into recession.
- The MPC's message remains unchanged as the Committee seeks to maintain tighter financial conditions. Monetary policy will remain tight as inflation is expected to moderate to target slowly, although some wage and inflation measures are below the Bank's last forecasts.
- Despite some deterioration in activity data, the UK economy remains resilient in the face of tighter monetary policy. Recent data has been soft but mixed; the more timely PMI figures suggest that the services sector is recovering from a weak Q3. Tighter policy will however bear down on domestic and external activity as interest rates bite.
- Employment demand is easing. Anecdotal evidence suggests slowing recruitment and pay growth, and we expect unemployment to rise further. As unemployment rises and interest rates remain high, consumer sentiment will deteriorate. Household and business spending will therefore be weak.
- Inflation will fall over the next 12 months. The path to the target will not be smooth, with higher energy prices and base effects interrupting the downtrend at times. The MPC's attention will remain on underlying inflation measures and wage data. We believe policy rates will remain at the peak for another 10 months, or until the MPC is comfortable the risk of further 'second-round' effects has diminished.
- Maintaining monetary policy in restrictive territory for so long, when the economy is already struggling, will require significant loosening in the future to boost activity.
- Global bond yields will remain volatile. Markets are currently running with expectations of near-term US rate cuts, fuelled somewhat unexpectedly by US policymakers themselves. Term premia and bond yields have experienced a marked decline. It would not be a surprise to see a reversal if data points do not support the narrative, but the current 10-year yield appears broadly reflective of a lower medium-term level for Bank Rate.
- There is a heightened risk of fiscal policy and/or geo-political events causing substantial volatility in yields.

Forecast:

- The MPC held Bank Rate at 5.25% in December. We believe this is the peak for Bank Rate.
- The MPC will cut rates in the medium term to stimulate the UK economy but will be reluctant to do so until it is sure there will be no lingering second-round effects. We see rate cuts from Q3 2024 to a low of around 3% by early-mid 2026.
- The immediate risks around Bank Rate have become more balanced, due to the weakening UK economy and dampening effects on inflation. This shifts to the downside in the short term as the economy weakens.
- Long-term gilt yields are now substantially lower. Arlingclose expects yields to be flat from here over the short-term reflecting medium term Bank Rate forecasts. Periodic volatility is likely.

	Current	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26
Official Bank Rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.25	5.00	4.75	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.50	3.25	3.00	3.00
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
3-month money market rate													
Upside risk	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	1.00	1.00
Central Case	5.40	5.40	5.40	5.30	5.15	4.80	4.30	4.10	3.80	3.50	3.25	3.05	3.05
Downside risk	0.00	0.00	-0.25	-0.50	-0.75	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
5yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	3.77	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.70	3.60	3.50	3.50	3.40	3.30	3.30	3.30	3.35
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
10yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	3.72	3.75	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.80	3.75	3.65	3.60	3.65	3.70
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
20yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	4.16	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.25
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00
50yr gilt yield													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.75	0.85	0.85	0.90	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Central Case	3.76	3.80	3.85	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.90	3.95	3.95	3.95
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.75	-0.85	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00	-1.00

PWLB Standard Rate = Gilt yield + 1.00%
 PWLB Certainty Rate = Gilt yield + 0.80%
 PWLB HRA Rate = Gilt yield + 0.40%
 UK Infrastructure Bank Rate = Gilt yield + 0.40%

Appendix B - Existing Investment & Debt Portfolio Position

	31/12/23 Actual portfolio £m	31/12/23 Average rate %
External borrowing:		
Government Loans Fund	57.3	
Local authorities	5.0	
Total gross external debt	62.3	4.75%
Treasury investments:		
Banks (unsecured)	-	
Money market funds	2.4	
Total treasury investments	2.4	5.19%
Net debt	59.9	

Appendix C - Additional requirements of the Government Investment Guidance

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

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

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

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

Table C1: Non-specified investment limits

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

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

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

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

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

The total amount borrowed will not exceed the authorised borrowing limit of £140.6 million. The maximum period between borrowing and expenditure is expected to be two years, although the Authority is not required to link particular loans with particular items of expenditure.

APPENDIX 6

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25

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

The broad aim of the DoE Guidance is to ensure that capital expenditure is financed over a period that is reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits. The DoE Guidance requires the Authority to approve an Annual MRP Statement each year and recommends a number of options for calculating a prudent amount of MRP. The following statement incorporates options recommended in the Guidance as well as locally determined prudent methods.

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1st April 2012, MRP will be equal to the principal repayments of the associated borrowing.
- For capital expenditure incurred after 31st March 2012, MRP will be determined by charging the expenditure over the expected useful life of the relevant asset as the principal repayment on an annuity with an annual interest rate equal to the average relevant PWLB rate for the year of expenditure, starting in the year after the asset becomes operational. MRP on purchases of freehold land will be charged over 50 years. MRP on expenditure not related to fixed assets but which has been capitalised by regulation or direction will be charged over an appropriate period. Capital expenditure incurred during 2024/25 will not be subject to a MRP charge until 2025/26 or later.
- For assets acquired by leases or the Private Finance Initiative, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.
- Where former operating leases have been brought onto the balance sheet due to the adoption of the *IFRS 16 Leases* accounting standard, and the asset values have been adjusted for accruals, prepayments, premiums and/or incentives, then the annual MRP charges will be adjusted so that the total charge to revenue remains unaffected by the new standard.

Based on the Authority's latest estimate of its capital financing requirement (CFR) on 31st March 2024, the budget for MRP has been set as follows:

	31.03.2024 Estimated CFR £m	2024/25 Estimated MRP £m
Capital expenditure before 1.4.2012	10.3	1.4
Supported capital expenditure after 31.3.2012	93.8	4.5
Expenditure subject to DfC Capitalisation Direction	2.5	1.0
Total	106.6	6.9

ACTIONS OUTSTANDING FROM PREVIOUS COUNCIL MEETINGS

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/178/2019	Notice of Motion – C/131/2019: Live Animals in Circuses	At the request of Councillor McAteer it was agreed the motion remain on the action sheet.	Democratic Services		N
C/084/2022	Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28.03.22 – with NIAS & SHSCT	It was agreed to bring forth problem solving solutions to the NIAS in all facets of their work and for this action to be retained on the Action Sheet to keep track of progress	Democratic Services		N

ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 8 JANUARY 2024

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/003/2024	Action Sheet arising from council meeting held on 4.12.2023	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	Democratic Services	Noted	
C/004/2024	Minutes of Council meeting held on 4.12.2023	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	Noted	
C/005/2024	Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	Noted	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
	<i>Meeting held on 11.12.2023</i>	<p>It was that Council would;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write to the Department of Education; urging them to progress a comprehensive, and fully funded childcare strategy, and calls on the DUP to restore the Executive urgently so that all parties can work together to make childcare a priority. • Write to the Department for Communities; to seek an assessment of the impact the lack of an anti-poverty strategy has had on families' access to childcare over the last five years. • Assess availability and demand for childcare in the district, to identify areas of most need. • Commit to delivering 10 new fully registered childminders, within the next twelve months, in the area through the Labour Market Partnership. 	<p>Democratic Services</p> <p>C Mallon</p>	Letter sent	
<i>C/006/2024</i>	<i>Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 14.12.2023</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	Noted	
<i>C/007/2024</i>	<i>Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting 18.12.2023</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	Noted	
<i>C/008/2024</i>	<i>Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting 20.12.2023</i>	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted	Democratic Services	Noted	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/009/2024	Planning Section	There were no issues arising	Democratic Services	Noted	
C/010/2024	Response from Department of Health re Notice of Motion C/203/2023 Daisy Hill Hospital	It was agreed to note the correspondence. It was agreed to convene an urgent meeting of the Southern Health Trust Working Group with the CEO of the Trust asked to attend. It was also agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary asking him when the decision had been taken to close the Emergency General Surgery at Daisy Hill and also asking him to reverse this decision.	Democratic Services J Campbell Democratic Services	Noted Awaiting suitable date from Trust Letter sent	
C/011/2024	Response from Department of Health re Notice of Motion C/255/2023 Southern Health and Social Trust Smear Tests	It was agreed to note the correspondence.	Democratic Services	Noted	
C/012/2024	Response from NIO and Department of Health re Notice of Motion C/223/2023 Prostate Cancer Drug in NI	It was agreed to note the correspondence.	Democratic Services	Noted	
C/013/2024	Response from Education Authority re Notice of Motion C/195/2023	It was agreed to note the correspondence. It was agreed that Council seek further information from the Education Authority's cross-directorate	Democratic Services	Letter sent	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
	<i>transport and availability of places for children with additional needs</i>	team asking what provisions would be in place for September 2024, ensuring that there would be placements for those requiring them and that these placements would be within a reasonable distance from where the young people live.			
<i>C/014/2024</i>	<i>Response from Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office re Notice of Motion C/224/2023 Violence in Gaza and Southern Israel</i>	It was agreed to note the correspondence.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Noted	
<i>C/015/2024</i>	<i>Response from Education Authority re Notice of Motion C/226/2023 Bereavement Support</i>	It was agreed to note the correspondence. It was agreed that Council write back to the Education Authority to ascertain what percentage of schools in the local area partook in bereavement training and ask how many schools had registered for the whole school, emotional health and wellbeing program.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Noted Letter sent	
<i>C/016/2024</i>	<i>APSE Conference</i>	The conference details were noted.	<i>Democratic Services</i>	Noted	
<i>C/017/2024</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Climate Change</i>	The Motion was referred to the Sustainability and Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6. <i>That this Council acknowledges the work done to date to help address the climate emergency; reaffirms previous motions regarding the degenerating global situation; and again, reiterates</i>	<i>A Cassells</i>	To be tabled at the February 2024 S&E Committee Meeting.	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		<p>that the crisis is the biggest threat posed to our constituents, our district, and our planet.</p> <p>Further acknowledges, however, that recent data collated by Climate Emergency UK ranks NMDDC 8th out of the 11 Councils within NI; and thus, pledges to include ambitious targets in the forthcoming Sustainability and Climate Strategies and Action Plans to expedite implementation.</p> <p>Considers that political instability hinders a transition to a greener economy and thus agrees to write to the Secretary of State for NI, the Shadow Secretary of State for NI, and the Irish Republic's Minister of Foreign Affairs to press the urgent need to reform the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and accept the recommendations contained within the report of the Westminster's Northern Ireland Affairs Committee evaluating their effectiveness</p>			
C/018/2024	<p>Notice of Motion – Geographical Disparity in Northern Ireland</p>	<p>It was agreed that Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expresses grave concern at the significant geographic disparities in the economy of Northern Ireland between those areas which have experienced economic prosperity and those areas which have been left behind. Recognises that too many of our communities are still trapped in levels of poverty. Expresses concern that the proportion of the population in Newry, Mourne and Down who are living in households where income is below 60% of the NI average (15.3%) is higher than the Northern 	C Moffett	<p>Consultation response submitted.</p>	

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		<p>Ireland average (13.1%) and is the third highest in Northern Ireland after Derry and Strabane and Fermanagh and Omagh.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcomes the publication of an action plan by Invest Northern Ireland (NI) to implement the recommendations of the recent review which revealed the scale of failure of Invest NI to work as a partner on a sub-regional basis. • Welcomes the proposal for legislation to address these regional economic imbalances through a Regional Jobs and Investment Bill. • Resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography. • Commits to responding to the consultation on this legislation which is currently open. • Calls for the restoration of the Executive and for an incoming Economy Minister, as a priority, resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography. 			
<i>C/019/2024</i>	<i>Notice of Motion – Kilbroney Park Playing Pitches</i>	The Motion was referred to the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.	<i>J Kelly</i>	Report brought to SPR Committee Meeting on 18th January 2024.	<i>Y</i>

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		<p><i>This Council shares the frustration and disappointment of the wider Crothlieve football & sporting fraternity, that almost three years after a planning application was submitted to upgrade the existing playing pitches at Kilbroney Park, information remains outstanding that would allow the planning department to complete their deliberations and bring forward a recommendation.</i></p> <p><i>Council remains very concerned at the unacceptable delay and inertia that has enveloped this process throughout 2023 and the inability of the project managers to progress the application to the stage where the planning department can conclude their work.</i></p> <p><i>Council notes the latest correspondence on the planning portal dated December 7th 2023, between the planning department and the project managers and agrees that an intervention from elected members is both appropriate and necessary to help break the logjam.</i></p> <p><i>Council now instructs the project managers to withdraw the pavilion/changing room element from this current application and to immediately provide the remaining outstanding information as requested by the planning department so a recommendation regarding the upgrading the pitches themselves can be made without further delay.</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, project managers will immediately seek to identify an alternative site for the pavilion</i></p>			

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		<p><i>and will submit a separate planning application for a pavilion within three months of this meeting.</i></p> <p><i>Project managers will also provide a monthly update to council regarding the other outstanding matters as requested by the planning department.</i></p>			
C/020/2024	<p><i>Notice of Motion – BBC Programme Farm Gate and Agricultural Issues</i></p>	<p>It was agreed that Council views with deep concern, BBC Northern Ireland's move to axe the agricultural feature segment programme, "Farm Gate" from their Radio Ulster schedule.</p> <p>And further demands that BBC NI fulfils it's obligations and responsibilities as a public service broadcaster to the farming and rural community. We also call on BBC NI to formally commit to providing regular, adequate, and bespoke coverage of live agricultural issues, including market and produce trends." If passed this motion will be sent to Mr Adam Smyth, BBC Northern Ireland Director.</p>	<p><i>Democratic Services</i></p>	<p>Letter sent</p>	
END					

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**NMD/C/**

**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 8 January 2024 at 6.00pm in
Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick and
via Microsoft Teams**

In the Chair:

Councillor G Sharvin

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor P Campbell
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor C Enright
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor R Howell	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor T Kelly	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor A McMurray	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Tinnelly

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor D Finn	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor C King
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor J Truesdale

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
 Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and
 Environment
 Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and
 Tourism
 Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
 Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
Via Teams:**

Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy,
 Growth & Tourism

As an apology had been tendered by the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

C/001/2024 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Gibbons and Harte.

The Chairperson on behalf of everyone at Council extended deepest condolences and sympathy to Councillor Valerie Harte on the passing of her step father, John Keenan. Councillors Finnegan, Hanlon, Devlin and Jackson also expressed their condolences to Councillor Harte and her family.

The Chairperson congratulated all community groups involved in organising Christmas tree switch ons and other Christmas events across the District. He spoke of the great community and Christmas spirit created by these events and thanked everyone involved.

Councillor Finnegan congratulated and wished St Patricks Club, Cullyhanna well on reaching the intermediate All Ireland Cub Final to take place on 14 January 2024.

Councillor Reilly congratulated Rory Armstrong from Downpatrick on winning the World Championship in Bahrain after competing against 71 world class drivers. It was agreed a letter of congratulations from the Chairperson would be sent to Rory.

C/002/2024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/003/2024 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2023

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 4 December 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 4 December 2023 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

**C/004/2024 COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING
OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 4 December 2023 (copy circulated).

In response to a query raised from Councillor McAteer, it was confirmed the interim report into Council's response to recent flooding was included within the Minute and also appeared on the action sheet.

**Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 4
December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record
and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Bowsie,
seconded by Councillor McAteer.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

**C/005/2024 MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 December 2023 (copy circulated).

ERT/154/2023: Notice of Motion – Childcare Strategy

Councillor Devlin spoke at length about how the cost of childcare was beyond debilitating, coupled with the spiralling costs of living meant it had become unbearable for many.

A discussion ensued during which Councillor Devlin proposed the following amendment to the motion so that the fully funded element be incorporated:

"And that this Council will;

- *Write to the Department of Education; urging them to progress a comprehensive, and fully funded childcare strategy, and calls on the DUP to restore the Executive urgently so that all parties can work together to make childcare a priority.*
- *Write to the Department for Communities; to seek an assessment of the impact the lack of an anti-poverty strategy has had on families' access to childcare over the last five years.*
- *Assess availability and demand for childcare in the district, to identify areas of most need.*
- *Commit to delivering 10 new fully registered childminders, within the next twelve months, in the area through the Labour Market Partnership."*

Councillor Andrews seconded the proposal.

Councillor Bowsie stated although while recognising this was an important issue, DUP's position remained the same regarding the restoration of the Executive.

The Chairperson put Councillor Devlin's amendment to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: 33
AGAINST: 0
ABSTENTIONS: 5

Councillor Devlin's proposal was agreed.

ERT/156/2023: Financial Assistance Call 3 2024-2025

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Tinnelly, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on item ERT/156/2023: Financial Assistance Call 3 2024-25 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 McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised that whilst in closed session item ERT/156/2023: Financial Assistance Call 3 2024-2025 had been discussed.

Agreed: The Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Campbell.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Andrews that Council would;

- Write to the Department of Education; urging them to progress a comprehensive, and fully funded childcare strategy, and calls on the DUP to restore the Executive urgently so that all parties can work together to make childcare a priority.

- **Write to the Department for Communities; to seek an assessment of the impact the lack of an anti-poverty strategy has had on families' access to childcare over the last five years.**
- **Assess availability and demand for childcare in the district, to identify areas of most need.**
- **Commit to delivering 10 new fully registered childminders, within the next twelve months, in the area through the Labour Market Partnership.**

C/006/2024

**MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 December 2023. (copy circulated).

SPR/176/2023: Draft Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-2027

Councillor Enright queried the accuracy of the minute stating he felt it had been agreed to reference the climate change emergency more robustly within the corporate plan, in line with the cross-party Notice of Motion tabled in October 2019 regarding the Climate Emergency. He stated the motion had required every plan produced by Council to have a clear reference to the climate emergency with concrete measures outlined to deal with same.

Councillor Enright stated he would propose the minutes with the caveat that the recording would be reviewed, and the agreed action amended.

Councillor McAteer advised he had already proposed and would be content with reviewing the recording.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Miss Taggart clarified that the minute reflected what had been agreed at the meeting and that the recommendation had been read out to Members who were all in agreement at the meeting.

Councillor Byrne stated he had seconded the proposal in the chat from Councillor McAteer, which he felt was to agree the minute as presented. He stated there had been discussion at the SPR Committee and the wording had been changed to reflect what was presented in the minute.

In response to point put forward by Councillor Byrne, the Chief Executive confirmed it had been said that a notice of motion would not be put into the corporate plan given the sheer volume of motions that come before Council.

Mrs Kelly advised there had been other discussions during the meeting regarding climate change under the performance assessment report.

SPR/178/2023: Officer's Report on Notice of Motion (amended) – Crossgar's Titanic Victim

Councillor Bowsie welcomed that Crossgar's Titanic victims were being recognised and thanked everyone for their support.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Byrne.**

C/007/2024 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 December 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.**

C/008/2024 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 December 2023 (copy circulated).

In response to a query about the abandonment of refuse collection services in the Mourne from Councillor Reilly, Mr Cassells explained any decision to withdraw services was not taken lightly, and with ice warnings in place from 5am to 10am that morning, the decision had been taken for health and safety reasons and the risks for large vehicles travelling on rural roads. He advised a dynamic risk assessment were carried out to ensure the health and safety of employees and the general public.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 December 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Kearns.**

C/009/2024 **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues arising.

CORRESPONDENCE

C/010/2024 RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RE NOTICE OF MOTION C/203/2023 DAISY HILL HOSPITAL

Read: Correspondence from Department of Health regarding the decision to permanently remove Emergency General Surgery from Daisy Hill Hospital dated 12th December 2023. (Copy circulated)

In referring to the letter from the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health, Councillor Feehan spoke in opposition to the Permanent Secretary's approval of the Southern Trust's decision to withdraw Emergency General Surgery from Daisy Hill Hospital.

He referred to how the Permanent Secretary had cited a shortage of general surgeons as justification for the decision, however when this service collapsed in January 2022, the Southern Trust had made no attempt to recruit general surgeons in the three years preceding the collapse having last recruited in 2019. He added that the claim that there were shortages of general surgeons across the board was undermined by the fact that NHS England had reported a 35% increase in the number of general surgeons on their books since 2011.

Councillor Feehan proposed that an urgent meeting of the Southern Trust Working Group be convened, and that the Chief Executive of the Southern Trust be called before that working group to explain how and why the very clear and unambiguous position of the community had been disregarded.

In seconding Councillor Feehan's proposal, Councillor Finn asked that Council also write to the Permanent Secretary asking him when the decision had been taken to close the Emergency General Surgery at Daisy Hill and also asking him to reverse this decision.

Councillor Taylor spoke of the anger and disappointment of the public at the decision being taken and how the concerns of the elected representatives and the community were being ignored. He pointed out there was a lack of long term strategic planning and investment by the Department and the Southern Health Trust and that there was real need for the Executive to be in place to provide leadership for long term strategic direction.

Councillor Kearns spoke of her disappointment in the decision and how it would cause great concern across all communities served by the hospital. She stated the Southern Trust must be clear about what steps they were taking to secure the safe delivery of services at Daisy Hill now and into the future and that Sinn Féin would continue to work with other parties and experts through the Daisy Hill Future Group to protect Daisy Hill.

Councillor Kearns stated the Health Service was facing huge challenges due to a lack of resources and understaffing and this needed to be urgently addressed and the Executive restored with all parties working together to invest in the health service to help deal with the unprecedented challenges being faced.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor O'Hare it was agreed to note the correspondence.**

On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed to convene an urgent meeting of the Southern Health Trust Working Group with the CEO of the Trust asked to attend. It was also agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary asking him when the decision had been taken to close the Emergency General Surgery at Daisy Hill and also asking him to reverse this decision.

C/011/2024 **RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RE NOTICE OF MOTION C/255/2023 SOUTHERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUST SMEAR TESTS**

Read: Correspondence from Department of Health regarding smear tests dated 8th December 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Finnegan voiced her disappointment at the response received to a very important motion. She pointed out that there was little detail within the response, however it did state that until a Minister was in place no policy could be set and called upon the DUP to get back to Stormont in order to get a Minister in place to deal with these serious health issues.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor O'Hare it was agreed to note the correspondence.**

C/012/2024 **RESPONSE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE AND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RE NOTICE OF MOTION C/223/2023 PROSTATE CANCER DRUG IN NI**

Read: Correspondence from Northern Ireland Office and Department of Health regarding prostate drug being available in NI dated 1st December 2023 and 8th December 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Lee-Surginor commented that the news that the drug, pivotal in the battle against prostate cancer would not be readily available to men from the initial diagnosis was disheartening. He stated that this was not due to inefficacy or unavailability but a structural issue within the healthcare system as unlike counterparts in Scotland or Wales, the Department of Health in Northern Ireland lacked the crucial entity of a Health Technology Assessment Body.

Councillor Lee-Surginor said it was concerning that despite proven best practices elsewhere in the UK, the Department of Health in Northern Ireland seemed unwilling to adopt these practices to ensure better outcomes for men battling prostate cancer and

that he hoped all parties would return to Stormont, so an Executive could be formed, so a minister could ensure a Health Technology Assessment Body be established and rectify this issue as soon as possible.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor O'Hare it was agreed to note the correspondence.**

C/013/2024 **RESPONSE FROM EDUCATION AUTHORITY RE NOTICE OF MOTION C/195/2023 TRANSPORT AND AVAILABILITY OF PLACES FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS**

Read: Correspondence from Education Authority regarding transport and availability of places for children with additional needs dated 11 December 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Galbraith welcomed a response from the Education Authority, given that Council had to send a second letter, however he felt the Education Authority had failed to provide a full response.

Councillor Galbraith said that in relation to transport for young people, whilst he appreciated the huge scale of work required to coordinate transport across the Education Authority, the same issues remained year on year and questioned why it would take up to 8 months to arrange training when the Education Authority would be aware of that at the early stages of the following annual reviews.

Councillor Galbraith voiced his disappointment that the Education Authority had not provided a response regarding the back log of those requiring statements of education or amended statements after the annual review and proposed that Council seek further information from the Education Authority's cross-directorate team asking what provisions would be in place for September 2024, ensuring that there would be placements for those requiring them and that these placements would be within a reasonable distance from where the young people live.

Councillor Andrews seconded Councillor Galbraith's proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor O'Hare it was agreed to note the correspondence.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Andrews that Council seek further information from the Education Authority's cross-directorate team asking what provisions would be in place for September 2024, ensuring that there would be placements for those requiring them and that these placements would be within a reasonable distance from where the young people live.

C/014/2024 **RESPONSE FROM FOREIGN, COMMONWEALTH AND DEVELOPMENT OFFICE RE NOTICE OF MOTION C/224/2023 VIOLENCE IN GAZA AND SOUTHERN ISRAEL**

Read: Correspondence from Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office regarding violence in Gaza and Southern Israel dated 8th December 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor King said there was no surprise at the response from the British Government and asked how someone could address a letter about the current situation and still use the phrase that Israel had a right to defend itself when over twenty-two thousand Palestinians had been killed. He spoke of how the British, Americans and the EU had it within their power to say to Israel to stop, achieve a ceasefire and bring stability to the region. He added the district and the people of Newry and across the Island saw things for what they were and would be on the right side of history calling for peace and an urgent ceasefire.

Councillor Byrne agreed with Councillor King and said Council should put on record its disappointment at the correspondence received from the UK Government. The motion had been articulated to condemn all killings right across the region and whilst it was positive that the Minister had at least acknowledged that a human tragedy was unfolding in the Middle East, there was nothing in the response that pointed to steps being taken to stop the suffering of innocent Palestinians. The Minister had condemned Hamas but did not condemn the disproportionate actions of Israel and had said that Israel had a right to defend itself. Every human, in every state had a right to defend themselves and not once did the Minister write about the rights of Gazans, Palestinians or people in the West Bank to defend themselves.

In response to a query from Councillor Byrne, the Chief Executive confirmed that a response had not yet been received from the Irish Government.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor O'Hare it was agreed to note the correspondence.**

C/015/2024 **RESPONSE FROM EDUCATION AUTHORITY RE NOTICE OF MOTION C/226/2023 BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT**

Read: Correspondence from Education Authority regarding bereavement support dated 14 December 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Howell welcomed the response from the Education Authority and that it was good to get clarification that there was support regarding bereavement and training for schools.

Councillor Howell proposed Council write back to the Education Authority to ascertain what percentage of schools in the local area partook in bereavement training and ask

how many schools had registered for the Whole School Approach to Bereavement and Critical Incidents program.

Councillor Hanlon seconded Councillor Howell's proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor O'Hare it was agreed to note the correspondence.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Hanlon that Council write back to the Education Authority to ascertain what percentage of schools in the local area partook in bereavement training and ask how many schools had registered for the whole school, emotional health and wellbeing program.

C/016/2024 **APSE CONFERENCE – LOCAL GOVERNMENT STRATEGIC POLICY SYMPOSIUM**

Read: Invitation from APSE regarding Conference on 19 January 2024 (Copy circulated)

Noted: **The conference details were noted.**

C/017/2024 **NOTICE OF MOTION – CLIMATE CHANGE**

The following motion was received from Councillor McMurray:

"That this Council acknowledges the work done to date to help address the climate emergency; reaffirms previous motions regarding the degenerating global situation; and again, reiterates that the crisis is the biggest threat posed to our constituents, our district and our planet. Further acknowledges, however, that recent data collated by Climate Emergency UK ranks NMDDC 8th out of the 11 Councils within NI; and thus, pledges to include ambitious targets in the forthcoming Sustainability and Climate Strategies and Action Plans to expedite implementation. Considers that political instability hinders a transition to a greener economy and thus agrees to write to the Secretary of State for NI, the Shadow Secretary of State for NI, and the Irish Republic's Minister of Foreign Affairs to press the urgent need to reform the institutions of the Good Friday Agreement and accept the recommendations contained within the report of the Westminster's Northern Ireland Affairs Committee evaluating their effectiveness".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kelly.

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

C/018/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – GEOGRAPHICAL DISPARITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The following motion was received from Councillor Sharvin:

"Expresses grave concern at the significant geographic disparities in the economy of Northern Ireland between those areas which have experienced economic prosperity and those areas which have been left behind. Recognises that too many of our communities are still trapped in levels of poverty. Expresses concern that the proportion of the population in Newry, Mourne and Down who are living in households where income is below 60% of the NI average (15.3%) is higher than the Northern Ireland average (13.1%) and is the third highest in Northern Ireland after Derry and Strabane and Fermanagh and Omagh. Welcomes the publication of an action plan by Invest Northern Ireland (NI) to implement the recommendations of the recent review which revealed the scale of failure of Invest NI to work as a partner on a sub-regional basis. Welcomes the proposal for legislation to address these regional economic imbalances through a Regional Jobs and Investment Bill. Resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography. Commits to responding to the consultation on this legislation which is currently open."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Devlin.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Sharvin said he believed that a person's chances should not be dictated by a postcode, that every person should have equal opportunities to succeed and go as far as their talents would take them and that jobs, opportunities and investment should be shared equally throughout the North. All too often that it was not the case with too many people trapped in poverty, deprivation and disadvantage in the community.

Councillor Sharvin explained this was the reason he was supporting the proposal for legislation to be brought forward to help combat this to ensure government was taking all necessary steps to spread jobs and investments throughout the North so everyone had a chance to succeed. This proposed law was designed to change the way Stormont worked by placing binding targets on all government departments to ensure that reasonable economic balance was fully considered when planned strategies and initiatives were put together.

Councillor Sharvin made reference to Derry and Belfast and the disparities within the economy, and that Newry, Mourne and Down District deserved to have its voice heard as well. Regional balance was not just about the two largest cities but was about each and every community getting a fair share of jobs and investment.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Devlin made reference to significant pockets of poverty and deprivation in areas that needed additional support and intervention from government and she hoped when the new Executive Assembly was in place that the imbalance which was acutely felt right across the District could be addressed.

In speaking in support of the motion, Councillor Hanlon said Sinn Féin were committed to tackling regional imbalances that existed in terms of employment and investment. She said in the past Invest NI had shown a lack of investment, job creation and investor visits particularly in rural areas and those west of the Bann. There was a clear gap in employment rates between different parts of the north, and this gap had to be narrowed so people across the north could benefit from greater employment opportunities and economic development.

Councillor Hanlon stated Invest NI must work more closely with local councils to promote investment and support job creation in areas which had been historically neglected or disadvantaged and should put in additional resources and upskilling and growing indigenous SME's and micro businesses.

Councillor Hanlon proposed the following amendment to include the following within the motion:

"Calls for the restoration of the Executive and for an incoming Economy Minister, as a priority, resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography."

Councillor Hanlon's amendment was accepted by Councillor Sharvin.

Councillors McMurray, Taylor and Byrne each spoke in support of the motion on behalf of their party's.

Councillor Bowsie advised the DUP were happy to support the original motion but it was regrettable that an unnecessary dig at DUPs legitimate concerns over the Union were inserted with the amendment, and there could not be a collective voice on this important issue as the DUP would be abstaining.

The Chairperson pointed out Councillor Hanlon's amendment had refrained from mentioning the DUP and that it was the importance of restoring the Executive to bring prosperity and opportunity for Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson put Councillor Hanlon's amendment to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	34
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	4

The motion was carried.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Devlin that Council:

- Expresses grave concern at the significant geographic disparities in the economy of Northern Ireland between those areas which have experienced economic prosperity and those areas which have been left behind.
- Recognises that too many of our communities are still trapped in levels of poverty. Expresses concern that the proportion of the population in Newry, Mourne and Down who are living in households where income is below 60% of the NI average (15.3%) is higher than the Northern Ireland average (13.1%) and is the third highest in Northern Ireland after Derry and Strabane and Fermanagh and Omagh.
- Welcomes the publication of an action plan by Invest Northern Ireland (NI) to implement the recommendations of the recent review which revealed the scale of failure of Invest NI to work as a partner on a sub-regional basis.
- Welcomes the proposal for legislation to address these regional economic imbalances through a Regional Jobs and Investment Bill.
- Resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography.
- Commits to responding to the consultation on this legislation which is currently open.
- Calls for the restoration of the Executive and for an incoming Economy Minister, as a priority, resolves to take all possible measures to alleviate regional economic imbalances in order to give every citizen equal opportunity to succeed, regardless of geography.

Councillor Reilly left the meeting during the above item.

C/019/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – KILBRONEY PARK PLAYING PITCHES

The following motion was received from Councillor Tinnelly:

"This Council shares the frustration and disappointment of the wider Crotlieve football & sporting fraternity, that almost three years after a planning application was submitted to upgrade the existing playing pitches at Kilbroney Park, information remains outstanding that would allow the planning department to complete their deliberations and bring forward a recommendation. Council remains very concerned at the unacceptable delay and inertia that has enveloped this process throughout 2023 and the inability of the project managers to progress the application to the stage

where the planning department can conclude their work. Council notes the latest correspondence on the planning portal dated December 7th 2023, between the planning department and the project managers and agrees that an intervention from elected members is both appropriate and necessary to help break the logjam. Council now instructs the project managers to withdraw the pavillion/changing room element from this current application and to immediately provide the remaining outstanding information as requested by the planning department so a recommendation regarding the upgrading the pitches themselves can be made without further delay. Furthermore, project managers will immediately seek to identify an alternative site for the pavilion and will submit a separate planning application for a pavilion within three months of this meeting. Project managers will also provide a monthly update to council regarding the other outstanding matters as requested by the planning department."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

Councillors Hanna and Jackson left the meeting at this point of the meeting.

C/020/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – BBC PROGRAMME FARM GATE AND AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

The following motion was received from Councillor McAteer:

"That this Council views with deep concern, BBC Northern Ireland's move to axe the agricultural feature segment programme, "Farm Gate" from their Radio Ulster schedule. And further demands that BBC NI fulfils it's obligations and responsibilities as a public service broadcaster to the farming and rural community. We also call on BBC NI to formally commit to providing regular, adequate, and bespoke coverage of live agricultural issues, including market and produce trends. If passed this motion will be sent to Mr Adam Smyth, BBC Northern Ireland Director."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Byrne.

In presenting the motion, Councillor McAteer advised he had brought it forward following the removal of a feature programme, Farm Gate by BBC Radio Ulster. He explained that recently farming and farmers were coming under greater focus in relation to greenhouse gas reduction and farming practices and to stop the information flow 'to' farmers was untimely and unfair and farmers felt increasingly isolated and pressurised.

Councillor McAteer advised the plan by BBC NI to remove the only broadcast by them, featuring agriculture was creating more angst among farmers and with around 4000 farm businesses in this Council area, forming a constituent part of the local economy, along with the remaining 20,000 other farm businesses throughout Northern Ireland.

Members were told this programme, which had been on air for over 30 years, was an important lifeline reaching into houses, milking parlours and tractors, bringing up to date information to farmers, directly affecting their livelihoods with the majority of farmers being lone workers and living in isolated parts of the country. To cut off this service will only alienate them further.

Councillor McAteer questioned why other minority interests were currently recognised by the BBC including culture, language, or hobbies, so why the removal of agriculture? Also had the BBC gave due regard to Rural Proofing and the Rural Needs Act Northern Ireland, which was enacted in the Assembly in 2016?

In seconding the motion, Councillor Byrne pointed out the program has been going for 30 years, used to have its own segment and over the years this had been reduced down to a five minutes segment on BBC Radio Ulster which had been phased out and removed.

Councillor Byrne advised BBC had a responsibility to the farming and rural community, and being funded by the public purse, the BBC had a responsibility to bring this content to the people. He spoke of the importance of Council supporting the people lobbying for this change to be reversed, and advised the Ulster Farmers Union were meeting with the BBC as they were completely exasperated as to why this decision had been made. As a Council with a huge rural area elected representatives were being urged to put weight behind the campaign to get the decision overturned.

Councillor Magennis voiced support for the motion on behalf of Sinn Féin commenting that it had highlighted the disrespect BBC bosses had for the farming and rural community across the north. Members were advised that an arranged meeting with farmers to discuss the axing of the 30-year-old Farm Gate show just before Christmas had been cancelled and was another setback for an already struggling farming community. There was no other radio programme in the North that delivered information on agriculture, ranging from policy to farm gate prices.

Councillor Magennis spoke of the need for an up and running Executive, with an Agriculture Minister in place to be in a much stronger position to challenge these issues and urged the DUP to end their boycott so as Minister's could be appointed to tackle these issues head on through the Assembly.

Councillors McMurray and Taylor joined in supporting the motion on behalf of their Party's.

Councillor McAteer thanked Members for their support.

Agreed: **It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Byrne that Council views with deep concern, BBC Northern Ireland's move to axe the agricultural feature segment programme, "Farm Gate" from their Radio Ulster schedule. And further demands that BBC NI fulfils it's obligations and responsibilities as a public**

service broadcaster to the farming and rural community. Also calls on BBC NI to formally commit to providing regular, adequate, and bespoke coverage of live agricultural issues, including market and produce trends. The motion be sent to Mr Adam Smyth, BBC Northern Ireland Director.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.50pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 February 2024.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 15 January 2024 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row, and
remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Chairperson: Councillor M Ruane

**Committee Members
in attendance in chamber:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor S Murphy

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor C King	Councillor Lee-Surginor
Councillor J Truesdale	

Non-Committee Members

Members via Teams: Councillor J Brennan Councillor G Sharvin

Officials in attendance: Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director: Economy, Growth & Tourism
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/001/2024: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Tinnelly and Feehan.

ERT/002/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Campbell declared an interest in Item 4 – Notice of Motion – Town & City Gift Cards.

**ERT/003/2024: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 11 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 11 December 2023.
(Copy circulated)

Councillor Truesdale wanted to note that action ERT/154/2023 – engaging with DAERA was not necessary as DAERA have already agreed to this testing and noted that it was the lack of an Executive that had caused the delay. Councillor Truesdale requested that officers investigate the cost of water monitoring on Newcastle Beach only. Mr Mallon confirmed this would be actioned.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 11 December 2023.**

Having previously declared an interest – Councillor Campbell left the meeting at this stage – 6.09pm

NOTICE OF MOTION

ERT/004/2024 – NOTICE OF MOTION – TOWN AND CITY GIFT CARDS (C/248/2023)

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director – Economy, Growth and Tourism regarding Notice of Motion – C/248/2023 Town and City Gift Cards **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Lee-Surginor presented his motion stating the community resilience shown by the residents of Downpatrick, Newry and beyond following the flooding in recent months had been remarkable. He spoke of the hard work and collaborative efforts of the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group in laying a solid foundation for Downpatrick's recovery and he accepted the recommendations contained within the officer's report. He expressed his confidence in the initiative serving as a catalyst for Downpatrick's economic recovery, and the whole Council area if expanded.

Councillor Galbraith queried whether previous similar schemes were successful. Councillor Ruane advised that it would need to be taken into consideration by the working group.

Councillor Hanna queried whether the Council or Chamber of Commerce would administer the scheme. Mr Mallon advised the scheme was currently being considered by the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group only for Downpatrick and until the scheme was advanced, outcomes regarding the success or otherwise of the scheme would not be known.

Councillor Clarke spoke of his Party's support for the recommendation within the officer's report, and how it would encourage many to spend local. He spoke of the immense devastation of the floods, and stated anything that could be done to get extra business into towns should be welcomed, however cautioned that a one size fits all approach would not be feasible and any further rollout of the scheme would need to be tailored to individual areas.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed that Council continue to support Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group and Downpatrick Town Committee as proposals for a Shop Local Loyalty Card Scheme are advanced.**

FOR DISCUSSION/DECISION

ERT/005/2024: ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM BUSINESS PLANS 2023-2024

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director – Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2023-24 **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Truesdale reiterated her Party's ongoing opposition to the gondola proposals as part of the Mournes Gateway Project.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to consider and agree the Mid-Year Assessment of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Directorate Business Plan 2023-24.**

ERT/006/2024: ECONOMY, GROWTH & TOURISM – BATHING WATER OPERATOR – SANDY BOTTOM, WARRENPOINT

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director – Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Bathing Water Operator at Sandy Bottom, Warrenpoint **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed that Council act as Bathing Water Operator for Sandy Bottom, Warrenpoint with bathing Water Operator duties required from June – September annually.**

ERT/007/2024: ECONOMY, GROWTH & TOURISM - FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 1

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director – Economy, Growth and Tourism regarding Financial Assistance Call 1 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to add two additional themes to Financial Assistance Call 1, Arts and Culture and Sports Programmes (summer schemes) (All themes are subject to agreement through rates process and via external funders if relevant)**

EXEMPT INFORMATION

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Murphy, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of**

Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

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

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

ERT/008/2024: OUTSCOPE SLA

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Lecale Way SLA with Outscope 2024 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna it was agreed that Council enter into a new Service Level Agreement with Outscope (ORNI) for the 2023 – 2024 financial year.

ERT/009/2024: TOURISM FACILITIES CLEANING CONTRACT SERVICES

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director: Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding the Provision of Cleaning Services at Council Forest Parks and Tyrella Beach. **(Copy circulated)**

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

1. Approve the business case to procure and appoint a suitably qualified and experienced contractor to provide cleaning services at Council's four Forest Parks and Tyrella Beach between 1 July 2024 and 31 March 2028
2. Approve the uplift in the current contract rate of the current supplier between April and June 2024 as detailed in this report.

ERT/010/2024: TOURISM FACILITIES AND EVENT HIRE SCHEDULE

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Event and Hire Schedule – Tourism Facilities **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Kearns it was agreed to approve the implementation of a facility/event fee structure as detailed in this report.

FOR NOTING**ERT/011/2024: DUBLIN BELFAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (DBEC) UPDATE**

Read: Report dated 15 January 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director, Economy, Regeneration and Tourism, regarding Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Partnership Update (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Galbraith it was agreed to note the update provided against the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor Partnership**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6:36pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 February 2024.

Signed: **Councillor M Ruane**
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed: **Mr C Mallon**
Director Economy, Regeneration & Tourism

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 18 January 2024 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre and remotely via Microsoft Teams

In the Chair:	Councillor C Enright (Chamber)
In Attendance in Chamber:	Councillor P Byrne Councillor D McAteer
	Councillor A Lewis Councillor G Sharvin
In Attendance via Teams:	Councillor T Kelly Councillor D Taylor
	Councillor H Reilly
Non-Committee Members in Attendance in Chamber:	Councillor J Tinnelly
Non-Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:	Councillor C Bowsie
Officials in Attendance In Chamber:	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy Regeneration and Tourism Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director: Capital and Procurement Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director: Sport & Leisure Ms V Keegan, Head of Communications and Marketing Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting) Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Officials in Attendance Via Teams:	Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration (Acting) Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration Mr P Rooney, Principal Planning Officer Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Economy, Growth & Tourism
Also in attendance Via Teams:	Ms N Largey, Belfast Legal Services

SPR/001/2024:**APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Hanlon, Howell, McEvoy, Mathers, O'Hare and Quinn. An apology was also received from Mr C Moffett, Assistant Director: Corporate Planning and Policy.

Councillor Enright queried the progression of the flooding relief scheme, supplied by the Department for Communities, and noted his concern regarding the spend and availability of same. Ms Ward advised that Council was still awaiting information from the Department. She advised that a report would be progressed through the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee.

Councillor Sharvin expressed his condolences and the thoughts of Party colleagues to Sheila Kieran from Democratic Services and her family on the passing of her sister. Councillor Lewis wanted to note his Party's condolences also.

SPR/002/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/003/2024: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 14 DECEMBER 2023

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 December 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Kelly, to approve the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 December 2023.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Kelly, 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 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under the Council.**

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

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

SPR/004/2024 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UPDATE

Read: Report dated 18 January 2024 from Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding an update to the Industrial Relations Paper. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, having received legal advice, the following was agreed:

- ***Recommendation One – Trade Union representation to Committee***
Matters relating to industrial dispute that have been formally registered with the Chief Executive Officer, which require a decision by Council will be referred to a Committee. The Committee will consider written submissions from Trade Union Side.
- ***Recommendation Two – Officer Report***
Where there is a notified industrial dispute and matters cannot be resolved through the normal channels, the matters been brought forward would be agreed between management and Trade Union side and subsequently an officer paper and written submissions from Trade Union side would be put forward to Committee.
Any usual exemptions e.g. in relation to legal or financial privilege would be exercised. Therefore, parts of the report would be redacted accordingly in line with the exemptions.
- ***Recommendation Three - Future considerations***
Council Officers look, along with advice from Belfast legal services, at ways that Members might meet with Trade Unions on a regular basis when there is no formal dispute in place considering any regional approach to Trade Union engagement that may be developed.

NOTICES OF MOTION**SPR/005/2024****NOTICE OF MOTION – KILBRONEY PARK PITCHES****Read:**

Report dated 18 January 2024 from Paul Tamati, Assistant Director Leisure and Sport, and Caolain Boyd, Assistant Director Capital and Estates, regarding Notice of Motion on Kilbroney Playing Pitches.

Ms Largey advised Members that the detail contained within the Officer's Report referred to future planning applications and asked that Planning Committee Members remained mindful of any potential conflicts of interest.

Following discussions in relation to Planning Committee Members being present and engaged in discussions, Ms Ward sought further clarification on perceived conflicts of interest, and Ms Largey confirmed that there should not be any conflict so long as the recommendations contained within the report were accepted without detailed discussions on planning matters. She advised that she would interject if she believed there would be any conflict arising from the ongoing discussions.

Mr Tamati presented his report and recommendations providing background information and an update to the current position with regard to Kilbroney Pitches.

Councillor Tinnelly thanked officers for the comprehensive report however highlighted that the pitches were not part of the historical park and gardens, as they were adjacent to these and that the report summarised that the pitch provision did not fit within the hedgerow footprint of the site whereas the current live application had the required width noted. He stated there was an omission in the report regarding the agreed Otium report which had approved a spend of £500k investment in each of the DEAs.

Councillor Tinnelly stated that he brought this motion following the latest correspondence between the Project Managers and Planners and highlighted the exasperation and frustration that was felt by the local sporting community, along with the embarrassment he felt as a local Elected Representative at the ongoing delays.

Ms Largey interjected at this point and raised her concerns around the fact that planning matters were being discussed and asked Councillor Tinnelly to bear in mind advice given previously.

Councillor Tinnelly stated he would not sit in on the Planning Committee when this application would be discussed as he had been involved in this project since inception.

Councillor McAteer noted that the meeting was recorded, and as a member of the Planning Committee he was noted as being present and involved in the discussion, regardless of contribution.

Ms Largey reiterated that her job was to provide legal advice to ensure the protection of members of the Planning Committee and the planning process. She advised it was a matter for individual Councillors to either remain for the discussions, or to leave. It was noted that the Committee was in open session and an audio recording was available, however if the Committee was to go into closed session, then Planning Committee members should consider leaving to avoid any conflict arising.

Councillor Reilly noted his concern at the progression of the meeting, and requested that Councillor Tinnelly be allowed to present his motion.

Councillor Tinnelly thanked Councillor Reilly for his support and wanted it noted that he did not require the legal advice that was being provided and noted the number of interjections during the presentation of his motion was unprecedented.

Councillor Tinnelly continued his presentation and noted that the application was now in its fourth year, with little progress in the past year. He noted that if the pavilion was removed from the application, all other aspects of the application pointed to an easily deliverable objective and proposed a two- stage approach.

Councillor Tinnelly then spoke on the recommendations contained within the Officer's Report and requested that recommendations include and reflect his concerns and his proposal regarding a 2-stage process. He stated there would not need to be any further liaison required with the clubs as they had appointed him to progress the application on their behalf. In relation to recommendation 4, he asked that members reflect on the concerns raised and support the proposal that a monthly report be brought to the Active & Healthy Communities Committee until the process had been completed.

Councillor Byrne confirmed that based on the proposal of additional recommendations made regarding a live planning application, as a Planning Committee Member he was going to remove himself from the room.

Councillor Byrne left the room at this stage -7.08pm.

Councillor Reilly proposed to adopt a two-phase approach to this application. This was seconded by Councillor Kelly.

Councillor Sharvin expressed his disappointment at a delay of three years on the planning application for a pavilion and a pitch. He queried what discussions had taken place with regard to the location of the pavilion with planners in relation to finding a suitable site based on the boundaries set out in the application.

Councillor Sharvin noted his support for a two-phase approach, and requested they run concurrently as neither application should hinder progress on the other. He also noted that one of Council's corporate objectives was to provide sports facilities to improve the health and wellbeing of those who live in the District.

Mr Tamati summarised the points raised and noted that Council officers were extremely committed to delivering the project, and acknowledged the delays caused to date. He addressed recommendation one that related to the environmental sensitivities of the area, and noted that it did not singularly address the location of the pitches, but the impact that the whole application had on the environment. He clarified that the Otium report specifically addressed sports hubs and a report regarding this was to be tabled at the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting on Monday 22 January 2024.

Mr Tamati addressed Councillor Sharvin's point relating to the location of the pavilion, and noted that pavilions were to be located as close to the pitch as possible, however the position of the pavilion had changed in relation to this consideration.

Following a discussion on the involvement of planners regarding the identification of potential sites for the location of the pavilion, Ms Ward stated that Planners were independent of the Council officers working on planning applications and work with Council in the same way they would work with any other agent.

With regard to recommendation three, Councillor Sharvin noted that this upgrade did not meet the needs of Crotlieve DEA and highlighted the importance of continuing engagement within the area, as Kilbroney Pitches were only one aspect of the District Electoral Area.

Mr Tamati responded stating in line with good governance of the Council it was always important to consult with the DEA as part of any process. He asked whether Members were stating that Council do not consult with the relevant club representatives, rather just consult with Councillor Tinnelly going forward?

Councillor Tinnelly clarified the point he was trying to make was that the project had been talked about extensively at this stage, and planners should have all the information they should require to be able to make a decision on the application. He stated there was a feeling that the will of the Councillors may not be being fulfilled as decisions that were being taken were open to interpretation.

Following further extensive discussions, the following amendments were proposed to the recommendations of the officer's report:

- To note the contents of the report in relation to the progress of the Kilbroney Playing Pitches Upgrade project and associated environmental considerations of the site location.

- To agree to adopt a two-stage process taking into account the environmental and planning considerations and the sporting need and to consult with and continue to work with the Crotlieve DEA to consider the appropriate location for a changing pavilion.
- To approve the continued liaison with the relevant club representatives to reach a solution in relation to the Kilbroney Sports Pitch.
- To add the project to the action sheet to ensure regular monthly updates on this project will be provided to the Crotlieve DEA Councillors and Active and Healthy Communities Committee until the project reaches a conclusion.

Councillors Reilly and Kelly confirmed that they were happy to propose and second the amendments.

Councillor Reilly further queried whether the recommendations of the Otium report could be shared alongside this report. Mr Tamati confirmed that these were two separate reports and reiterated that a report regarding Multi Sports Hub Review Report was being tabled at the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting next week.

AGREED:

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

- **To note the contents of the report in relation to the progress of the Kilbroney Playing Pitches Upgrade project and associated environmental considerations of the site location.**
- **To agree to adopt a two-stage process taking into account the environmental and planning considerations and the sporting need and to consult with and continue to work with the Crotlieve DEA to consider the appropriate location for a changing pavilion.**
- **To approve the continued liaison with the relevant club representatives to reach a solution in relation to the Kilbroney Sports Pitch.**
- **To add the project to the action sheet to ensure regular monthly updates on this project will be provided to the Crotlieve DEA Councillors and Active and Healthy Communities Committee until the project reaches a conclusion.**

Councillor Byrne rejoined the meeting at this stage - 7.38pm.

Councillor Tinnelly left the meeting at this stage - 7.39pm.

SPR/006/2024:**NCCR – FLOOD ALLEVIATION SCHEME****Read:**

Report dated 18 January 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding NCCR – Flood Alleviation Scheme. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Taylor welcomed the progress to date on the flood alleviation scheme, and queried whether there had been any update from DFI Rivers on the progression of plans for the wider Newry area.

Mr Mallon advised that DFI Rivers were selecting elements of work that could be delivered in tandem with the ongoing work being undertaken by Council, but would report back to the Member on a timeframe for further works after consulting with the Department.

Councillor Enright advised that he was on the Drainage and Flooding Council, and there were four Newry flood alleviation schemes, and a scheme for flooding from the sea. The meeting to discuss this had been moved to February.

Councillor McAteer queried whether the planned works were to be completed alongside any plans to improve the existing infrastructure to prevent any further flooding. He also queried whether there was a fund for business owners to enable their own individual flood prevention measures.

Mr Mallon advised that a full investigation into the root cause to the Newry flooding was progressing, and hoped for engagement in the coming weeks for local stakeholders alongside the multi-agency review. He noted that funding for individual flood prevention measures for businesses had been progressed by DFE and Council would work alongside the department when criteria had been identified and agreed.

Councillor McAteer queried why this work was being carried out as part of the flood alleviation scheme as this proposal was to raise the height of the walls that had not been breached.

Mr Mallon advised the proposal was to capitalise on the opportunity to deliver the new flood alleviation works at the same time as constructing the new facility at the location, so as not to have to disturb the works at a future date.

In response to a further query from Councillor McAteer, Mr Mallon advised the theatre conference project was out to procurement at the minute for a contractor and the work outlined would form part of the work package as set out in the report. It was anticipated that this work would be commencing later in the year.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to agree that elements of the Newry Flood Alleviation Scheme Phase 2 at Sugar Island and between the Town Hall and Needham Bridge is included as a works package within the ITT for the NCCR Theatre Conference project.

It was further agreed that Mr Mallon would report back to Committee on any update on timescales of the flood alleviation scheme following consultation with DFI Reivers

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Byrne, 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 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under the Council.

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

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

SPR/007/2024: USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA – MANDATORY TRAINING

Read: Report dated 18 January 2024 from Ms V Keegan, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy (Acting) regarding mandatory training in the use of social media. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to approve the essential training for Members, SMT, CMT and key social media practitioners on behalf of NMDDC.

Councillor Reilly left the meeting at this stage - 7.55pm

FOR DECISION**SPR/008/2024: PROPOSED RENEWAL OF LEASE AT MILLTOWN PLAYING FIELDS TO WARRENPOINT TENNIS CLUB**

Read: Report dated 18 January 2024 from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding the renewal of lease at Milltown Playing Fields to Warrenpoint Tennis Club. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, to renew the lease in respect of the lands hatched blue with the party noted in the officer's report for a period of three years subject to market rent to be determined by Council's valuer.

SPR/009/2024:**PROPOSED RENEWAL OF LEASE FOR CABRA COMMUNITY CENTRE****Read:**

Report dated 18 January 2024 from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding the renewal of lease for Cabra Community Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, to agree to lease the lands outlined in red with the party noted in the officer's report for a period of 15 years subject to a peppercorn rent.

SPR/010/2024:**PROPOSED RENEWAL OF LEASE AT MEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE****Read:**

Report dated 18 January 2024 from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding the proposed renewal of lease at Meigh Community. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to renew the lease in respect of the lands outlined in red with the party noted in the officer's report for a period of 25 years subject to market rent to be determined by Council's valuer.

SPR/011/2024:**LOCAL GOVERNMENT TRAINING GROUP ARRANGEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTION FEES****Read:**

Report dated 18 January 2024 from Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding Local Government Training Group Arrangements and Contribution fees. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to the following:

- **Approve the payment of the LGTG contribution as outlined in the SLA agreement for the period of April 2023 to March 2024.**
- **Approve this ongoing membership and associated contribution payment up until April 2029.**
- **A report be brought back to Committee on the use of the e-learning platform.**

SPR/012/2024:**SPECIFIC DELEGATED FUNCTION****Read:**

Report dated 18 January 2024 from Marie Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Specific Delegated Function **(Copy circulated)**.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed to note that delegation had been exercised by the Chief Executive regarding a HR matter in the best interests of the Council and was being reported in accordance with 3.1.11 of the Council's Scheme of Delegation for Officers

SPR/013/2024: **PAY PROTECTION POLICY**

Read: Report dated 18 January 2024, from Josephine Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Pay Protection Arrangements (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the introduction of the Pay Protection Arrangements Policy

FOR NOTING

SPR/014/2024: **STRATEGIC FINANCE WORKING GROUP ACTION SHEET 14 NOVEMBER 2023**

Read: Action sheet from Strategic Finance Working Group from meeting held on 14 November 2023 (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Kelly, it was agreed to note the action sheet.

SPR/015/2024: **STRATEGIC FINANCE WORKING FROUP ACTION SHEET 12 DECEMBER 2023.**

Read: Action sheet from Strategic Finance Working Group from meeting held on 12 December 2023 (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Kelly it was agreed to note the action sheet.

Councillor Reilly rejoined the meeting at this stage – 8.10pm

SPR/016/2024: **STATUTORY REPORTING – SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Report dated 18 January 2024 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding statutory reporting – Section 75 policy screening report – quarterly report for period October – December 2023 (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

SPR/017/2024: PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Read: Report dated 18 January 2024 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration, regarding a Planning Department update. **(Copy circulated).**

Councillor Kelly welcomed the update stating she was glad to see that the recruitment process was well progressed and looked forward to seeing the reduction in waiting times for planning applications.

Councillor Sharvin spoke of the stark figures within the report, with a large number of non-allocated applications and the negative impact that this was having on the local residents and economy. He noted that staff turnover had a huge effect on processing times and queried what Council could do to retain staff within the planning department and if it was possible to engage with local stakeholders on what constituted a good quality application which may assist in the processing time of applications. He also queried what resources were allocated to legacy and new applications, and how this affected waiting times.

Councillor Taylor left the meeting at 8.23pm

Mr McGilly advised that workshops were planned for February and March for stakeholders and noted that there were issues outside of Council control, such as consultee responses to applications, and any amendments to the applications following these consultations. He mentioned that Council was aware of the impact of these issues on the local economy, and the report outlined the steps taken to address the challenges. He noted that the Planning Department had engaged extensively with Human Resources regarding staffing issues and were progressing various plans to continue the recruitment process. He further noted that legacy and new applications both had to be progressed concurrently, one could not take precedence over the other.

Councillor Reilly noted that Council was in an emergency situation regarding the social and economic impact and suggested that other Councils be approached to assist if possible. He noted that it was frightening that applications for mobility issues were being held up, negatively impacting the vulnerable.

Councillor McAteer stated that the reputation of the Council was at stake regarding the delay and queried if it was possible to address issues by including part time roles. He also queried the length required to train new staff and that further work was needed as the situation was close to becoming indefensible.

Mr Mallon noted that there has been a number of recruitment exercises, and still there were two vacancies. He advised that not all new employees had experience in Council software and needed to be trained by existing planning officers, which had an impact on their time spent on determining applications. He noted that Council was aware of the issues and had put plans in place to resolve the issues.

Agreed:

On the proposal of Councillor Kelly, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.

It was further agreed that Officer's table quarterly reports to update members on progress, or otherwise, against actions outlined in the report.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 08.41pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 February 2024.

**Signed: Councillor Cadogan Enright
Chairperson**

**Signed: Josephine Kelly
Director of Corporate Services**

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2024

**Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on
Monday 22 January 2024 at 6.00pm in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic
Centre and via Microsoft Teams**

Chairperson:	Councillor R Howell (Chamber)	
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor C Galbraith Councillor D Lee-Surginor Councillor A McMurray Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor J Jackson Councillor A Lewis Councillor D Murphy
In attendance via Teams:	Councillor L Devlin Councillor A Finnegan Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D Finn Councillor O Magennis Councillor K Murphy
Non-Members in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor J Tinnelly
Officials in Chamber:	Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth & Tourism Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director, Leisure and Sport Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting) Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer	

AHC/001/2024: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

There were no apologies received.

The Chairperson paid tribute to the lifeguards at Newry Leisure Centre and thanked them for their heroic response last week when dealing with a medical emergency and hoped the person was feeling better .

The Chairperson extended congratulations to St Patrick's GFC, Cullyhanna on winning the AIB GAA Football All Ireland Championship Final.

AHC/002/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

- AHC/003/2024:** **ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2023**
- Read:** Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 18 December 2023. **(Copy circulated)**.
- Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Galbraith, to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 18 December 2023.**
-
- AHC/004/2024:** **COMMUNITY COORDINATION HUB (CCH) UPDATE REPORT**
- Read:** Report dated 22 January 2024 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on the Community Coordination Hub. **(Copy circulated)**
- Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheet for the Community Coordination Hub Meeting held on Wednesday 13 December 2023.**
-
- AHC/005/2024:** **SAINTFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE – REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL LAND**
- Read:** Report dated 22 January 2024 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding a request for additional land by Saintfield Community Association. **(Copy circulated)**
- Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Jackson, to approve Saintfield Community Association's request to extend the current Community Garden at Saintfield Community Centre and include it within its Financial Management Agreement with Council.**
-
- AHC/006/2024:** **DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE**
- Read:** Report dated 22 January 2024 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on the District Electoral Area Forums. **(Copy circulated)**
- Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Finnegan, to note the officer's update report on recent DEA activity and on activity planned to be undertaken by the DEAs.**

AHC/007/2024: NEWRY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP (NRP) REPORT

Read: Report dated 22 January 2024 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Engagement, regarding Newry Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership (NRP) Report. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Finnegan, to:**

- **Note the report.**
- **Note the minutes of Newry NRP Meeting held on Wednesday 29 November 2023, approved at Newry NRP Meeting held on Wednesday 17 January 2024.**

AHC/008/2024: MULTI SPORTS HUB REVIEW

Read: Report dated 22 January 2024 from Mr P Tamati, Assistant Director, Leisure and Sport regarding Multi Sports Hub Review. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Tinnelly said he had concerns about the contents of the report to which the Chairperson advised the report was for noting. The Chairperson said she was aware issues raised by Councillor Tinnelly were being dealt with through other channels.

Councillor Tinnelly stated he had been told at Council Meeting that someone from Audit would be in touch with him and that no one had contacted him.

The Chairperson confirmed Mr Tamati would follow up on the action from Council.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Finnegan, to note the officer's report.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.12pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 February 2024.

Signed: Councillor Howell
Chairperson

Signed: Paul Tamati
Assistant Director Leisure and Sport

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 24 January 2024 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, District Council Offices, Monaghan Row, Newry and via MS Teams.

Chair:	Councillor W Clarke (Chamber)	
In Attendance in Chamber:	Councillor C Enright Councillor G Kearns Councillor K Murphy	Councillor J Jackson Councillor O Magennis Councillor D Taylor
In Attendance via Teams:	Councillor D Finn Councillor H Reily Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor M Larkin Councillor M Rice
Non-Committee Members in Attendance via teams:	Councillor C Bowsie Councillor S Murphy	Councillor O Hanlon
Officials in Attendance:	Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Waste Management Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer	

As the Chairperson had tendered an apology, the Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Clarke assumed the Chair.

SE/001/2024: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews and Feehan.

Councillor Clarke congratulated Ms Murphy on her appointment to the position of Director Sustainability and Environment, and also wished Mr Cassells well for his future endeavours.

SE/002/2024: DECLARATIONS OF "CONFLICTS OF INTEREST"

There were no declarations of interest.

FOR DECISION**SE/003/2024: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2023**

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 December 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed that the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 December 2023 be noted.**

SE/004/2024: REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – FLOOD DEFENCES

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Ma A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding a report on Notice of Motion – Flood Defences. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Enright informed Members that he was on the board of Drainage and Flooding Council representing Council and noted his support of the four flood relief schemes in Newry under discussion, however budget constraints had seen the Downpatrick flood alleviation scheme remain a proposal. He stated that the Quoile barrier was not fit for purpose, and maintenance issues needed to be addressed.

He pointed out that a number of flooding events needed to be considered, and urged Newry Councillors investigate the defences relating to flooding from the sea. He noted an assumption that Newcastle flood defences were finished, but many were aware that this wasn't the case given recent events.

Councillor Enright, in noting his support regarding points 2, 3 and 4 of section 2.2 of the Officer's Report, proposed to invite DFI Rivers to meet with elected members to discuss the recent flooding events. He also noted queries regarding the process of addressing potential floods, and communications relating to the flooding. He commended Council actions after the floods occurred but confirmed that there were no warnings or support prior to the floods occurring.

Councillor Magennis welcomed the assessment of funding from the Shared Island Fund, however, noted that Council appeared to be tasked with roles and responsibilities that were the responsibility of other departments. She pointed out that there had been years of lobbying for better maintenance schedules and infrastructure upgrades, but years of cuts had resulted in a meagre budget that was not fit for purpose.

She noted her Party's support for a request of river maintenance schedule but cautioned that this would not be adequate without significant funding, and she urged Council to await the outcome of the independent review.

Councillor Truesdale confirmed her understanding of Sinn Fein's position but noted that she felt elected representatives should be able to support the community while the independent review was ongoing.

Mr Cassells presented his report, highlighting the detailed statutory obligations of the relevant departments, and confirmed that members would have an opportunity to feed into the independent review.

Following further discussions, Councillors Hanlon and Finn requested clarity on what action was being agreed, and queried the merit in inviting DFI Rivers and members of the Flood and Drainage board to meet with Members at this time, given the independent review was ongoing.

Councillor Enright clarified the reason for the departmental meeting was to seek clarity on the process, the liaison between Council and DFI could be clarified to ensure there is an early warning system in place for any future issues that may arise in relation to flooding.

Mr Cassells provided clarification on the role and responsibilities of the Drainage Council stating they provided an independent impartial oversight sitting above DFI Rivers, with a statutory duty to ensure uniformity of drainage throughout Northern Ireland. If Councillor Enright's proposal was agreed, it was requested that Members prepare questions in advance to allow representatives to be able to provide all relevant information.

Following further queries Mr Cassells advised that Council could investigate the legality of whether holding such a meeting would compromise the ongoing independent review.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed that Council would:

- **Further investigate the possibility of a Shared Island application to assist with flood defences.**
- **Write to DFI Rivers and request a river maintenance schedule.**
- **Seek legal advice to clarify if a meeting with DFI Rivers (flooding department) and the Drainage and Flooding Council would compromise the ongoing independent review of the recent floods in the district.**

SE/005/2024: REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – FLOOD PREPAREDNESS

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Ma A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Flood Preparedness. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Truesdale stated that this motion had its roots in years of repetitive extreme weather events, noting that many weather records were being broken. She recognised the existence of the Regional Community Development Group for the management of extreme weather events and stated that Council should have Community Resilience Groups.

With regard to the officer's report, Councillor Truesdale highlighted the following:

- Note of thanks to Taucher McDonald, local DEA co-ordinator, for acting so swiftly during the December floods in Newcastle. She caveated this by stating that it should not be the sole responsibility of a DEA Coordinator but should be assisted by a Council emergency task force, working alongside local resilience groups.
- Disappointed she was unable to find any Community Resilience Group pages on the Council's website adding that existing community groups across NI, along with DFI, provide support to elected representatives and Councils with the process.
- Disappointed that Council did not assist with sandbag distribution, regardless of statutory obligations. She called for Council to work collaboratively with DFI Rivers and funders to share information in relation to sandbag locations, and to update its website in this matter.
- Supported writing to the NIEA to call for the implementation of a flood warning system in line with England, Scotland and Wales, and for the Community Flood Plans to be fully implemented.

- Reiterated her Party's call for an Independent Environment Agency since it was promised previously under New Decade, New Approach.
- Referenced the second cycle flood risk management plan 2021-2027, and questioned how Council was translating this at a local level, stressing the importance of good communication and the necessary preparation to ensure its accessibility by people in times of distress, such as flooding.
- Stressed the onus was on everyone to empower residents and businesses within the district by building Community Resilience Groups, have the necessary information freely available on Councils website, and need to agree and set out clear lines of communication through a Council led multi-agency task force.

Councillor Finn commended the community spirit of those impacted in Newry, noting her frustration at the lack of knowledge regarding location and availability of sandbags. She queried whether a Community Resilience Group was established in Newry and recommended it as an action if not.

Councillor Taylor advised he had been contacted by those impacted by the floods, who raised concerns about the timeline of the independent review. He noted concerns of the local businesses around insurance viability moving forward, and the impact of the lack of insurance should another flooding incident happen.

Councillor Hanlon noted problems with Floodline and noted that DFI Rivers had advised that it helped them identify the worst affected areas. She noted the strategic benefit of this view of flooding but stated that when on the ground in a flooding incident, it appeared to be too little too late. She expressed her hope that the whole system was reviewed in regards to this.

Councillor Clarke reiterated his own concerns regarding communication relating to sandbag availability and distribution, confirming that clarity was needed on the ownership of this task. He proposed that the establishment of community resilience groups were managed by local DEA groups as they were best placed to oversee the process.

He noted that the Burren River flood defence failed as nearby homes were flooded and stated that this defence was meant to protect them. He also stated the drain network was not fit for purpose anymore, given the direction of the flooding in Newcastle. He commended Belfast Council's actions during the flooding incidents, noting their sterling work in accessing sandbags and assisting with the flood emergency response.

Councillor Magennis noted her thanks to Monaghan County Council for assisting with the delivery of sandbags.

Mr Cassells advised there were well-established multi agency emergency arrangements already in place, involving all blue light services, government departments and Council. He pointed out that his report was mindful of Council responsibilities and those of other statutory agencies. He noted that in section 2.4 of his report, any reference to "Council" was the Draining and flooding Council, not this Council.

He confirmed the internal debrief on flooding had been completed, and a wider questionnaire to capture members and staff feedback would be issued in the coming weeks, with a further debrief report then fed into the external multi agency review. He confirmed the formal report from multi agency review would be compiled independently and should be complete by end of June. He confirmed that stakeholder input was being sought from individuals, groups and members, and there would be several engagement events across this Council and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council.

Councillor Truesdale noted her support for the involvement of local DEA forums, but urged Council to recognise its role, such as disseminating information from Regional Community on the website.

- AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed that Council would**
- **Liaise with local DEA forums to discuss and plan the setup of Community Resilience Groups**
 - **Investigate the facilitation of sandbag availability and management through these Community Resilience Groups.**
 - **Look into sharing information on the website from the Regional Community Resilience Group**

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 6 to 13, 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 Finn, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

FOR DECISION

SE/006/2024: BUSINESS CASE FOR FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT CONTRACT

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability regarding a business case for annual servicing and maintenance of fire fighting equipment in Council buildings. **(copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Murphy, to note the content of the report and associated Business Case, and to accept the conclusion of the Business Case to see the appointment, through a tender process, of a competent contractor to inspect, maintain and testing of all Fire Fighting Equipment in Buildings in the Council's asset register.**

SE/007/2024: UPDATE ON FINANCIAL COSTINGS FOR CONSULTANTS REGARDING CEMETERY CAPITAL PROJECTS

Read: Report dated 20 December 2023 Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability regarding an update on financial costings for consultants re: Cemetery Capital Projects. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Rice, to note the contents of the report and approve the recommendations contained within the Officer's Report in relation to Capital Expenditure sought.

SE/008/2024: WASTE CONTRACT EXTENSIONS

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Mrs S Murphy, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding the extension of mixed dry recycling contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Kearns, to approve the following:

- **The extension of the contract for the Receipt and Processing of Mixed Dry Recycling with Re-Gen Waste LTD from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, subject to the approval of the arc21 Joint Committee**
- **The extension of the current haulage contract with Natural World Products LTD from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, subject to approval of the arc21 Joint Committee.**

SE/009/2024: SINGLE TENDER ACTIONS

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Environment, regarding Single Tender Action Extension **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Kearns, to approve the extension of the Single Tender Action for the collection, treatment and processing of residual waste, rigid plastics, and mixed paper from Downpatrick, Ballynahinch and Castlewellan Household Recycling Centres as outlined in section 2.3 of the officer's report.

SE/010/2024: ENERGY CONTRACTS 2024-2025

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment, regarding Electricity and Natural Gas contracts 2024/25
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, to approve the second year (12 month extension) of electricity and natural gas contracts with GoPower, commencing in May 2024.

FOR NOTING

SE/011/2024: REPORT ON CHRISTMAS ILLUMINATIONS

Read: Report dated 24 January 2024 from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Facilities Management and Maintenance Officer, regarding Christmas illuminations 2023
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Rice, to note the contents of the report.

SE/012/2024: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN HELD ON 5 DECEMBER 2023

Read: ARC21 – Joint Committee Members' Monthly bulletin. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Rice, to note the arc21 Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin from 5 December 2023.

SE/013/2024: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER 2023

Read: ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting In Committee Minutes of Thursday 26 October. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Rice, to note the in Committee minutes of the arc21 Joint Committee meeting of Thursday 26 October 2023.

Councillor Taylor left the meeting at 07.35pm

FOR NOTING

SE/014/2024: UPDATE REPORT ON OCTOBER/NOVEMBER FLOOD RECOVERY AND RESPONSE

Read: Report from Mr A Cassells, Director: Sustainability & Environment, regarding an October/November 2023 Floods – Post Flooding review **(Copy circulated)**.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed note the contents of the report.**

SE/015/2024: **ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF THURSDAY 26 OCTOBER 2023**

Read: arc21 Joint Committee Minutes of Thursday 26 October 2023 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed note the minutes.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 07:42pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 05 February 2024.

Signed: **Councillor Willie Clarke**
Chairperson

Signed: **Mr Andrew Cassells**
Director of Sustainability & Environment



Department
of Health &
Social Care

From the Rt Hon Andrew Stephenson CBE MP
Minister of State for Health and Secondary Care

39 Victoria Street
London
SW1H 0EU

90

Your Ref: C/250/2023

PO-1487395

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down Council
By email to: council@nmandd.org

22 January 2024

Dear Ms Ward,

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 December to the Prime Minister about access to cystic fibrosis medication. Your letter has been passed to the Department of Health and Social Care for reply.

I am grateful to you for raising your concerns.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) is the independent body responsible for developing evidence-based recommendations on whether medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS, based on an assessment of their costs and benefits. NICE appraises all newly licensed medicines, and the process means that the NHS can be confident that spending on NICE-recommended medicines will not displace spending on other treatments that may be more effective. These are difficult decisions to make, and it is right that they are made independently of Government by experts based on the available evidence of clinical and cost effectiveness.

It is important to note that NICE recommends the vast majority of medicines it appraises, often as a result of confidential commercial agreements between the NHS and pharmaceutical companies. The NHS is legally required to fund medicines recommended by NICE and many thousands of patients have benefitted from access to new medicines as a result of its important work.

The cystic fibrosis medicines Orkambi, Symkevi and Kaftrio are currently available as treatment options for eligible NHS patients under the terms of an interim access agreement, which was originally reached in 2019. The agreement has made the medicines available at a reduced price and for a limited time, while enabling the collection of data to inform a NICE appraisal to determine whether the medicines should be routinely funded by the NHS. On 15 November, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency approved a new licence extension, and children as young as two with cystic fibrosis are now eligible to receive Kaftrio through the interim access agreement.

NICE published draft guidance on 3 November that does not recommend Orkambi, Symkevi and Kaftrio for the treatment of cystic fibrosis. While I understand this is

extremely disappointing, it is important to note that recommendations on medicines can, and often do, change during the NICE process. The draft guidance was subject to a public consultation that closed on 24 November, and NICE's appraisal committee met on 14 December to consider the comments received.

NICE is continuing to work closely with Vertex and NHS England in order to address the concerns raised in its draft guidance and secure access to these treatments at a price that represents value for the NHS. NICE is working to determine the most appropriate next steps for this appraisal, including liaising with NHS England and Vertex to explore potential commercial solutions. NICE will give regular updates to the community of patients, families and other interested parties while discussions continue.

Eligible children and adults with cystic fibrosis can continue to receive and be started on treatment with these medicines, as clinically appropriate, while NICE's appraisal is ongoing. Additionally, there is a flexible commercial mechanism in place between NHS England and Vertex to ensure that patients already receiving these treatments will have continued access following the publication of NICE's final guidance, regardless of the outcome.

I hope this reply is helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Stephenson', written in a cursive style.

**THE RT HON ANDREW STEPHENSON CBE MP
MINISTER OF STATE**



Peter May
Permanent Secretary
Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3SQ
Email: permanent.secretary@health-ni.gov.uk

Date: 18 January 2024

Dear Peter May,

Re: Notice of Motion – Cystic Fibrosis Medication

At its Council meeting held 9 January 2024 Council considered correspondence from Marie Ward, Chief Executive, Newry Mourne and Down District Council, regarding an adopted Notice of Motion – Cystic Fibrosis Medication (correspondence dated 13 December 2023).

Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council resolved to Support the Notice of Motion:

That Council notes with extreme concern proposals by NICE to remove its NHS recommendations for Kaftiro, Orkambi and Symkevi due to rising costs; calls upon NICE to reconsider this proposal without hesitation to make such medication available to all in need; and will write to the Department of Health to request an assessment of the efficacy of this drug to help save lives since its introduction in January 2022; and to consider amending the minimum age for recipients of this medication to 2 so as to ensure that all those who suffer from cystic fibrosis have the best start in life.

I advise notification of Council's resolution accordingly and look forward to receiving a response, on behalf of Council.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sinead Duggan".

Civic Support & Committee & Member Services Officer

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

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

93

Our Ref: Democratic Services

Date: 22 January 2024

Email: democratic.services@fermanaghomagh.com

Ms Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council
Monaghan Row
NEWRY
BT35 8DL

Dear Marie,

Re: Notice of Motion – Cystic Fibrosis Medication

At the Council meeting held on 9 January 2024, Members noted your correspondence dated 13 December 2023 and asked that I write to you to confirm Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's support for your motion on Cystic Fibrosis Medication.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison McCullagh".

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



AIB
Newry Branch
42-44 Hill Street
Newry
BT34 1AU

94

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E newry@aib.ie
aibni.co.uk

Private & Confidential

Marie Ward

Chief Executive

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

O'Hagan House

Monaghan Row

Newry

BT35 8DJ

Your Reference: C/249/2023

17th January 2024

Dear Marie,

Thank you for your letter regarding access to cash and the provision of Euro ATMs in the Newry and Mourne Area.

AIB remains fully committed to our customers in the Newry and Mourne area. Access to cash, including a dedicated AIB Euro ATM, is available at our Newry branch, which is located at 42 Hill Street, Newry. Our successful partnership with the Post Office enables customers to conduct their everyday personal and business banking transactions in any of the 500+ Post Offices across Northern Ireland including the Newry and Mourne region. The Post Office service for business customers was expanded in 2021 to include additional transactional services for business customers such as faster cash deposits.

- In addition to our Euro ATM at Newry branch, there is an extensive AIB ATM network in the Republic of Ireland (ROI). This includes ATMs across the border from Newry, in locations such as Dundalk, Ardee, Carrickmacross and Castleblaney.
For more information on ATM locations please visit: branches.aib.ie/search
- AIB ROI customers can also avail of services in the extensive ROI branch network. Some of these branches including Dundalk have Self Service Lobbies which are open from 08:00 to 21:00 seven days a week.
For more information please visit: branches.aib.ie/search
- AIB ROI customers can also use AIB services at any one of the 900 An Post offices across ROI.
For more information please visit: aib.ie/ways-to-bank/aib-at-the-post-office

Newry and Mourne AIB customers continue to be supported locally by our Newry business relationship managers and branch advisors.

We would encourage any AIB customers with any query about access to sterling or euros to visit their nearest AIB branch where colleagues will be more than happy to help. All the relevant information is available on aibni.co.uk/waystobank and aib.ie.

Customers can also phone our Customer Services Team on 0345 6005 925, 09:00 – 17:00 Monday - Friday, excluding Bank Holidays.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin Fitzpatrick', written over a light blue horizontal line.

Kevin Fitzpatrick

Newry Branch Manager

AIB

Quality Care - for you, with you

Our Ref: MOK/20240203

Chair
Eileen Mullan MBE

Chief Executive
Dr Maria O'Kane

3rd February 2024

VIA EMAIL ONLY

James Campbell
Head Of Environmental Health-Residential
Oifig Dhun Padraig
Downpatrick Civic Centre
Downshire Estate
Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

Dear James,

RE: Request for Meeting with Chief Executive

We understand that this meeting request is in relation to the decision to deliver emergency general surgery services for the area from Craigavon Area Hospital. This recommendation was agreed at Trust Board in September 2023, following feedback from a 12 week public consultation and then put to the Department of Health for decision.

As the recommendation was formally approved by the Department of Health on 8th January it would not be appropriate for the Trust to attend a further meeting on this issue at this time.

Our surgical team worked hard and were available throughout the consultation period to explain the rationale and answer queries on their new model for emergency general surgery. The consultation and opportunities to contact the team, share feedback, ask questions or attend online sessions and a public event in the Canal Court were widely publicised. We also kept political colleagues updated through the process and representatives from our senior leadership team attended Council meetings.

Meeting the clinical standards to ensure the best outcomes for all patients living across the entire southern area, has been their absolute priority throughout this process. Full background to the proposals can be found on the following links:

[Future of Emergency General Surgery | Southern Health & Social Care Trust \(hscni.net\)](#)

[Consultations | Southern Health & Social Care Trust \(hscni.net\)](#)

We acknowledge concerns raised from some living in the Newry, Mourne, South Down, South Armagh areas, about access to services and understand that people would value a service closer to home, but we must always prioritise patient safety.

We have always emphasised that patients should continue to phone first or attend their nearest Emergency Department with seriously urgent symptoms. Daisy Hill continues as a Type 1 consultant led ED, assessing all medical and surgical patients, 24/7.

Those who need transferred to Craigavon, will be directly admitted to the surgical ward, so it is important that Newry and Mourne patients attend Daisy Hill first to benefit from this process.

About 70% of patients do not require surgery after being referred to the team. It is rare for someone to need very immediate surgery for a life-threatening condition, but we can assure local people that we have arrangements in place for the patient to be operated on at Daisy Hill should this happen.

Daisy Hill is an essential part of the Southern Trust acute hospital network, serving a population of approximately 388,700 people from South Down to Mid Ulster.

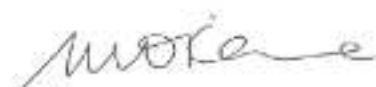
We have a dedicated team of highly skilled and experienced staff working across a wide range of vibrant specialties, including mental health, paediatrics, obstetrics and gynaecology, coronary care, renal, surgery and general medicine.

The hospital has been appointed as a regional elective overnight stay centre for surgery. We have a really enthusiastic and committed surgical team, continually striving to improve and develop services and keen to work with colleagues regionally, to tackle unacceptable waiting lists across Northern Ireland. Since April 2023, they have treated over 6200 patients across a range of specialties including general surgery, gynaecology, ENT and endoscopy.

Whilst rising demand for services, workforce and finance remain challenging across health and social care regionally, the stabilisation plans for acute inpatient medicine have made good progress.

The Trust is contributing to the regional hospital configuration blueprint project led by the Department of Health and we have also started the journey of developing our new long term corporate vision and strategy for the organisation. We continue to develop and promote Daisy Hill as a key acute hospital throughout this process.

Yours sincerely



DR MARIA O'KANE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**From the Permanent Secretary
and HSC Chief Executive**



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

Castle Buildings
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ

Tel: 02890520559

Email: peter.may@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref: C/203/2023 & C/217/2023

Our ref: SCORR-0050-2024

Date: 31 January 2024

Dear Marie

Thank you for your correspondence dated 16/01/24 detailing the actions proposed by the NMD council in regards to the reconfiguration of Emergency General Surgery services from the Daisy Hill Hospital site to Craigavon Area Hospital.

I must firstly acknowledge the strong feelings in the Newry/Mourne population in defending their local health services. It is unfortunate that for some time Daisy Hill Hospital had not been able to recruit and retain a complete surgical team that would be available to staff a 24/7 service at the hospital. I would like to draw attention to a particular element of the Public Consultation document which states:

With regards to recruitment, from June 2016 to December 2019, six General Surgery Consultants were appointed to Daisy Hill Hospital. By December 2021, five of the six had resigned to take up posts elsewhere. Common themes emerged following discussion with Consultants regarding their decision to resign - the inability for the Consultant to practice their sub-specialty interest; deskilling due to limited exposure to emergency surgery; and high frequency of on-call due to the small rota. Surgical training is lengthy and has changed towards subspecialisation as the evidence base for the safe provision of services has grown.

The decision to temporarily and then permanently suspend this service has to be based upon clinical safety and quality outcomes. As it became clear over time that suitably trained staff could not be recruited or retained, it was impossible for the Trust to provide a safe service. As the leader of the HSC I have to consider clinical safety as the highest priority in the provision of services.

However, I am very pleased to see that the reconfiguration of the service to Craigavon Area Hospital has resulted in a better staffed, safe and sustainable service. New ambulance transfer pathways and extended emergency access to theatres and surgeons

24 hours per day mean that the people of Newry/Mourne now receive a safer service than they have since 2021, and one that can build and grow over time.

Whilst the action asked me to reverse the decision, I do not see any grounds for taking such a decision which would be contrary for the evidence provided. In the current HSC it is becoming clearer across a number of clinical specialisms that they cannot be safely and sustainably provided in each of our ten hospital sites. Patient safety means that reconfiguration of some services will be a necessity. Our commitment is to ensure that we use the hospital estate to its full effect to deliver the best health and care services to our community that we can. Changes in Daisy Hill are testament to delivering on that commitment.

Yours sincerely



Peter May



CEO 864-11-23 Q2

Issued by email

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

01 February 2024

Dear Ms Ward

Re: Notice of Motion – Bereavement Support

Thank you for your letter to the Chief Executive, on whose behalf I am responding in relation to the request for additional information regarding the bereavement training provided by the Education Authority, which was discussed at a recent meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

I can advise you that out of the 126 schools in the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area, Principals and senior leaders from 31 schools (24.6%) have attended the 'Whole School Approach to Bereavement and Critical Incidents' training. In addition, 17 schools (13.5%) are currently engaged with the Whole School Approach to Emotional Health and Wellbeing – Being Well, Doing Well programme and as part of this all staff will receive Bereavement & Loss professional development training.

I hope that this provides clarity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Dale Hanna'.

Dale Hanna
DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES

“To inspire, support and challenge all our Children and Young People to be the best that they can be.”

[Education Authority](#)

3 Charlemont Place, The Mall, Armagh BT61 9AX

T: 028 37512535 | email: dale.hanna@eani.org.uk Web: <https://www.eani.org.uk>

**From the Permanent Secretary
Mark Browne**



Marie Ward

Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org

Rathgael House
43 Balloo Road
Rathgill
BANGOR
BT19 7PR

Tel: 028 9127 9309

Email: mark.browne@education-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref: ERT/154/2023 & C/005/2024
Our Ref: SCORR-0026-2024

2 February 2024

Dear Marie,

Thank you for your e-mail of 24 January 2024 regarding the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council meeting held on 4 December 2024.

The Department of Education leads on the development of an Executive Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Strategy. The ELC Strategy has dual aims:

(i) supporting child development and (ii) promoting parental employment. The affordability and accessibility of childcare for families, alongside other actions to stabilise the early learning and childcare sector, are being considered as part of the development of the Strategy.

Significant work has been done to identify and cost a range of high-level options for early learning and childcare services in NI, informed by extensive stakeholder engagement and the findings from commissioned external reviews. In addition, my officials continue to liaise with colleagues from other UK jurisdictions and Ireland to better understand their models of support. As actions involve input from a range of Government Departments, cross-departmental sign-off will be required.

A Review of Childcare Services in NI commissioned by the Department of Education was published on 22 June 2023 and it sets out the key challenges which the Strategy needs to address. It can be accessed at [RSM \(2023\) DE Review of Childcare Services in NI - Final Report.PDF \(education-ni.gov.uk\)](#).

The timeline for publication and implementation of the ELC Strategy requires Executive agreement on significant policy decisions, including the scale and scope of any expanded provision and the allocation of budget.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Browne", with a long horizontal line underneath it.

MARK BROWNE (Dr)