



June 2nd, 2025

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 2nd June 2025** at **6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre**.

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 6 May 2025

For Information

 [Action Sheet 2025 05 06.pdf](#)

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Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing

4.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 6 May 2025

For Approval

 [Council Minutes 2025 05 06.pdf](#)

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Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption

5.0 Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 8 May 2025

For Approval

 [Audit Committee Minutes 2025-05-08.pdf](#)

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6.0 Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 May 2025

For Approval

 [Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2025-05-12.pdf](#)

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7.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 May 2025

For Approval

 [Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2025-05-15.pdf](#)

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8.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 May 2025

For Approval


 [Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2025 05 19.pdf](#)

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9.0 Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting

held on 21 May 2025

For Approval

 [Sustainabilty_and_Environment_Committee_Minutes_2025_05_21.pdf](#)

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10.0 Minutes of Special Audit Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2025

 [Special Audit Committee Minutes 2025-05-23.pdf](#)

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11.0 Planning Section

Correspondence

12.0 Correspondence Report


For Information

 [Correspondence Report Council 2025 06 02.pdf](#)

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12.1 Letter to Department for Infrastructure - Regionally Significant Planning Application, Lands approximately 650m south west of 40 Mullaghgarriiff Road, Hilltown, Newry

For Information

 [Letter to DfI - updated notification of hearing and submission details.pdf](#)

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12.2 Housing Council Minutes - 10 April 2025

For Information

 [Housing Council Minutes - 10th April 2025.pdf](#)

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12.3 Response from Minister of Health re: C/065/2025 Notice of Motion - Endometriosis

For Information

 [Response from Minister of Health re NOM C065.2025 Endometriosis.pdf](#)

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12.4 Response from DAERA re: C/056/2025 Notice of Motion - Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support

For Information

 [Response from DAERA Minister re NOM Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support.pdf](#)

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12.5 Response from Minister for Communities re: C/042/2025 Notice of Motion

- Arts Funding

For Information

 *Response from Communities Minister re NOM C.042.2025 Arts Funding.pdf*

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12.6 Response from DAERA re: C/066/2025 Notice of Motion - Wildfires in the Mourne Mountains

For Information

 *Response from DAERA Minister re NOM Wildfires in the Mourne Mountains.pdf*


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12.7 Response from Minister of Education re: C/081/2025 Notice of Motion - Funding to Pre School Groups

For Information

 *Response from Minister of Education re NOM Funding to Pre School Groups.pdf*

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 *Response from Education Authority re NOM Funding to Pre School Groups.pdf*

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Notices of Motion

13.0 Notice of Motion - Supreme Court Ruling

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Jackson

"That this Council welcomes the recent Supreme Court ruling which clarified that under the Equality Act 2010:

- a 'woman' is a biological woman or girl (a person born female)
- trans women (biological men) should not be permitted to use the women's facilities
- if somebody identifies as trans, they do not change sex for the purposes of the Act, even if they have a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC)

Furthermore, it accepts the initial assessment by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland that this judgement, in the context of our corresponding equality law, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 ('SDO'):- "is likely to be deemed by our industrial tribunals and courts to be highly persuasive and, consequently, it is likely to be followed in cases where similar issues arise."

Accordingly, Council resolves to urgently review all relevant Council policies and to make it clear that if a space or service is designated as women-only across the District, a person who was born male but identifies as a woman does not have a right to use that space or service."

14.0 Notice of Motion - "Good Jobs" Employment Rights Legislation

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Hearty:

"This Council calls for the delivery of equal and fair rights for all workers and welcomes the "Good Jobs" Employment Rights legislation currently being considered by the Stormont Assembly.

This bill presents an unparalleled opportunity to grow a productive regional economy that benefits our businesses, our workers and their families within the all-Ireland and global economic contexts.

Good jobs, which deliver fair wages, guarantee secure employment, with strong union recognition and collective bargaining rights, are the cornerstone of an economy that values inclusive growth and a fairer distribution of wealth.

The bill will ensure the fairer treatment of workers in regard to pay, tips and gratuities, holiday pay and parental leave as well as bringing tangible benefits to workers' lives across our entire community.

This Council endorses strong, progressive workers' rights legislation; to build a strong, regional economy; in which both businesses and workers prosper and we finally begin to eradicate the scourge of workplace inequalities."

15.0 Notice of Motion - Voting Rights for the Election of the President of Ireland

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Quinn:

"That this Council notes that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both; recalls that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 counties the right to vote in presidential elections; further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland."

16.0 Notice of Motion - Establishment of Arts Working Group

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Finn:

"NMDDC recognises the impact that regional inequalities in funding has had on our district's arts sector, acknowledges the support that artists, creatives and groups require and the gap in what they will need in the future, particularly given the closure of Newry Town Hall, and seek to establish an arts working group to provide support and create a roadmap for the sector across our district".

Invitees

Cllr Terry Andrews

Mr Alan Beggs

Cllr Callum Bowsie

Fionnuala Branagh

Cllr Jim Brennan

Cllr Pete Byrne

Cllr Philip Campbell

Cllr William Clarke

Cllr Laura Devlin

Ms Louise Dillon

Cllr Cadogan Enright

Cllr Killian Feehan

Cllr Doire Finn

Ms Lynne Fitzsimons

Ms Joanne Fleming

Cllr Conor Galbraith

Cllr Mark Gibbons

Cllr Oonagh Hanlon

Cllr Glyn Hanna

Mrs Catherine Hanvey

Cllr Valerie Harte

Mr Conor Haughey

Cllr Martin Hearty

Cllr Roisin Howell

Cllr Tierna Howie

Ms Catherine Hughes

Cllr Jonathan Jackson

Cllr Geraldine Kearns

Miss Veronica Keegan

Mrs Josephine 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

Maureen/Joanne Morgan/Johnston

Sinead Murphy

Cllr Declan Murphy
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Cllr Kate Murphy
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Cllr Selina Murphy
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Cllr Siobhan O'Hare
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Mr Andy Patterson
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Cllr Áine Quinn
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Cllr Henry Reilly
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Cllr Michael Rice
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Ruth Rooney
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Cllr Michael Ruane
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Cllr Gareth Sharvin
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Conor Smyth
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Donna Starkey
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Sarah Taggart
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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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Cllr Helena Young
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ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – TUESDAY 6 MAY 2025

| Minute Ref | Subject | Decision | Lead Officer | Actions taken/ Progress to date | Remove from Action Sheet Y/N |
|-------------------|--|--|----------------------------|--|---|
| <i>C/128/2024</i> | <i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 01.07.2024</i> | It was agreed item C/058/2024: Twinning Newry with City of Ramallah should remain on the action sheet. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Ongoing | <i>N</i> |
| <i>C/070/2025</i> | <i>Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 07.04.2025</i> | It was agreed to note the action sheet. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Noted | |
| <i>C/071/2025</i> | <i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 07.04.2025</i> | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Noted | |
| <i>C/072/2025</i> | <i>Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 31.03.2025</i> | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Noted | |
| <i>C/073/2025</i> | <i>Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14.04.2025</i> | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Noted | |
| <i>C/074/2025</i> | <i>Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17.04.2025</i> | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Noted | |
| <i>C/075/2025</i> | <i>Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 28.04.2025</i> | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | Noted | |

| Minute Ref | Subject | Decision | Lead Officer | Actions taken/ Progress to date | Remove from Action Sheet Y/N |
|-------------------|---|--|---------------------|--|---|
| C/076/2025 | <i>Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29.04.2025</i> | The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. | Democratic Services | Noted | |
| C/078/2025 | <i>Correspondence Report</i> <i>Response from Mid Ulster District Council in relation to a Notice of Motion regarding safeguarding measures at school bus stops.</i> | It was agreed to note the Correspondence report. It was agreed that Newry Mourne and Down District Council fully support the Motion from Mid Ulster District Council regarding safeguarding measures at school bus stops. | Democratic Services | Noted Correspondence issued | |
| C/079/2025 | <i>Notice of Motion – 'Nip it in the Bud' Campaign</i> | It was agreed that this Council notes the importance of farmers and rural dwellers to our society; recognises that farmers, agricultural workers and people living in rural communities can have lower access to cancer services due to the nature of their work and often living in isolated areas; we also recognise the impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on a family business such as a family farm, including housing, the extending family and the welfare of livestock; endorses the 'Nip It In The Bud' campaign delivered by the Farming Community Network in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and acknowledges the benefits to the rural community; pledges to do all we can to raise awareness and save lives, particularly using our social media platforms, to help rural dwellers in this | Democratic Services | The Council launched our support for the 'Nip It in the Bud' cancer awareness campaign on May 23, 2025, utilising a multi-platform approach including local media, a web news story, and scheduled social media posts. This comprehensive effort also involved direct outreach to Gyles Dawson at Rural Support to ensure | |

| <i>Minute Ref</i> | <i>Subject</i> | <i>Decision</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> | <i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i> | <i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i> |
|-------------------|---|---|-----------------------------|--|---|
| | | <p>Council area be aware of the symptoms of cancer and to seek immediate medical advice if necessary, as evidence demonstrates that early diagnosis and treatment can save lives.</p> <p>It was also agreed that Council write to Rural Support (Gyles Dawson) and ask them to provide information on the services they provide to ensure elected representatives and Council Marketing could disseminate advice and guidance for farmers and rural dwellers, and if possible, invite them to present to Council Committee.</p> | <i>Marketing Department</i> | <i>their helpline and other partner resources from the Farming Community Network and Macmillan was available for farmers and all online resources and Helpline Phone numbers from the partners were promoted to staff, councillors, and community groups, aiming to address cancer inequalities in rural areas.</i> | |
| <i>C/080/2025</i> | <i>Notice of Motion – Mourne Mountain Gateway Project</i> | <p>"This Council notes the recent announcement that the National Trust decided against leasing it's land to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council regarding the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project. The Council further notes the widespread concern expressed by residents across the district, and recognises that this project, in the absence of a secured lease presents significant financial and legal risks.</p> <p>This Council therefore agrees to undertake a full review of the project, including the exploration of viable and sustainable alternative proposals to the gondola element of the project — such as the development of a visitor centre in Donard Park — to improve access and enhance tourism in the Mournes".</p> | <i>Democratic Services</i> | <i>Noted</i> | |

| <i>Minute Ref</i> | <i>Subject</i> | <i>Decision</i> | <i>Lead Officer</i> | <i>Actions taken/ Progress to date</i> | <i>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</i> |
|-------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|--|---|
| | | The Motion was referred to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Programme Board in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6 | <i>M Ward C Mallon</i> | | |
| C/081/2025 | <i>Notice of Motion – Funding to Preschool Groups</i> | It was agreed that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its deepest concern relating to the lack of available funding to pre-school groups across our District. This Council fully supports groups such as Little Stars Pre-School in Killyleagh who at this time are making strenuous efforts to secure the necessary funding through the Pathfinder Programme to maintain, enhance and continue the excellent standard of education and care that they provide to the community. We call upon the Education Minister and the Education Authority to expedite and release much needed funding to enable groups to do what they know best, providing a service of care and professionalism to their pupils. | <i>Democratic Services</i> | <i>Noted</i> <i>Correspondence issued</i> | |

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Tuesday 6 May 2025 at 6.00pm in
Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne

In attendance in Chamber:

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Councillor T Andrews | Councillor C Bowsie |
| Councillor J Brennan | Councillor P Campbell |
| Councillor W Clarke | Councillor L Devlin |
| Councillor C Enright | Councillor K Feehan |
| Councillor C Galbraith | Councillor O Hanlon |
| Councillor G Hanna | Councillor M Hearty |
| Councillor T Howie | Councillor J Jackson |
| Councillor G Kearns | Councillor A Lewis |
| Councillor A Mathers | Councillor D McAteer |
| Councillor S O'Hare | Councillor D Murphy |
| Councillor K Murphy | Councillor A Quinn |
| Councillor H Reilly | Councillor M Rice |
| Councillor G Sharvin | Councillor J Tinnelly |
| Councillor J Truesdale | Councillor H Young |

In attendance via Teams:

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| Councillor M Gibbons | Councillor R Howell |
| Councillor M Larkin | Councillor D Lee-Surginor |
| Councillor O Magennis | Councillor L McEvoy |
| Councillor M Ruane | |

Officials in attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
 Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
 Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
 Mrs S Muphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
 Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
 Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
 Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/068/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Finn, Harte, S Murphy and Taylor.

The Chairperson spoke of the recent passing of Pope Francis and thanked all Council staff involved in opening the books of condolences enabling people to physically record their message of condolence in books across multiple venues as well as online and reminded everyone the books would close on 7 May 2025.

The Chairperson expressed his condolences to the family, husband and seven sons of Zipporah Brannigan who had passed away suddenly. On behalf of Councillor Brennan, the

Chairperson wished to highlight all gate proceeds from the Drumaness v Ardglass Gaelic game on 8 May would go to the fundraiser for the family at this very difficult time.

The Chairperson passed on condolences on behalf of Council to Councillor Valerie Harte and her family whose brother had sadly passed away.

Condolences were extended to the family of Peter McParland, who had grown up in Newry and was a former international soccer player who played for Aston Villa and Northern Ireland who had won an FA Cup medal with Aston Villa and played in the World Cup.

The Chairperson offered his congratulations to the following:

- Leo Laverty from Killough who was now an All-Ireland Boxing Champion, highlighted by Councillor Sharvin.
- Daniel Carson on being named the Energia AIL Rugby Referee of the Year, highlighted by Councillor Sharvin.
- Downe Travel team who were crowned the number one travel agency at the top 50 Travel Agencies Northern Ireland Awards night, highlighted by Councillor Sharvin.
- Rostrevor Men Shed on celebrating their 10th anniversary and advised they were hosting a coffee morning on 17 May from 9:00 to 1:00 PM, highlighted by Councillor Finn.
- Emma McArdle from Burren on winning the World Championships for Irish Dance 2025 in Killarney, Emma's second time to win a world title, highlighted on behalf of Councillor S Murphy.
- A happy birthday to Councillor Terry Andrews who had turned 60.
- Conor Og McVeigh who did himself, his school and team Northern Ireland proud at the TCS London Mini Marathon Championships on smashing the 2.6 kilometre road race. He was 2nd Northern Ireland runner along with the Ulster Schools Cross Country Champion Kieran Smith from St Colman's College (highlighted by Councillor Devlin).
- Upper Crossgar who recently became World Pipe Band Champions for which a reception had been held in association with Councillor Lewis
- VE Day celebrations in Kilkeel which had been a remarkable evening with thanks to Councillor Hanna.

The Chairperson asked that it be noted the Greater Newry Business Awards had opened for nominations and anyone that wanted to nominate a business should do so with the awards taking place on 19 September 2025.

The Chairperson referred to the news that had broken the previous week that the National Trust had pulled out of the Mourne Mountain Gateway project. He provided an overview of the Emergency Programme Board Meeting that had been held on 2 May where the members of the Programme Board had a very robust and long discussion on where that left Council.

Members were advised there were a number of proposals arising from the Emergency Programme Board, one of which was to call a Special Council Meeting with the National Trust to answer questions on their decision to pull out and it was hoped that would be happening in the near future. Council officers were asked to engage with the Belfast Region City Deal team to find out what the next steps were for Council going forward.

The Chairperson acknowledged this had been a very disappointing decision for those working on the project and wished to make it clear that the failure or the pulling out of the project did not fall with Council officers who were carrying the request through the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that was signed by the National Trust and the Council. The MOU had asked Council to carry out an Independent Environmental Assessment at the request of the National Trust and following the report of the EIA move to

The Chairperson asked that anybody that had ideas or alternatives to contact Senior Management whilst they hold discussions with Belfast Region City Deal panel and once those meetings were concluded Council would be in a better position on how to move forward at the next emergency Programme Board Meeting.

There were no declarations of interest.

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 April 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Andrews.

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 7 April 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 31 March 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 31 March 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor K Murphy.

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 April 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 April 2025 were agreed as

an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Hanna, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

C/074/2025 MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 2025

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 April 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Quinn.**

C/075/2025 MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2025

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 28 April 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 28 April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Lewis.**

C/076/2025 MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2025

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/045/2025: Notice of Motion, Newcastle Memorial Garden

In welcoming the Newcastle Fishing Disaster Memorial, Councillor Bowsie wished to put on record his disappointment that a similar motion he had brought for a maritime disaster, namely the last victim of the Titanic being from Crossgar had not been allowed and asked that in future there was more consistency when it came to memorials in line with Council's policy.

The Chairperson replied there had been a long discussion at that time and it had gone before the Equality and Good Relations Forum where it was highlighted there was another victim from the Jonesborough area and it was about getting a memorial for all victims across the District.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Young.**

C/077/2025

PLANNING SECTION

There were no issues arising.

C/078/2025

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 6 May 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Councillor Young proposed support for the Motion from Mid Ulster District Council regarding safeguarding measures at school bus stops stating there were many rural roads throughout the District on which children were boarding and alighting from school buses and often seen standing on grass verges either waiting to get on a bus or having just got off a bus waiting to cross a road. She spoke of how roads were extremely dangerous with some motorists not adhering to speed limits and others taking risks, particularly while overtaking other vehicles and that anything that could be done to improve road safety and the safety of school children must be welcomed and fully supported.

Councillor Sharvin seconded Councillor Young's proposal to support the Motion from Mid-Ulster District Council and that hopefully there would be a response from the Minister of Infrastructure and Minister of Education in tackling the issue.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Sharvin that Newry Mourne and Down District Council fully support the Motion from Mid Ulster District Council regarding safeguarding measures at school bus stops.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Young to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:

- **Response from Mid Ulster District Council in relation to a Notice of Motion regarding safeguarding measures at school bus stops.**
- **Response from Scottish Government in relation in relation to a Notice of Motion on Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support.**

C/079/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – 'NIP IT IN THE BUD' CAMPAIGN

The following Motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

"That this Council notes the importance of farmers and rural dwellers to our society; recognises that farmers, agricultural workers and people living in rural communities can have lower access to cancer services due to the nature of their work and often living in isolated areas; we also recognise the impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on a family business such as a family farm, including housing, the extending family and the welfare of livestock; endorses the 'Nip It In The Bud' campaign delivered by the Farming Community Network in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and acknowledges the benefits to the rural community; pledges to do all we can to raise awareness and save lives, particularly using our social media platforms, to help rural dwellers in this Council area be aware of the

symptoms of cancer and to seek immediate medical advice if necessary, as evidence demonstrates that early diagnosis and treatment can save lives."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Galbraith advised the Farming Community Network (FCN) was a voluntary organisation and charity that aimed to improve the health and wellbeing of people in farming and assist those people at times of difficulty and change.

Members were advised research indicated people living in rural communities were often presented with more advanced cancer when diagnosed and were 5% less likely to survive than those living in an urban environment. Approximately 36% of Northern Ireland's population lived in a rural area, and this created a unique challenge for accessing services and support. Farmers and people living in rural communities were being urged to 'Nip it in the Bud' and be aware of symptoms and if necessary get checked for early signs of cancer as part of a new UK-wide campaign by The Farming Community Network (FCN).

Members were advised there was a firm belief amongst clinicians who were increasingly concerned that farmers in particular were hesitant to contact their doctor until the late development of the disease and farmers, farm workers and people living in rural communities had lower access to cancer services and support due to the nature of their work and rural life, often in isolated areas with migrant workers facing additional barriers when accessing cancer care.

Councillor Galbraith informed Members the Minister of Health recognised these inequalities in diagnosis and treatment and had included addressing the imbalance's as a priority with research commissioned with the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry to identify the barriers and constraints.

Councillor Galbraith pointed out early diagnosis saved lives therefore it was essential to encourage farmers who faced many challenges and stressful situations to put their health first and support from Council would help this campaign achieve its objective which would undoubtedly save lives.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor McAteer spoke of various forms of skin cancer that were prevalent within the farming community linked to prolonged outdoor work and that it was well recognised that farmers were keener to take care of their livestock and land than they were of themselves. He stated he would like this taken forward to the Active and Health Communities Committee to see what could be done locally to bring this to people's attention within the Council area e.g. At Farmer Markets or other outlets and make people aware of what was available with emphasis on screening and promote that along with the Health Service.

Councillor Hanlon spoke of the importance of highlighting the inequalities that do potentially exist with rural communities and supported the Motion.

Councillor Hanlon proposed the following amendment:

That Council write to Rural Support (Gyles Dawson) and ask them to provide information on the services they provide to ensure elected representatives and Council Marketing could disseminate advice and guidance for farmers and rural dwellers, and if possible invite them to present to Council Committee.

Councillor K Murphy seconded Councillor Hanlon's proposed amendment.

Councillor Galbraith accepted Councillor Hanlon's amendment.

Councillors Hanna and Truesdale each voiced support for the Motion on behalf of their parties.

Councillor Galbraith on behalf of the Farming Community Network thanked Members for their support advising they were pushing the campaign across all Council areas and Newry Mourne and Down would now be the second Council area to run with this.

The Chairperson declared the Motion was unanimously passed.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor McAteer that this Council notes the importance of farmers and rural dwellers to our society; recognises that farmers, agricultural workers and people living in rural communities can have lower access to cancer services due to the nature of their work and often living in isolated areas; we also recognise the impact that a cancer diagnosis can have on a family business such as a family farm, including housing, the extending family and the welfare of livestock; endorses the 'Nip It In The Bud' campaign delivered by the Farming Community Network in partnership with Macmillan Cancer Support and acknowledges the benefits to the rural community; pledges to do all we can to raise awareness and save lives, particularly using our social media platforms, to help rural dwellers in this Council area be aware of the symptoms of cancer and to seek immediate medical advice if necessary, as evidence demonstrates that early diagnosis and treatment can save lives.**

It was also agreed that Council write to Rural Support (Gyles Dawson) and ask them to provide information on the services they provide to ensure elected representatives and Council Marketing could disseminate advice and guidance for farmers and rural dwellers, and if possible, invite them to present to Council Committee.

C/080/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – MOURNE MOUNTAIN GATEWAY PROJECT

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

"This Council notes the recent announcement that the National Trust decided against leasing it's land to Newry, Mourne and Down District Council regarding the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project.

The Council further notes the widespread concern expressed by residents across the district, and recognises that this project, in the absence of a secured lease presents significant financial and legal risks.

This Council therefore agrees to Undertake a full review of the project, including the exploration of viable and sustainable alternative proposals to the gondola element of the project — such as the development of a visitor centre in Donard Park — to improve access and enhance tourism in the Mournes".

The amended Motion was seconded by Councillor Howie.

In response to a query from Councillor Truesdale as to why the Motion was being referred to the Programme Board and not the Project Board, the Chairperson advised when a motion was brought to Council that fell under the remit of Council, it went to the relevant committee that dealt with it under Standing Order 16.1.6.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Programme Board in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

C/081/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – FUNDING TO PRE-SCHOOL GROUPS

The following Motion was received from Councillor Andrews:

"Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its deepest concern relating to the lack of available funding to pre-school groups across our District. This Council fully supports groups such as Little Stars Pre-School in Killyleagh who at this time are making strenuous efforts to secure the necessary funding through the Pathfinder Programme to maintain, enhance and continue the excellent standard of education and care that they provide to the community. We call upon the Education Minister and the Education Authority to expedite and release much needed funding to enable groups to do what they know best, providing a service of care and professionalism to their pupils."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Howie.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Andrews placed on record appreciation to all the hard work from the team at Little Stars in Killyleagh and to others within the District who carried out sterling service to those in their charge and care.

Councillor Andrews advised that having written to the Minister he had taken on board the sentiments and outlined his plans to extend the Pathways Fund which was to be welcomed and would be asking his colleagues and the Executive to enhance the fund budget from the Early Learning and Childhood Strategy funding being held in the 2024/25 arrangements.

Members were informed that whilst Little Stars met all eligibility requirements available funding was extended, subject to Executive agreement and the decision could take weeks and that time was vital for the long term survival of Little Stars. Council needed to do what it could so the much needed funding be expedited and released to enable groups to do what they know best and provide the service of care and professionalism to pupils.

In seconding the Motion and referring to the news about Little Stars, Councillor Howie said it unfortunately was not an uncommon thing for early years as there were a lot of issues. She welcomed that the Minister was conducting a review of early years across the board as even those preschools and play groups that did have funded places were having to sadly close their doors e.g. Little Sunbeams in Saintfield.

Councillor Howie added that those like Little Stars, which were non-statutory organisations were often left worse off and did not get any funded places and relied entirely on grant funding. She advised it was disappointing that despite Stormont being reestablished and there being an Education Minister in place, there were still difficulties with the scheme and huge difficulties with early years education.

Councillor Howie said she would urge the Minister of Finance to be supportive of the request to enhance pathway funding and support of early years preschools across the District and across Northern Ireland.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the Motion and referred to a similar problem a number of years ago where funding was at risk but due to work carried out with various MLAs and MP the funding had been reinstated. He spoke of the vulnerability for groups that could not plan long term due to funding risks every year.

Councillor Hanlon spoke in support of the Motion and the importance of funding for all preschool early years to give children the best possible start in life. She stated while Little Stars had been highlighted, unfortunately this had been right through the District with many preschool providers contacting Sinn Féin offices feeling they had been unfairly excluded from key support programmes such as the preschool standardisation programme which offered extended hours of vital childcare to parents and families. She said hopefully these issues could be resolved on a longer term basis and not going year to year with uncertainty for many providers.

Councillor Jackson stated that on 23 May 2024 the Education Minister had set out a package of measures for early learning and childcare that was agreed by the Executive. This included £5 million to begin the transition of all funded preschool education places to 22.5 hours and another £2 million was earmarked for a targeted business support scheme for childcare providers to assist those in need of financial support and the Department for Economy and Invest NI would assist with the design of the scheme. Almost twelve months on, DfE had continued to drag its heels with the work necessary to deliver that money with the latest formal position that 'research was progressing at pace.'

Councillor Jackson stated there needed to be action from the Economy Minister which reciprocated the urgency with which the Education Minister had provided vital support to working parents through the 15% subsidy for childcare bill for 3 and 4 year olds.

In speaking about the amazing work of the staff at Little Stars, Councillor Lee-Surginor implored all MLAs across the parties to work together and to come up with a final solution.

The Chairperson declared the Motion was unanimously passed.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Howie that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its deepest concern relating to the lack of available funding to pre-school groups across our District. This Council fully supports groups such as Little Stars Pre-School in Killyleagh who at this time are making strenuous efforts to secure the necessary funding through the Pathfinder Programme to maintain, enhance and continue the excellent standard of education and care that they provide to the community. We call upon the Education Minister and the Education Authority to expedite and release much needed funding to enable groups to do what they know best, providing a service of care and professionalism to their pupils.**

Councillors Enright and Bowsie left the meeting during the above discussion – 6.48pm and 6.51pm.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.55pm.
For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2025

**Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 8 May 2025, at 2.00pm,
in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

Chairperson: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

**In attendance
in Chamber:**

Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor A Mathers
Councillor G Sharvin

Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor S O'Hare

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor L Devlin
Councillor K Murphy

Councillor T Howie

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director Active & Healthy Communities
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Ms C Hughes, Head of Performance and Improvement (Acting)
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Also in attendance
in chamber:**

Ms K Doey NIAO
Mr S Wade NIAO
Ms C Hagan Sumer NI

AC/027/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, and Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment.

AC/028/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Ms Hagan declared an interest in item 17 – Internal Audit Extension.

AC/029/2025: ACTION SHEET OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 FEBRUARY 2025

Read: Action Sheet arising from Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on Thursday 20 February 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AC/071/2024:

In response to the Chairperson noting that training was still an outstanding item on the action sheet, Mrs Kelly advised that herself and Ms Taggart were currently sourcing training. She noted the potential change of membership of the Audit Committee given the upcoming AGM and advised that the item would remain on the action sheet until completed.

AC/015/2025: Update on NCCR:

Mrs Kelly advised that following the discussion that had occurred at the previous Audit Committee meeting, she had written to the Local Government Auditor to detail the site selection process that had taken place. She confirmed that the auditor was content with the detail that had been provided.

Mr Wade, on behalf of the local auditor, confirmed that Mrs Kelly had communicated with the auditor, and both were content with the response received.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet for Audit Committee Meeting held on 20 February 2025.**

FOR CONSIDERATION

AC/030/2025: TO AGREE DATE AND START TIMES FOR 2025/2026

Read: Proposed dates and start times for Audit Committee meetings for 2025/2026. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne advised that the proposed date in September 2025 may require amendment as the Audit Office had a number of Audit Committees scheduled for that week. He advised that he would liaise with Ms Taggart to secure an alternative date and would communicate this in the coming weeks.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to approve the dates and start times for Audit Committee meetings for 2025/2026 subject to amendment.**

AC/031/2025: AUDIT COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND TIMETABLE

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Audit Committee Terms of Reference and Timetable. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne advised that Terms of Reference should be updated annually, in line with best practice. He detailed that Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report detailed the highlighted amended Terms of Reference which had been guided by the self-assessment from the NI Audit Office as detailed at Appendix 2. He further advised that Appendix 3 outlined the timetable for the year ahead.

Ms Slevin noted the importance of the documents for the Committee and welcomed the updated Terms of Reference and work programme for the year ahead.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the Audit**

Committee Terms of Reference and to note the timetable for the year ahead.

AC/032/2025: AUDIT COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT – NEW GUIDE

Read: Audit Committee self-Assessment – New Guide. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne advised that the new guide had been released in March 2025 from the NI Audit Office and a meeting was to be arranged with the Chairperson of the Audit Committee to populate the guide, which would then be circulated to Members for agreement. He advised that this would guide the self-assessment for the coming year.

Ms Slevin noted that it was a comprehensive document which would be used to feed into her annual report to evaluate the effectiveness of the Audit Committee.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Audit Committee Self-Assessment – New Guide.

FOR NOTING

AC/033/2025: UPDATE OF MEMBERS INTERESTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Update of Members' Interests. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly advised that this report was tabled every six months and had been updated following a request from the Democratic Services Manager for Members to update their Register of Interest, following which five Members had made amendments.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the six-month review report.

AC/034/2025: LGA AUDIT REPORT 2024 - RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Local Government Auditor Report 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne advised that the report had been compiled by the Local Government Auditor and contained a number of recommendations that had applied to all Councils. He advised that unfortunately the report detailing Council's compliance, or working towards compliance, for each recommendation had not been included in the agenda. He advised that it had only been noticed prior to the meeting, therefore advised that the report would be tabled at the next Audit Committee meeting in order to give Members time to review the data.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note that the report and update would be brought to the next Audit Committee due to an admin error.

PERFORMANCE – OPEN SESSION

AC/035/2025: PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2025 - 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Hughes advised Members that the draft Performance Improvement Plan had been tabled and agreed at Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting in March 2025, and that the consultation on the objectives was scheduled to end on Friday 9 May. She confirmed that following the consultation period, the Performance Improvement Plan 2025/26 would be published by 30 June 2025.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Hughes and her team for the hard work that went into the documents and consultation.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the following:

- The five draft performance improvement objectives 2025 – 26, as outlined in Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report.
- The proposed approach and timetable for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan 2025 – 26, as outlined in Appendix 2, including approval to commence the consultation and engagement process on 14 March 2025.

CORPORATE SERVICES – OPEN SESSION

AC/036/2025: CORPORATE RISK REGISTER – CORPORATE SERVICES RISK REGISTER ALSO TO BE TABLED

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding the Corporate Risk Register. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly advised that the Corporate Risk Register had been reviewed by the Senior Management Team (SMT) at the end of April, utilising audit assurance statements to help inform the risks. She outlined that there were still 12 risks, seven red, four amber and one yellow, with no new risks having been added. She asked Members to note the change in risk allocation, noting the increased risk rating for the Planning section.

Mrs Kelly advised that the recent National Trust announcement had broken following the review of the risk register and as such, SMT had added some narrative to the risk register regarding the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project (MMGP), advising that this would be considered further when more information was available about next steps.

Councillor Bowsie noted that he had some concerns relating to the risk allocation given the recent National Trust announcement, stating that he believed that the risk register should contain more narrative given the level of uncertainty regarding the potential loss of investment.

Following a query from Councillor Bowsie on the amount spent to date on the project, Mr Mallon advised that he did not have that detail to hand but confirmed that he could collate the information and bring it back to a future Audit Committee meeting.

The Chairperson queried whether Mr Mallon had any data relating to spend that he could share today.

Mr Mallon advised that he did not want to speculate as to costs incurred, advising that Council would have incurred costs up to 1st May prior to the National Trust announcement that had yet to be invoiced and was unwilling to offer incomplete data given the public interest in the issue. He advised that he would action this and report back to a future Committee date.

Councillor Bowsie then asked the following questions:

- What assurance had been received from the National Trust that demonstrated commitment to the project to allow Council to spend money to date?
- What action had or would Council take to recoup costs to date from the National Trust?
- What steps had been taken to ascertain if the £30m investment could be secured for other projects within the District and was there a deadline associated with this?

Mr Mallon responded as follows:

- A condition of the contract for funding from Department for Economy (DfE) was that all parties had to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in respect of the project, with assurances having been provided to Council, the Department and funders to allow the letter of offer to be released.
- Mr Mallon advised he was not in a position to answer regarding plans to recoup the costs as that would be a matter for Council to decide on how to progress the matter.
- Meetings were scheduled with stakeholders regarding the BRCD funding and any potential to keep the £30m funding within the District, with answers hopefully forthcoming over the coming weeks

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the questions relating to the MMGP, stating that the risk of potentially losing £30m investment should not be overlooked by the Audit Committee. She noted that there appeared to be several untruths circulating as to how the funding could be spent by Council, stressing her understanding that there were requirements that had to be adhered to in order to secure the funds for the District. She stated that while she was unsure where the risk should fall within the grid, however, given that the situation was ongoing it should be as high a risk level as possible.

Mr Mallon accepted the point regarding the number of unknowns in relation to the situation at present, acknowledging that the uncertainties created a heightened level of risk. He advised that SMT would reconsider the risk register and table it at the next Audit Committee.

Councillor Hanlon queried whether the item should be set aside as a risk on its own, rather than incorporating the issue into the capital projects risk category.

Mr Mallon advised that the project had its own risk register and stated that this could be tabled for consideration, rather than incorporating the MMGP under the entirety of capital projects across Council.

Councillor Hanlon then noted her Party's concern if the risk was left until the next Audit Committee in July, stressing that she felt it needed to be dealt with quicker than that, given the potential detriment to Council and District. She queried whether the issue should be tabled at a Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee rather than waiting another quarter for an update.

Mrs Kelly stated that it should be tabled at the next Audit Committee but agreed that it could be tabled at either Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee, or full Council meeting in the interim.

The Chairperson advised that the risk register naturally sat within the Audit Committee remit, but agreed with the Members' rationale that given the risk the organisation was facing, the item could be tabled at the forthcoming Special Audit Committee in the coming weeks, as well as at other Committees that Officers and Members deemed appropriate.

Councillor Devlin and Howie acknowledged the uncertainty at the minute, and noted their anticipation for the updates that would be forthcoming following the stakeholder meetings Mr Mallon was due to attend.

Following request for clarity from the Chairperson regarding next steps, Mr Mallon stated that he hoped to report back to next week's Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting regarding the latest discussions and outcomes with BRCD and DfE, which would inform the risk register to be tabled at the next Special Audit Committee meeting, but stressed the need for time to allow discussions to happen which would help inform next steps.

Councillor Bowsie queried the dates for any forthcoming meetings, to which Mr Mallon advised that there was a preliminary meeting with BRCD and DfE early next week.

Councillor Bowsie then noted the spend relating to the advanced flooding scheme, querying whether there was any feedback as to why a number of applicants did not meet the threshold.

Mr Mallon advised that he did not have the exact detail to hand but stated that there were a range of issues why the threshold had not been met, such as some applicants having received payouts from their insurance company and therefore becoming ineligible for the funds, but each application could have appealed through consultation with DfE who had full control over all decisions made.

AGREED:

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

- **To approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at Appendix 1. Full Corporate Risk Register can be evidenced at Appendix 2.**
- **To note the revised Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register summary at Appendix 3 and detailed Corporate Services Directorate Risk Register at appendix 4.**

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

- **An update regarding the MMGP would be tabled at a Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee**

- meeting to provide up to date information and evidence to allow a reassessment of the Risk
- The Corporate Risk Register would be tabled at the upcoming Special Audit Committee (date to be confirmed) following SMT reconsideration of the risks associated with the MMGP.
- A report to be brought back to next Audit Committee on the MMGP.

AC/037/2025: PROMPT PAYMENT STATISTICS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Procurement, regarding Prompt Payment Statistics **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne outlined the report, noting that 93% of invoices had been paid within 30 days, with the average being paid within 15.41 days. He noted that there was an updated process where invoices without a PO number were taken monthly to SMT for consideration, which had an impact on the payment statistics.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the Quarter 4 Prompt Payment Statistics 2024/25

Items restricted in accordance with Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during the following items which related to exempt information by virtue of Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during these items of business.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

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

CORPORATE SERVICES (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/038/2025: UPDATE ON AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding an Update on Audit Recommendations **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the progress in implementing both internal and external audit recommendations.

Councillor Sharvin joined the meeting during the above discussion – 2.45pm

AC/039/2025: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note Quarter 4 AND Financial Year End of 31 March 2025 update in relation to Direct Award Contracts.

Councillor Howie left the meeting during the above discussion – 3.13pm

AC/040/2024: PROCUREMENT ACTION PLANS

Read: Report Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Procurement Action Plans. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the update and progress in relation to the Directorate Procurement Action Plans.

AC/041/2025: UPDATE ON FRAUD AND RAISING CONCERNS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Fraud and Raising Concerns Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the following:

- The update in relation to Fraud and Raising Concerns cases detailed at Appendix 1 of the Officers Report
- The progress on actions arising from the NIAO Internal Fraud Risk Self-Assessment
- The update in relation to the National Fraud Initiative

NIAO (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/042/2025: AUDIT STRATEGY 2024/2025

Read: Audit Strategy 2024-2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed to note the contents of the Audit Strategy for 2024/25

INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)

Having previously declared an interest in the item, Ms Hagan left the room for discussion on the following item – 3.46pm

AC/043/2025: INTERNAL AUDIT EXTENSION

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the first one-year extension period to allow work to commence on the third year of the four-year Internal Audit Plan.

Ms Hagan rejoined the meeting – 3.48pm

AC/044/2025: SUMER NI SUMMARY REPORT

Read: Sumer NI Summary Report **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Summary Report

AC/045/2025: INTERNAL AUDIT PLAN 2025/26

Read: Internal Audit Plan 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Plan 2025/26

AC/046/2025: FUEL MANAGEMENT REPORT

Read: Fuel Management Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Fuel Management Report

Cllr Devlin left the meeting during the above discussion – 4.35pm

AC/047/2025: PERFORMANCE DATA AND VALIDATIONS

Read: Performance Data and Validations Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Performance Data and Validations Report

AC/048/2025: **LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIPS**

Read: Labour Market Partnerships Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Labour Market Partnerships Report

AC/049/2025: **SUMER NI INTERNAL AUDIT CHARTER**

Read: Sumer NI Internal Audit Charter. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the Sumer NI Internal Audit Charter

CIRCULARS

AC/050/2025: **CIRCULAR LG 12/2025 – CONSOLIDATED COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCES**

Read: Circular LG 12/2025 – Consolidated Councillor Allowances Circular. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the Consolidated Councillor Allowances Circular

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 4.48pm

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

Signed: **Ms J Kelly**
Director Corporate Services

Signed: **Ms B Slevin**
Independent Chairperson

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

25

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 12 May 2025 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row**

Chairperson: Councillor A Lewis

**Committee Members
in attendance:**

| | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Councillor T Andrews | Councillor K Feehan |
| Councillor O Hanlon | Councillor G Hanna |
| Councillor D Lee-Surginor | Councillor S Murphy |
| Councillor A Quinn | Councillor M Ruane |

Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor J Truesdale

Officials in attendance:

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:**

Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

ERT/039/2025:

APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Gibbons, Hanna and Harte.

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. He asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

ERT/040/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andrews declared an interest in Item 12 – DBEC Application to SEUPB.

ERT/041/2025:

**ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 15 APRIL 2025**

Read:

Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy,
Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 14
April 2025 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

**On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by
Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the Action
Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration &
Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 14**

April 2025.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/042/2025:

ARTS OUTREACH PROGRAMME

Read:

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

Mrs Smyth outlined the report regarding the outreach programme that was to be delivered over the 2025/26 financial year, directing Members attention to section 2.1 of the report that contained all the pertinent details of the proposal while working in partnership with two schools to continue the programme into the coming year.

Councillor Lee-Surginor commended the work involved within the proposal, noting that the report referenced "local" primary schools. He queried whether this applied solely to Downpatrick or would it extend to nearby locations, such as Crossgar.

Mrs Smyth advised that the proposal incorporated schools that already had the shared education programme established, and both of these were Downpatrick based.

Councillor Hanlon commended the good work that was ongoing and welcomed the fact that funding would continue for the groups involved. She requested that officers reconsider the opening hours of the Down Arts Centre, stating that it was unfortunate that the work on display could not be accessed on a Saturday when the town had the largest footfall.

Mr Mallon advised that proposals were being developed regarding the Arts Centre in Downpatrick and how they could be aligned with the Museum opening hours.

AGREED:

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

- **To deliver an Artist Bursary Programme, awarding Letters of Offer to 6 bursaries.**
- **To deliver 2 Artist Bursaries through a Service Level Agreement with the John Hewitt Programme**
- **To deliver a Theatre Company in Residence Programme, establishing a Service Level Agreement for delivery against KPIs between June 2025 and March 2026**
- **To deliver an Artist in Residence programme, establishing a Service Level Agreement for delivery against KPIs between September 2025 and March 2026**
- **To support a Schools Shared Education Project through issue of a Letter of Offer for implementation of a Streets Mural Arts Project.**

ERT/043/2025:

DATA SHARING AGREEMENT BETWEEN DAERA AND 11 COUNCILS

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding Data Sharing Agreement between DAERA & 11 Councils. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly outlined the report, advising that the Service Level Agreement (SLA) was due to be extended for a further three years. He advised that the SLA was part of the planning process to allow for the exchange of data when processing planning applications that required consultation with DAERA.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the Data Sharing Agreement between DAERA and the 11 Councils regarding planning applications on agricultural land.**

ERT/044/2025: KILKEEL CHAMBER

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

Mrs Smyth noted that Council supported a number of artisan markets across various locations within the District, advising that this report proposed to work in partnership with Kilkeel Chamber to deliver three markets over the coming year around holiday periods.

Councillor Clarke noted the positive addition the market would make to Kilkeel, noting that it would need a visible presence within the area to encourage footfall. He also commended the Kilkeel Chamber which had a track record of delivering different events within the area.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor Andrews welcomed the proposed market and officers acknowledged his request for consideration to be given to the establishment of an artisan market in Rowallane DEA.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve the establishment of a Service Level Agreement with Kilkeel Chamber to deliver three artisan markets in 2025/26.**

ERT/045/2025: NI REGIONAL PLANNING IT SYSTEM

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regenerations, regarding NI Regional Planning IT System. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly advised that the SLA existed between 11 Councils and the Intelligent Client Function (ICF), which was the organisation established to manage the Master Gov system established in 2022 to manage all planning applications. He advised that the SLA was due for renewal for a further three-year period.

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

Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to approve the Service Level Agreement between the Intelligent Client Function (ICF) and the 11 partner Planning Authorities and associated costs of the Shared Service for the Planning System.

ERT/046/2025: RING OF GULLION LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP SCHEME LEGACY FUND

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

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, noting that the Ring of Gullion Partnership Scheme had been underway for some time. She directed Members attention to section 2.1 of the report that detailed the three projects that had been identified to utilise funding for legacy-based projects.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to issue Service Level Agreements for the delivery of 3 Ring of Gullion Landscape Partnership Legacy phase projects as set out in section 2 and 4 of the Officers Report, to include:**

- **Workshop Teaching Space – SLA with Mountain Ways Ireland**
- **Heritage across the Generations – SLA with Rural Health Partnership**
- **Ring of Gullion Heritage Festival – SLA with Oriel Events**

ERT/047/2025: YOUNG ENTERPRISE NORTHERN IRELAND (YENI)

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Young Enterprise Northern Ireland. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth advised Young Enterprise NI had approached Council following their successful application to deliver a project to post primary schools requesting match funding and assistance to extend delivery of their programme to all post primary schools within the District.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to issue a Letter of Offer to Young Enterprise NI to deliver the "Building Aspirations" project in 25/26.**

ERT/048/2025: NEWRY RIVER CHANNEL MARKERS

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

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, noting that the ten navigational markers were currently maintained by Carlingford Lough Commission on behalf of Council and the proposed SLA was to enable the continuation of this agreement.

Councillor Feehan queried what actions had been taken on behalf of Council following the announcement to develop Carlingford Lough as a sustainable tourism region by the Shared Island Unit.

Mr Mallon advised that Fáilte Ireland were leading on delivery of the project and would be engaging with Council and Louth County Council to set out plans and proposals following the successful application.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to approve that Council enter into a Service Level Agreement with Carlingford Lough Commission (CLC) to maintain 10 Navigational Markers within the Newry River from Narrow Water to Victoria Lock Gates.

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

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor S Murphy, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised that the exempt appendices were noted and the following had been agreed while in closed session.

ERT/049/2025: TYRELLA BEACH – SEASON PARKING PERMIT

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Tyrella Beach Season Parking Permit. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to approve the proposal to continue to operate a seasonal carpark permit at Tyrella Beach.

FOR NOTING

ERT/050/2025:

DBEC APPLICATION TO SEUPB

Read:

Report from Mr Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding DBEC Application to SEUPB. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor S Murphy, it was agreed to note the following:

- **That a funding application has been submitted to SEUPB PEACEPLUS Programme under Investment Area 6.1 – Strategic Planning & Engagement, seeking €2 million to enable the delivery of a programme.**
- **To note Newry, Mourne and Down District Council as the lead Partner for the project.**

ERT/051/2025:

EATS & BEATS - BUSKFEST

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Eats and Beats - Buskfest. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor S Murphy, it was agreed to note the partnership between Eats & Beats Event and Banbridge Buskfest by offering the Overall Winner of Buskfest 2025 a performance slot on stage at the Eats and Beats Festival 2025.

Councillor Lewis thanked officers and Members for their patience and work since taking on the role of Chairperson of the Committee. He further thanked Councillor Clarke for assuming the role of Chairperson at the previous meeting in his absence.

Members present thanked Councillor Lewis for his fair and impartial conduct when chairing meetings.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.25pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

Signed: **Councillor A Lewis**
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed: **Conor Mallon**

Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

32

**Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Thursday 15 May 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre**

In the Chair: Councillor T Howie

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

| | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| Councillor C Bowsie | Councillor O Hanlon |
| Councillor M Hearty | Councillor A Mathers |
| Councillor D McAteer | Councillor A Quinn |
| Councillor H Reilly | Councillor M Rice |
| Councillor G Sharvin | |

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Councillor P Byrne | Councillor S O'Hare |
| Councillor D Taylor | |

**Non-Committee Members
In Attendance:**

Councillor T Andrews

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/070/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Enright, and Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive.

SPR/071/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**SPR/072/2025: ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES
MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 2025**

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 17 April 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the**

**action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources
Committee meeting of 17 April 2025.**

33

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/073/2025: APPROACH TO CITY, TOWN AND VILLAGE SIGNAGE

Read: Report from Mr C Moffet, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding Approach to City, Town and Village Signage. **(Copy Circulated)**

Mr Moffett outlined the Report, advising there had been numerous meetings of the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group at which the matter had been debated, without reaching consensus. He advised that purpose was to agree a corporate approach, that there was no budget agreed regarding implementing elements of this, and it was not about proceeding to action any agreements on a grand scale.

Mr Moffett detailed that the ongoing discussions at the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group were in relation to Tier 1 and 2 settlements within the District, of which there were 8, and the Report tabled for discussion today was an attempt to reach agreement for a District-wide approach, which encompassed 89 settlements.

Mr Moffett advised that the Report sought agreement on a number of issues, to include an agreed corporate:

- Branding approach to signage
- Language approach to replacement of pre-existing and erection of new signage not on Council property
- Agreement that signage on Council property be erected in line with Council's Brand Identity Guidelines i.e. bilingual

Mr Moffett advised that in relation to branding, the three options for consideration were to make full use of Council branding; to make use of Council icon; or to have no branding. He advised that in relation to replacing pre-existing signage not on Council property, Members were asked to consider either a new bilingual sign or a like for like language approach of what is currently in place. He further advised that when erecting a new sign not located on Council property, the options for consideration were either a bilingual sign or for Members to propose and agree an alternative approach.

Mr Moffett outlined the recommended options in relation to policy context, noting that Council had an active and established bilingualism policy that aimed to facilitate and promote the use of both Irish and English language within the Council area, and also brand identity guidelines that had previously been agreed by Council which outlined policy requirements for signage on Council buildings, property, boundaries and information signage. He confirmed that Council had not yet reached agreement with regard to a branding style when erecting signage that was not Council property.

Councillor Hanlon thanked Mr Moffett for the detailed Report and highlighted her Party's support for bilingual signs, reiterating that it supported Council's existing policy. She proposed that only the Council icon be used on signage, noting that the boundary sign already advised people they were entering the District area and that the use of full Council branding would be too busy. She further proposed that in relation to language option 1 be implemented i.e. Bilingual signage as this was keeping with the bilingual policy of Council. This was seconded by Councillor Hearty.

Councillor Sharvin noted his support for the proposal, stating that the use of the icon alone on signage was in keeping with the legacy Down and Newry and Mourne approach and option 1 with respect to language remained in line with existing Council policy.

Councillor Bowsie stated that he had no issue with the Irish Language, noting that languages and culture tended to move with people. He stated that while Council claimed to respect the diversity of languages and cultures within the District, he believed that it was systematically imposing Irish leading gateway signage across the District despite how the local District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums had voted on the issue.

Councillor Bowsie then outlined his concerns regarding the Officer's Report, to include the options for gateway signage on Council property that he stated was ultimately an officer's recommendation based on a bilingualism policy that referred to Council services and facilities, not gateway signage. He further stated that the options in section 2.2 of the Report had no third option for fully mono-lingual signage to reflect the longstanding position of the legacy Down District Council. He further noted that Appendix 3 was referenced within the Report but stated that this policy gave no authorisation for dual language signage.

Councillor Bowsie asked the following questions:

- In 2023, each of the 7 DEA Forums had been asked to vote on bi- or mono-lingual signage for tiers 1 and 2 settlements with Rowallane unanimously in support of monolingual signage. Why had the results of that consultation not been included within the Officer's Report?
- Slieve Gullion DEA was the only DEA to adopt dual language in 2014, while Rowallane had not yet voted for dual language signage. When did Council approve to end taking a DEA approach to dual language?
- Where within Council's bilingualism or branding policy did it specify that Irish was to be the leading language?

Councillor Sharvin requested clarity in relation to Councillor Bowsie's first question stating that it was his understanding that reference to the DEA Forums was relating to tier 1 and 2 settlements, while he believed that this Report had been tabled to reach an agreement for a whole District approach.

Mr Moffett advised that as outlined in section 1.3 and 1.4 of his Report, a myriad of proposed actions and responses that could be taken forward were discussed at the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group, confirming that one such action had been for officers to meet with DEA Forums to discuss signage options in relation to tier 1 and 2 settlements. He noted that there was only one settlement in the Rowallane area with regard to this action, which was Ballynahinch. He confirmed that no consensus had been reached in relation to any of the approaches discussed at the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group, reiterating again that the Report tabled was to agree a way forward with regard to all 89 settlements within the District, not just tier 1 and 2 settlements.

Councillor Bowsie interjected stating that a senior Council official had met with the Rowallane DEA and a show of hands vote had taken place with regard to preference on signage, with Ballynahinch unanimously voting against bilingual signage. He stated that he believed this vote was not referenced within the Report as the reporting officer did not like the outcome, arguing that all the information needed to be presented to Members to enable them to make an informed decision.

Councillor Howie stated that she did not recall a show of hands vote in Ballynahinch.

Mr Moffett stated that the discussion with the DEA Forum was only relating to tier 1 and 2 settlements in order to help inform further discussion at the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group and was not a confirmatory vote. He further advised that officers only engaged 6 of the 7 DEAs as Slieve Croob did not have a tier 1 or 2 settlement.

Mr Moffett advised that signage requirements were set out in either the guidelines for employees or the procedures with regard to implementation, noting it was ultimately custom and practice as to how the legacy Councils implemented their bilingualism policy in each area.

Councillor Reilly noted that he did not believe Councillor Bowsie received an answer to his first question, questioning what was to be the foremost language, not just policy. He noted that the Irish language seemed to create division as there was no consensus with regard to implementation, further expressing his disappointment that despite being discussed for over a year no agreement had been reached, stating it had been tabled at Committee where he believed that Sinn Féin could force it through with a majority.

Councillor Howie reiterated Mr Moffett's statement that nothing would be implemented immediately and en-masse, but rather as and when needed.

Councillor Reilly noted that despite Unionist objections, he believed that Sinn Féin and SDLP would push the agreement through, which further cemented his view of the second-class position of Unionists within the Community.

Councillor Taylor noted for accuracy that Slieve Gullion had adopted bilingual signage as a majority view, not unanimously. He stated that the Reference Group provided an opportunity to have frank discussions relating to sensitive issues where, on many occasions, agreements could be reached to benefit the whole community. He stated his belief that this did not appear to be the case during discussions relating to the Irish language, stating that Unionists did try and come forward with a positive and constructive approach, but he felt that the republican mindset would not compromise to recommendations that everyone would agree with.

Councillor Taylor stated that he believed should the majority agree the Report it would not lend itself to community relations by imposing one viewpoint on everyone, especially in areas that had no affinity with the Irish language.

Councillor Hanlon reminded Members that Council already had a bilingualism policy in place and a natural progression of this was gateway signage. She noted her disappointment that while reference had been made to respecting diversity, other Members had referenced areas that they believed would not welcome bilingual signage. She made her own observations at some of those areas offering Irish language classes or choosing to send their children to Irish Medium Schools and stated that those Members were not speaking for the whole community.

Councillor Sharvin raised his concern at Councillor Bowsie's accusation that a Council officer disregarded information and expressed his disbelief that the statement had not been challenged. He noted that the officer in question had stated that the information had been considered as a tier 1 and 2 debate, but the Report tabled referred to the District as a whole. He asked Councillor Bowsie to withdraw the comment.

Councillor McAteer echoed Councillor Sharvin's statements, further noting his disappointment that the issue could not have been resolved at the Equality & Good Relations Reference

Group and expressed his hope for more maturity within the Chamber. He also asked Councillor Bowsie to withdraw his statement regarding the Council officer.

Councillor Howie expressed her disappointment that the Irish language had become such a divisive topic, expressing her belief that it was for all communities to speak and use the language.

Councillor Howie advised that Councillor Reilly had requested a recorded vote on Councillor Hanlon's proposal, a copy of which is appended to the minutes.

The results of the vote were as follows:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| FOR | 10 |
| AGAINST | 3 |
| ABSTENTIONS | 0 |

Mrs Kelly stated that officers had spent considerable time preparing the Report and acted in a fair and respectful manner.

AGREED:

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

- **That Option 3 was the preferred option when erecting signage that was not located on Council property, as outlined at section 2.1 of the Officer's Report i.e. the sole use of Council logo on signage.**
- **That Option 1 was the preferred option when replacing existing or erecting new signage not on Council property as outlined at section 2.2 of the Officer's Report i.e. bilingual signage be used.**
- **That signage on Council property be erected in line with Council's Brand Identity Guidelines, i.e. bilingual.**

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

AGREED:

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

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/074/2025: RENEWAL OF LEASE AT MARTIN'S LANE, NEWRY

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, and Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal administration, regarding Renewal of Lease at Martin's Lane, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to lease the New Lands at Martin's Lane as outlined in red on Map 2 attached for a term of 25 years from 25th March 2017 subject to the premium as outlined within the Officer's Report**

SPR/075/2025: LICENCE OF THE MONUMENT BUILDING AND YARD, CASTLEWELLAN FOREST PARK

Read: Report from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding Licence of the Monument Building and Yard, Castlewellan Forest Park. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to grant the company named in the Officer's Report a short term licence of the Monument Building and Yard as outlined in red and hatched orange on Map 2 attached hereto for a period of 2 months and thereafter from month to month until the proposed lease is signed subject to a market value licence fee.**

SPR/076/2025: TREASURY MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTS

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Treasury Management and Accounts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the Direct Award Contract for the Treasury Management and Accounts Closedown advisors for a period of 12 months.**

SPR/077/2025: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to approve the Direct Award Contracts as noted in Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report until 30 June 2026.

SPR/078/2025: **DUBLIN BELFAST ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (DBEC) SUMMIT 2025**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Summit 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to accept the Officer's Recommendations.

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

SPR/079/2025: **PORT HEALTH RESOURCES**

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Port Health Resources. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the contents of the report and the preferred operating model as set out in sections 2.3 and 2.4 of the Officer's Report.

FOR NOTING

SPR/080/2025: **STATUTORY REPORTING – RURAL NEEDS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL 2024 – 31 MARCH 2025**

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Statutory Reporting – Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the completed Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for period 1 April 2024 – 31 March 2025 (Appendix 1) and submit to DAERA to meet their requested deadline of 20 June 2025.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 6.58pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

Signed: **Councillor Tierna Howie**
 Chairperson

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

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 15/05/2025 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: SPR Committee

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Item 4 – Approach to City, Town & Village Signage

| COUNCILLOR | FOR | AGAINST | ABSTAIN | ABSENT |
|---------------|-----------|----------|---------|----------|
| C Bowsie | | 1 | | |
| P Byrne | 1 | | | |
| C Enright | | | | 1 |
| O Hanlon | 2 | | | |
| M Hearty | 3 | | | |
| T Howie | 4 | | | |
| A Mathers | 5 | | | |
| D McAteer | 6 | | | |
| S O'Hare | 7 | | | |
| A Quinn | 8 | | | |
| H Reilly | | 2 | | |
| M Rice | 9 | | | |
| G Sharvin | 10 | | | |
| D Taylor | | 3 | | |
| TOTALS | 10 | 3 | | 1 |

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2025

**Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on
Monday 19 May 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chambers,
Downshire Civic Centre**

Chairperson: Councillor C Galbraith

**In attendance
in Chamber:**

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|
| Councillor P Campbell | Councillor L Devlin |
| Councillor R Howell | Councillor J Jackson |
| Councillor D Lee-Surginor | Councillor A Lewis |
| Councillor A Mathers | Councillor L McEvoy |
| Councillor D Murphy | |

Committee Members in

attendance (via Teams): Councillor M Gibbons Councillor O Magennis
Councillor K Murphy

Non Committee Members

in attendance: Councillor T Andrews

Officials in Chamber:

Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

AHC/038/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Young.

AHC/039/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**AHC/040/2025: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL
2025**

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 28 April 2025. **(Copy circulated).**

AHC/029/2025 – Action Sheet of AHC Committee Meeting held on 18 March 2025

Councillor Devlin asked that the issue of the running track remain on the action sheet until an update was provided.

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 28 April 2025.

AHC/041/2025: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE REPORT

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Devlin, to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheets attached for:

- Rowallane DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 24 April 2025
- Slieve Croob DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 29 April 2025
- Newry DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 1 May 2025.

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

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

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

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

AHC/042/2025: FUNDED PROGRAMME DELIVERY

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding funding programme delivery. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Howell, to proceed with delivery of the funded programme as detailed within the officer's report, pending receipt of a letter of offer from the Programme Funder.

AHC/043/2025: DISPOSAL OF ASSETS

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living Leisure and Sport, regarding disposal of assets. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, to approve the disposal of AHC assets as set out within the officer's report.

AHC/044/2025: FACILITIES SERVICE PROVISION

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living Leisure and Sport, regarding facilities service provision. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to approve the business case and appointment of a suitable supplier to provide the service provision as detailed within the officer's report.

AHC/045/2025: FITNESS ASSETS SERVICE PROVISION

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living Leisure and Sport, regarding fitness assets service provision. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Campbell, to approve the business case and appointment of a suitable supplier to provide the service requirement as detailed within the officer's report.

FOR NOTING

AHC/046/2025: UPDATE REPORT – DIGI-HUB PROJECT AT BESSBROOK COMMUNITY CENTRE

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development, regarding Digi-hub project at Bessbrook Community Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, to note the content of the officer's report.**

AHC/047/2025: AHC CAPITAL PROJECT DELIVERY

Read: Report dated 19 May 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy living Leisure and Sport, regarding AHC Capital Project Delivery. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, to note the contents of the officer's report.**

The Chairperson reflected that this was his last meeting as chairperson of the Committee stating that he had found it to be a real privilege. He stated that the role had given him the opportunity to work closely with a fantastic team of people and was truly thankful for the support he had received throughout. He extended his thanks and appreciation to Council officers Mr Patterson, Mrs Robb, Mr Haughey and Mr Scott, all of whom had who provided him with consistent advice, support, expertise and patience throughout his term as Chairperson.

Councillor Galbraith gave special mention to Democratic Services staff for their knowledge, professionalism and support. Councillor Galbraith highlighted that whilst this is not at all times visible, it was always essential and readily available when needed. He thanked the Committee members for their professionalism, contributions and the respectful way committee discussions have been conducted.

Councillor Galbraith concluded by offering his best wishes to the next chairperson of the AHC committee and expressed hope that they find the role as rewarding as he had.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.24pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

Signed: Councillor Galbraith
Chairperson

Signed: Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: SE/2025

**Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on
Wednesday 21 May 2025 at 6pm in Council Chamber,
Monaghan Row, Newry**

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| Chair: | Councillor G Kearns | |
| In attendance in Chamber: | Councillor T Andrews Councillor C Enright Councillor D Finn Councillor J Jackson Councillor H Reilly | Councillor W Clarke Councillor K Feehan Councillor V Harte Councillor O Magennis Councillor D Taylor |
| Committee Members in Attendance via Teams: | Councillor J Brennan Councillor M Ruane | Councillor M Larkin |
| Non-Committee Members In Attendance via Teams: | Councillor G Sharvin | Councillor J Truesdale |
| Officials in Chamber: | Mrs S Murphy, Director Sustainability and Environment Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer | |
| Officials in attendance Via Teams: | Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager | |

SE/052/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON’S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Young and Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director, Environment.

SE/053/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SE/054/2025: ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 APRIL 2025

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

SE/036/2025 – Home to Hospital Update

Councillor Andrews enquired whether an update was available in respect of above. Mrs Murphy advised that she would revert to the Member with an update.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 April 2025.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/055/2025: UPDATE ON NOTICE OF MOTION – CLEAN AIR

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Update on Notice of Motion – Clean Air. (**Copy circulated**)

Mr Sage presented the report and explained that no additional costs were required to install air filtration units in Down Civic Centre and that all costs for ventilation systems, including filtration, were included within the specification and estimated costings for the proposed new Civic Centre in Newry.

Councillor Truesdale referred to section 2.4 of the report and noted that the information was available on the HSC website. She suggested that, given the importance of fresh air exchange and for educational purposes, the Council could create an explanatory poster and share it via social media to raise awareness. Mr Sage advised that he would revert to the Councillor outside of the meeting in respect of this.

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

- **Mechanical ventilation systems in Downshire Civic Centre are fitted with suitable levels of filtration that comply with the required guidance.**
- **The Newry Civic Centre has been designed to include suitably filtered fresh air in accordance with the required standards.**
- **There are no additional costs associated with supply of suitably filtered fresh air in the above facilities.**

SE/056/2025: OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – FOSSIL FUEL NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY & AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT AREAS

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Officer Report on Notice of Motion –

Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty & Air Quality Management Areas. **(Copy circulated)**

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Mrs Murphy advised that the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative was a global effort to foster international cooperation to accelerate a transition to Safe, Renewable and Affordable Energy for All. She advised that net zero targets were legislatively based and aligned with the Council's Strategy on Sustainability and Climate Action and stated that 135 cities and some national governments, including Councils in the UK and Ireland, had either formally endorsed the Treaty or signed a merged declaration.

Mrs Murphy explained that there were two Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs) within the Council area, both located in Newry City—one for nitrogen dioxide and the other for PM₁₀ and officers carried out air pollutant monitoring using two continuous monitors located in Market Street, Downpatrick and Canal Street, Newry. She stated that Environmental Health Officers continued to work with NIEA regarding PM_{2.5}, a pollutant not currently monitored, and are seeking additional funding in the 2026/27 financial year to enable extended monitoring.

Councillor Truesdale thanked Mrs Murphy for the comprehensive report and welcomed the proposal for additional PM_{2.5} monitoring. She stated that a tangible, binding plan was needed to end the expansion of fossil fuel projects and manage a global transition and she emphasised the need for an equitable phase-out that left no worker, community, or country behind. She stated that, if agreed by Members, this would be the first Council in Northern Ireland to sign the Treaty.

Councillor Reilly cautioned against a rushed transition to renewables, citing a recent power outage in Spain due to over-reliance on solar energy and he argued that fossil fuels remained necessary until viable alternatives such as hydrogen became available. He criticised the UK's green policies, noting its small share of global emissions compared to rising emissions in countries like the US, China, and India. He expressed concern about the economic impact on vulnerable people and opposed the motion, calling for a more balanced approach.

Councillor Finn enquired whether funding for PM_{2.5} testing could be used to expand monitoring to other locations. Mrs Murphy clarified that testing had not ceased, but levels remained below exceedance thresholds, and if this continued, monitoring in those areas would no longer be required. She confirmed that information on future monitoring sites would be shared at upcoming S&E meetings.

Councillor Finn proposed that the Council write to other Councils in Northern Ireland to share information on the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty Initiative, advise that NMDDC endorsing the Treaty and also urge them to support the initiative. This was seconded by Councillor Enright.

Ms Taggart stated as there was dissent in the chamber, a vote was required.

The Chairperson then put the proposal to vote, the results of which were as follows:

| | |
|----------------|----|
| FOR | 11 |
| AGAINST | 3 |
| ABSTAIN | 1 |

The proposal was carried.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Enright, the following was agreed:

- **Members approved the endorsement of the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and agreed to write to the Northern Ireland Executive urging them to support this initiative.**
- **Members noted the current on-going review process on the effectiveness of the Council's Air Quality Management Areas in liaison with DAERA and the potential expansion of the number of air quality monitor stations throughout the District, subject to funding.**
- **To write to other Northern Ireland Councils to inform them that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have endorsed the Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty urging them also to support this initiative.**

SUSTAINABILITY

SE/057/2025:

SUSTAINABLE NI ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Read:

Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Sustainable NI Annual Membership Subscription.
(Copy circulated)

Mr Sage advised the report recommended that Members approve the accelerator membership level and the signing of a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Sustainable NI for 2025/26 as it had been included as part of the rate-setting process.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Riley, it was agreed to approve the Accelerator Membership Level and signing of an SLA with Sustainable NI for 2025/26

SE/058/2025:

KEEP NI BEAUTIFUL ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP SUBSCRIPTION

Read:

Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Keep NI Beautiful Annual Membership Subscription.
(Copy circulated)

Mr Sage presented the report on the request for financial support and signing of a new SLA, highlighting there was an additional request for funding related to the delivery of an annual Green Flag Award Ceremony, bringing the total requested amount to £32,975.00.

Councillor Finn asked whether officers could approach Live Here Love Here to work alongside the Council to assist Newry in becoming the best kept city in the North. Mr Sage advised that he would make enquiries and revert to Councillor Finn directly.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed to approve the financial support as outlined in section 2.2 and an SLA for the period of 2025 – 2026 to support the Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful (KNIB) Live Here Love Here campaign and Eco Schools Programme across the District.**

SE/059/2025: NEWRY MARKET CHRISTMAS EVENT

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Newry Market Christmas Event. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage stated there had been a request from an external party to host a Christmas market at Newry Variety Market in 2025 with the proposed event due to run from Thursdays to Sundays for five weeks, from mid-November to Christmas. It was noted that a well-organised market could boost footfall and the report recommended was to proceed with the Christmas market event, with suggested charging as outlined in section 2.2 of the officer's report.

Councillor Finn commended the plan and stated that it would be excellent for that part of Newry in terms of its impact on local businesses. She asked whether Council officers could explore the possibility of reducing costs for both the organiser and stallholders. Mr Sage confirmed that this could be explored and advised he would revert to Councillor Finn in relation to this.

Councillor Feehan concurred with Councillor Finn regarding the positive impact on the area and local businesses and supported the exploration of cost reductions.

Councillor Harte welcomed the plan to enhance Newry Market. She asked whether existing market stallholders would also be charged the fee, noting that the goods they sell may not align with typical Christmas market items. Mr Sage advised that it was his understanding that current stallholders were interested in participating in the market.

Councillor Harte suggested a two-week pilot scheme for the market to assess whether footfall would be sufficient to sustain it through to Christmas. Councillor Taylor welcomed the report and concurred with Councillor Harte on the need for a pilot scheme to ensure adequate attendance. He emphasised the importance of having a clear strategy and promoting the event well in advance.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan it was agreed to proceed with the Christmas Market Event with recommended charging as outlined in section 2.2 of the Officer's Report.**

SE/060/2025:

REQUEST TO APPROACH DFI ABOUT TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF CARPARKS

Read:

Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Request to Approach DFI about Transfer of Ownership of Car Parks. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage advised Members were asked to approve Council officers to formally approach the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) and research the feasibility of a land transfer of their portion of the parking area at The Square, Warrenpoint into Council ownership.

Councillor Ruane stated that he had brought the issue to the attention of Council due to illegal parking negatively impacting local businesses and welcomed the request to formally approach DFI.

Councillor Feehan asked for an update from officers regarding Newry city centre parking and noted that a previous Notice of Motion had been brought forward in relation to the matter. Mrs Murphy stated that she would revert to Councillor Feehan on this matter.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Taylor, it was agreed to approve the request for Council Officers to formally approach DFI and research the feasibility of a land transfer of their portion of the site into Council ownership.

ENVIRONMENT

SE/061/2025:

CONSULTATION ON PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO THE FOOD LAW CODE OF PRACTICE AND PRACTICE GUIDANCE

Read:

Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Consultation on Proposed Amendments to the Food Law Code of Practice and Practice Guidance. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed to approve the submission on behalf of Council of the draft response to the Food Standards Agency Consultation on the proposed amendments to the Food Law Code of Practice (Northern Ireland) and Practice Guidance, as set out in Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report

Councillor Taylor left meeting at 6.59pm.

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

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed to come out of closed session.

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

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

SE/062/2025: AWARD OF ENERGY CONTRACTS 2025 – 2027

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability, regarding Award of Energy Contracts 2025 - 2027. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- That Council proceed with the process and note the appointment of the successful supplier to supply Electricity and Natural Gas following completion of the joint procurement exercise with the other NI Councils.
- That Council opt for the "Green" Electricity Premium due to the significant reduction in the cost of the Green Electricity premium from the supplier named in the officer's report to set an example and drive the market demand for green electricity.

SE/063/2025: BUSINESS CASE FOR MAINTENANCE OF COUNCIL FACILITIES CCTV SYSTEMS

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability, regarding Business Case for Maintenance of Council Facilities CCTV Systems. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve the procurement of CCTV monitoring and maintenance services in line with the recommendations of the

business case as presented with the Officer's Report.

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

SE/064/2025: FLEET UPDATE

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director: Sustainability & Environment, regarding Fleet Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed to note the contents of the Officer's Report.**

FOR NOTING

SE/065/2025: PROVISIONAL NORTHERN IRELAND LOCAL AUTHORITY COLLECTED MUNICIPAL WASTE MANAGEMENT STATISTICS, OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024, RELEASED 1 MAY 2025

Read: Provisional Northern Ireland Local Authority Collected Municipal Waste Management Statistics October – December 2024, released 1 May 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

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

Councillor Andrews expressed his thanks to Councillors Kearns and Enright as this was their last meeting as Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.07pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025

Signed: **Councillor Geraldine Kearns**
Chairperson

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

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AC/2025

Minutes of Special Audit Committee Meeting held on Friday 23 May 2025, at 2.00pm, in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

Chairperson:

In attendance via Teams: Ms B Slevin, Independent Chairperson

Committee Members in attendance in Chamber:

Councillor C Bowsie

Committee Members in attendance via Teams:

Councillor T Howie Councillor A Mathers
Councillor K Murphy Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor G Sharvin

Officials in attendance in Chamber:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs S Murphy – Director, Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director Active & Healthy Communities
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance via Teams:

Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance

Also in attendance via Teams:

Ms K Doey NIAO
Ms C Hagan Sumer NI

AC/051/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Devlin and Hanlon.

AC/052/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FOR CONSIDERATION

AC/053/2025: RISK REGISTER

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Corporate Risk Register. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly referred to section 2.28 of the Officer's Report, which detailed that the current risk in relation to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project (MMGP) and the review of the risk undertaken as an action from the previous Audit Committee meeting. She advised that the MMGP was included in risk CR1, which was scored Red – 20, however advised that controls were already in place in relation to capital projects, including a Project Risk Register, Gateway Reviews, and an Internal Audit of Project Governance completed in 2022/23, which received a satisfactory level of assurance. She stated that due to the fact the MMGP was a major project with huge significance for tourism in the District, there had been two meetings of the Project Board and ongoing discussions with the Department over the last number of weeks. She advised that at this stage the level of risk remained unchanged while these discussions were taking place.

Mrs Kelly advised that other controls in place included the establishment of Project Boards, outline of strategic business cases, funding agreements, and contracts for funding. She explained that an additional action had been included under CR1, relating to working with Department for the Economy (DfE) and Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) partners to consider next steps.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve the updates to the Corporate Risk Register highlighted within the summary at Appendix 1. The Full Corporate Risk Register can be evidenced at Appendix 2.**

AC/054/2025: AUDIT COMMITTEE SELF-ASSESSMENT 2024/2025

Read: Report from Ms B Slevin, Independent Chair of Audit Committee, regarding Audit Committee Self-Assessment 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

The Chairperson reported that the implementation of the new checklist from the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) had taken longer than anticipated due to the comprehensive nature of the documentation. She highlighted that the checklist incorporated both previous recommendations and new items.

From previous recommendations, the following points were noted:

- Encouragement for Members to serve the full four-year tenure on the Audit Committee to retain knowledge and skills.
- Progression of training for all Members, including internal and on-board training.
- Continued efforts to ensure internal audit reports were completed and presented to the Audit Committee in a timely manner.
- Timely submission of reports to Democratic Services to allow Members adequate time for review.

From the new NIAO checklist, the following areas were identified:

- Improved understanding for the Committee in relation to cyber and digital risks and their impact on the Council.

- Assessment of climate change and net zero commitments relevant to the Audit Committee.
- Oversight of how controls are evaluated to address fraud and error risks.
- Consideration of feedback from the NI Executive and key stakeholders, including internal and external audit, to enhance and strengthen committee effectiveness.
- Induction focus for new Members unfamiliar with public sector operations, particularly regarding regularity and appropriate use of funds.

The Chairperson concluded that the Audit Committee had been assessed as working effectively for 2024/25 and welcomed any comments or questions from Members.

Councillor Sharvin noted the value of training provided by the Chief Executive's Forum for Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee members which covered not only public sector governance but also arm's length bodies, and included participation from organisations. He also suggested that the Audit Committee could benefit from reviewing lessons learned from cyber security incidents in other organisations. He proposed that reports be brought to the Committee to enhance awareness and provide assurance that the Council was learning from wider sector experiences to strengthen its own cyber resilience.

The Chairperson agreed with Councillor Sharvin's comments and confirmed that both suggestions would be taken forward for consideration.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the contents of the Report.

Items restricted in accordance with Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during the following items which related to exempt information by virtue of Part 3 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during these items of business.

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

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

INTERNAL AUDIT (CLOSED SESSION)

AC/055/2025: INTERNAL AUDIT

Read: Internal Audit Reports **(Copy circulated)**

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the Internal Audit Reports, to include the following:
- Follow Up Report with officers providing a 6-month mid-year review on the 2024/25 actions/internal audit recommendations to the December Audit Committee
 - Refuse Collection Overtime Report
 - Newry BID Final Report with officers to provide an update report at the September Audit Committee Meeting
 - Annual Assurance Report

AC/056/2025: PROGRESS ON INTERNAL AUDIT REPORTS

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Progress on Internal Audit Reports. **(Copy circulated)**

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to note the update and progress in relation to addressing audit recommendations.

FOR NOTING

AC/057/2024: LGA 2024 RECOMMENDATIONS

Read: Report Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Local Government Auditor Report Recommendations. **(Copy circulated)**

- AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to note the recommendations from the LGA and the update from Council Officers.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 3.27pm.

For consideration at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 June 2025.

Signed: **Ms J Kelly**
Director Corporate Services

Signed: **Ms B Slevin**
Independent Chairperson

| | |
|---|--|
| Report to: | Council |
| Date of Meeting: | 2 June 2025 |
| Subject: | Correspondence to Council |
| Reporting Officer (Including Job Title): | Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive |
| Contact Officer (Including Job Title): | Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting) |

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

| For decision | x | For noting only | |
|---------------------|----------|------------------------|---|
| 1.0 | | | Purpose and Background |
| 1.1 | | | To provide an update on correspondence received for attention of Council. |
| 2.0 | | | Key issues |
| 2.1 | | | This paper refers to correspondence to be brought to the attention of Council. Items are referred to in 3.0 below. |
| 3.0 | | | Recommendations |
| | | | That Council considers and notes the following correspondence: |
| 3.1 | | | Correspondence from Planning Appeals Commission to Department for Infrastructure Council received correspondence from Planning Appeals Commission to Department for Infrastructure in relation to Regionally Significant Planning Application, Lands approximately 650m south west of 40 Mullaghgarraiff Road, Hilltown, Newry. |
| 3.2 | | | Correspondence from the Northern Ireland Housing Council Council received a copy of Minutes from the Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes from a meeting held on 10 April 2025. |
| 3.3 | | | Correspondence from Minister of Health Council received a response from the Minister of Health in relation to a Notice of Motion C/065/2025, Endometriosis. |
| 3.4 | | | Correspondence from Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Council received a response from the DAERA Minister in relation to Notice of Motion C/056/2025, Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support. |
| 3.5 | | | Correspondence from Minister for Communities Council received a response from the Minister for Communities in relation to Notice of Motion C/042/2025, Arts Funding. |

| | |
|-----|--|
| 3.6 | Correspondence from Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Council received a response from the DAERA Minister in relation to Notice of Motion C/066/2025, Wildfires in the Mourne Mountains. |
| 3.7 | Correspondence from Minister of Education and the Education Authority Council received a response from the Minister of Education and the Education Authority in relation to Notice of Motion C/081/2025, Funding to Pre School Groups. |
| 4.0 | Resource implications |
| 4.1 | Not applicable. |
| 5.0 | Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections) |
| 5.1 | <i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.2 | <i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/> The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5.3 | <i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/> Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Rationale:</i> |
| 6.0 | Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply) |

| | |
|-----|---|
| 6.1 | <p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs <input type="checkbox"/></p> |
| 7.0 | Appendices |
| | |
| 8.0 | Background Documents |
| | None |



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Phone: 028 9024 4710 (switchboard)

Email: info@pacni.gov.uk

Website: www.pacni.gov.uk

Your Ref: P/2015/0218/F
Our Ref: 2021/C010

Date: 20th December 2024

Department for Infrastructure
Regional Planning Policy & Casework Directorate
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB
By email only

Dear Sir/Madam

Regionally Significant Planning Application under Section 26 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Location: Lands approximately 650m south west of 40 Mullaghgarrieff Road, Hilltown, Newry in the townlands of Gruggandoo, Grugganskeagh and Mullaghgarve BT34 5LT.

Proposal: Construction of a wind farm comprising 8 no. wind turbines (tip height not exceeding 142.5 metres), and electrical substation and control building, construction of internal access tracks, spoil deposition areas, temporary construction compound, formation of passing bays on Mullaghgarrieff Road, delivery route improvements at Rostrevor Road, junction improvements at Rostrevor/Mullaghgarrieff Road and all associated ancillary works.

Further to previous correspondence of 3rd December 2024 regarding the public inquiry and summary of arrangements. A postponement has been requested by the applicant and a new date has been set.

Please be advised that the public inquiry scheduled for 12th & 13th March 2025 has been **rescheduled and will now take place on 3rd September 2025** in the Newry Conference and Banqueting Centre, 39-41 The Mall, Newry, BT34 1AT and will continue as necessary on the following day.

The new deadline for statement of case is now by 4pm on 2nd June 2025. Your statement should not exceed 2500 words. Statements received will then be exchanged for comment by 30th June 2025.

Yours faithfully

Lori Austin

PAC Admin Team

SUMMARY OF ARRANGEMENTS

Statements of case by:- **4pm on 02/06/2025**

Rebuttal evidence by:- **4pm on 30/06/2025**

Inquiry opens at:- **10:30am on 03/09/2025 continuing on 04/09/2025 if necessary.**



Minutes of the 516th Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 10th April 2025 at 10.30 am in Lisburn Civic Centre, the Island, Lisburn

Present:

- Cllr Mark Cooper

Cllr Aaron Skinner

Ald Amanda Grehan

Cllr Martin Hearty
- Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council (Chair)

Mid & East Antrim Borough Council

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Virtual:

- Ald Keith Kerrigan

Ald Stephen McIlveen

Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald

Cllr Sean McGlinchey
- Derry City & Strabane District Council

Ards & North Down Borough Council

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

In Attendance:

- David Polley

Heloise Brown

Diane Shiveral

Kelly Cameron

Maria McLaughlin
- Department for Communities

Department for Communities

Department for Communities

Secretary, Housing Council

Executive Assistant, NIHE

Apologies:

- Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Cllr Mary O'Dowd
- Mid Ulster Borough Council

Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

| | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | Welcome The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting. | |
| 1.1 | Newry, Mourne & Down District Council's representative The Chair welcomed Councillor Martin Hearty to his first meeting of the Housing Council since his appointment. | |

| | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 2. | Declarations of Interest There were no declarations. | |
| 3. | Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 13th March 2025 The minutes were proposed by Cllr A Skinner and seconded by Cllr A Fitzgerald. The Minutes were approved. | |
| 4. | Matters Arising from the Minutes | |
| 4.1 | Invitation to the new Minister of Communities The Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons will join Members at the May Meeting; the agenda and questions were discussed at the 'In Committee' session. | |
| 4.2 | Non attendance at meetings As there has been no resolution regarding the attendance of the Belfast City Council's representative (Councillor Paul McCusker) at Housing Council meetings, advice has been sought from the Department for Communities and it has been agreed, going forward, to pause the issuing of Housing Council papers and minutes to the representative and Council, until this issue is resolved. | Secretary |
| 4.3 | Housing Council vacancy on Housing Executive Board The Secretary undertook to contact the Department for Communities seeking confirmation on when the competition will commence for the Housing Council vacancy on the Housing Executive Board, given that Newry & Mourne & Down Council has nominated their representative. | Secretary |
| 4.4 | Invitation to Water Service, Department for Communities DfC) and Department for Infrastructure (DfI) Invites were sent to the Water Service, DfC & DfI expressing concerns about wastewater infrastructure and the constraints this placed on the construction of houses, as well as the challenges of water connections stalling people moving into newbuild properties. It was noted that a reply had been received from DfI declining the invitation stating that, as this was an operational matter, NI Water should provide an update on how they are approaching this matter. It was agreed that Members would still like DfI to be represented from a policy viewpoint. The Secretary undertook to send another invite. All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda. | Secretary |

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| 5. | <p>DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES TOP HOUSING ISSUES</p> <p>Members expressed their disappointment at receiving the report extremely overdue and that the report they received hadn't included updated information.</p> <p>David Polley & Heloise gave an update on the Department for Communities Top Issues under the following headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Housing Development Programme (SHDP) – to provide an additional 400 social homes by March 2025 of which 10% will be wheelchair accessible; • Complete preparations and present the Minister with advice on viable options to tackle the significant investment challenge and address the maintenance backlog faced by the Housing Executive; • To develop way forward policy options and legislative proposals in response to the Fundamental Review of Social Housing Allocations Policy; • To review the Decent Homes Standard to ensure that all those living in the social rented sector have access to a fit and decent home suitable for modern living; • To review Housing Executive Administered Private Sector Grants, including the Disabled Facilities Grant, in partnership with the Department of Health and the Housing Executive; • Deliver 2758 affordable warmth measures to 1428 homes by 31 March 2025 through the Affordable Warmth Scheme; • To progress all appropriate tenancy fraud provisions within the Financial Provisions Bill; • Develop proposals and draft legislation on Injunctions against Anti-Social Behaviour and Grounds for Possession; • Deliver 846 new shared ownership homes by March 2025 (<i>via £22 million in Financial Transactions Capital funding</i>); • Develop new affordable housing options (Intermediate Rent); • To work with the Housing Executive and across Government to implement the Homelessness Strategy (PFG target) to tackle homelessness; • To implement the first phase of PRS reform as encapsulated in the Private Tenancies Act (NI) 2022; • Deliver a Housing Supply Strategy and Action Plan(s) to provide a framework for the delivery of the homes we need over the next 15 years. | |
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| | <p>Members Questions/Comments</p> <p>Referring to the Private Rented Sector (PRS), D Polley confirmed that PRIS rents are not regulated in Northern Ireland and, in the last two years, they have increased approximately by 10% per year, due to the demand within the PRS, higher level of mortgages, taxes, stamp duty and maintenance costs.</p> <p>In relation to electrical re-wiring in PRS properties, it was noted that the phase in period for the electrical safety checks in existing tenancies in the PRS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Regulations are operational from 1 April 2025, for all new private tenancies granted on or after this date; • existing tenancies granted before 1 April 2025, have to 1 December 2025 to comply. <p>Agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DfC to provide the number of applicants, by Council area, currently on the waiting list who have intimidation points. • Presentation to be arranged on Decent Homes Standards at the June Meeting in order to feed into the consultation document. • Presentation to be arranged on the process of how Contractors are procured; how the Contractors are allocated; how the Housing Executive measure quality of works undertaken and how complaints are dealt with. | <p>DfC</p> <p>DfC</p> <p>Secretary</p> |
| 6. | <p>PRESENTATION ON INTERMEDIATE RENTS</p> <p>Diane Shiveral, Department for Communities gave a presentation on Intermediate Rent.</p> <p>It was noted that the Department for Communities has produced a new affordable housing policy which aims to create an additional supply of homes, providing a new affordable "Intermediate Rent" housing option. The Department has identified an Intermediate Rent Operator who will, in due course, be awarded funding to support the delivery of new affordable rented homes in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>The Intermediate Rent Policy intends to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a new supply of homes; • provide much needed high-quality housing at below market rents for those on lower to moderate incomes; • offer homes for rent with at least a 20% discount on prevailing private market rents for a similar property type and size within a locality; • provide homes of a size and type suitable for the number of occupants, in locations where people wish to live; | |

- alleviate some of the up-front barriers to accessing a rented home and be targeted towards eligible lower to moderate income households;
- offer enhanced security of tenure by making available tenancies of up to five years at a time and the option to renew subject to the agreement of the landlord and tenant; and
- offer tenants access to effective and prompt property management and tenancy support services.

The Department has now identified Maple and May Ltd, a wholly owned subsidiary of Choice Housing Ireland, as Intermediate Rent operator to deliver 300 new Intermediate Rent homes across Northern Ireland over the coming years. Once these homes are built, they will be advertised and tenancies made available to eligible households, in line with DfC's policy. It is expected the first Intermediate Rent homes will be available for rent from 2026.

Ms Shiveral confirmed that talks are still ongoing as to identifying specific sites of where the 300 houses are going to be located. The Maple & May proposal should see new homes constructed over 11 sites across 8 Local Government Districts.

A Skinner raised the issue of tenants providing a guarantor which can be a barrier for many.

Concern was expressed that areas of housing need for social housing is not always identified and would the intermediate rent products feed into possibly highlighting these unidentified areas.

It was explained that work is ongoing with the Housing Executive who are working on the methodology to identify intermediate rent need.

D Polley explained that the rent is set at 20% below market level and the loan is for 25 years and, even if the loan is paid back within that period, the property has to remain as Intermediate Rent for the 25 year period.

In response to A Grehan's question asking if the Operator or local Council can buy off the shelf properties for intermediate rent, it was explained that initially Intermediate Rent will be delivered by the Operator who will develop their own houses for renting. D Polley added that there is no reason why a Developer or local Council cannot provide their own intermediate housing for rent outside of the DfC funding model if they abide by the Intermediate Rent policy and the design standards.

Members welcomed this Policy and the Chair thanked Ms Shiveral and Mr Polley for a very informative presentation.

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| 7. | Any Other Business | |
| 7.1 | Waiting Lists by Local Government District Report noted. | |
| 7.2 | NI Audit Report - Homelessness in NI & Media Release Noted. | |
| 7.3 | Minister's Announcement Temporary Accommodation Noted. | |
| 7.4 | Update on the Housing Executive's Damp & Mould Policy The Secretary undertook to arrange a presentation/update to be given on the Housing Executive's Damp & Mould policy, at a future meeting. | Secretary |
| 8. | Date of Next Meeting The next meeting would be held on Thursday 8 th May 2025 at 10.00 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast. It was noted that the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons will join Members from 10.45 to 11.30 am. | |

Meeting ended 12.10 pm.

FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



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Marie Ward
sarah-louise.taggart@nmandd.org

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 Email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Your Ref:

Our Ref: COR-0622-2025

Date: 12 May 2025

Dear Marie

Thank you for your email correspondence of 29 April 2025 regarding a Notice of Motion following a meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council held on 7 April 2025.

The Department of Health has a formal link with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) under which NICE Technology Appraisals are reviewed locally for their legal and policy applicability here, and where found to be applicable, they are endorsed for implementation within Health and Social Care (HSC) organisations. In practice, this means that treatments that have been recommended by NICE for routine use in the NHS in England are also available in Northern Ireland.

NICE bases their recommendations on a review of clinical evidence and cost effectiveness. Clinical evidence shows how well the medicine or other treatment works and how safe it is. Cost effectiveness shows how well the medicine or other treatment works in relation to how much it costs the NHS i.e. whether it represents value for money

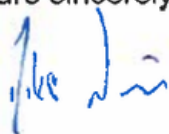
On 16 April 2025 NICE published TA1057 which recommends the use of relugolix-estradiol-norethisterone for treating symptoms of endometriosis in adults of reproductive age who have had medical or surgical treatment for endometriosis.

I am pleased to advise that the treatment is now available in line with the criteria set out in NICE TA1057 via the process for the Managed Entry of New Medicines on a cost-per-case basis. Individuals requiring access to treatment should discuss the matter with their hospital consultant in the first instance who will then decide whether it is appropriate to make a cost-

per-case application to the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) within my Department.

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Yours sincerely



Mike Nesbitt MLA
Minister of Health

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



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

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Our Ref: COR-0309-2025
Date: 13 May 2025

Dear Marie

NOTICE OF MOTION – FISHING INDUSTRY VISA AND ENHANCEMENT SUPPORT

Thank you for your letter of 16 April 2025 where you outlined the details of a meeting of the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council on 7 April.

Please be assured that I share the deep concern of the Council Members for the fishing industry in South Down.

I note your request to meet with my Scottish counterparts on this matter and can assure that I meet regularly with Ministers from the UK Government, Scotland and Wales at the Inter-Ministerial Group for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (IMG EFRA). At the IMG EFRA meeting on 18th November 2024, the impact of labour shortages in the environment, food and rural affairs sectors were discussed, where ministers emphasised concerns within their nations and discussed the need for effective joint working in addressing similar but distinct challenges across the 4 nations. At this meeting I raised the labour shortage pressures that are faced by the fisheries and mushroom sectors in Northern Ireland.

Further to my letter to you on 1 April, I have now written to Fleur Anderson MP, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Northern Ireland Office. This was following my meeting with her and the NI Mushroom Growers Association on 13 March 2025.

My letter stressed that it was vital that labour solutions be found for Northern Ireland's agri-food industry sectors currently reliant on migrant labour, notably for mushrooms, fishing and meat processing, until such time that automation technologies are more advanced and accessible.

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I urged the UK Government to look again at the suggestions put forward in my letter to the Defra Secretary of State on 10 October 2024 in relation to migrant worker visas or consider other alternatives, such as those advanced by the Northern Ireland Fishermen's Federation.

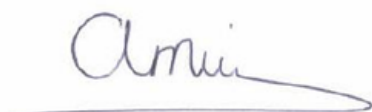
Immigration Policy is a reserved matter for the UK Government and as such, neither the Scottish Government, nor NI Executive, have control over the operation of the immigration system. The Scottish Government has funded services such as Scotland Migration Service and the Workers Support Centre, which provide advice and support to migrants and employers, but these do not provide any additional visa routes or enhancements to workers in gaining visas compared with the rest of the UK.

DAERA officials regularly attend meetings of the Defra Access to Labour Devolved Governments group and have requested that the topic of shared learnings for the fishing industry, with regards to visa support, is raised at the next meeting for discussion and our further consideration.

I am content to attend meetings with the Home Office, alongside the First Minister and deputy First Minister and the Economy Minister. I will also continue to press access to labour issues concerning the agri-food sector with the UK Government. In addition to this, I am committed to working with the fishing industry to develop alternative workforce solutions such as apprenticeship schemes.

I can assure you that my officials will continue to work closely with fishing industry representatives on these critical issues.

Yours sincerely



ANDREW MUIR MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs



Department for
Communities
www.communities-ni.gov.uk

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Depairment fur
Commonities

From: The Minister

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Telephone: 028 9082 3476
e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref: CORR-0217-2025
Date: 13 May 2025

Marie Ward
Chief Executive
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Via email: democratic.services@nmandd.org.

Dear Marie,

ARTS FUNDING DISTRIBUTION

Thank you for your correspondence of 24 March in relation to arts funding distribution.

I am familiar with the points raised in the Council's motion and agree that an equitable regional balance of funding is very important for the arts and that the needs of those in rural areas are just as important as those in urban settings. The Arts Council does not use place-based criteria when determining funding decisions; however, I have spoken with the Arts Council stressing the importance of making funding available across Northern Ireland.

The opportunity to access the arts will be an important theme of the work being undertaken to develop a new Arts Policy under the Heritage, Culture and Creativity (HCC) programme which I announced last July. The Arts Policy will fill a long-standing policy vacuum and be an important step forward in articulating the benefits that the arts can deliver and the potential to do more. The policy will explore new ways to support

the arts and maximise the contribution that it can make by driving equality of access and opportunity across socio-economic groupings and all of Northern Ireland. I want the Arts Policy to encourage greater participation, particularly from people and communities that might feel that the arts are not quite for them or that their cultural or artistic activities and traditions do not quite fit.

In closing may I pass on my thanks to your officials for their engagement to date as the work on the HCC Programme is advanced.

Yours sincerely,



Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities

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



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

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Our Ref: COR-0308-2025
Your Ref: C/066/2025
Date: 22 May 2025

Dear Marie

EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – WILD FIRES IN THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS

Thank you for your letter, dated 16 April 2025 following recent fires in the Mourne Mountains.

I am concerned at the environmental damage done by these fires and the risks they pose to lives, homes and farms. We need for anyone with any information about those lighting these deliberate and malicious fires to contact the Police or Crimestoppers.

I agree with the Council's views about the need for a comprehensive wildfire management plan for the Mournes.

My Department supported the development and implementation of wildfire control measures within the previous Eastern Mournes Project. An additional procurement exercise was issued in January 2025 to deliver a wildfire plan for the wider Mournes, however no applications were received. My officials are reviewing the process and will re-issue a procurement exercise for this work as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely

ANDREW MUIR MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

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FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTER



Marie Ward

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private.office@education-ni.gov.uk

22nd May 2025

Your Ref: C/081/2025
CORR 0632-2025

Dear Marie

Thank you for your letter of 14 May 2025 regarding Pathway funding for Little Stars Pre School, Killyleagh and other early years settings in the Newry, Mourne and Down District.

The recent application process for the Pathway Fund saw a significant increase in the level of demand, exceeding what could be funded from my Department's 2025-26 budget. I am pleased to advise that I have successfully secured the necessary approval from the Northern Ireland Executive to enhance the Pathway Fund budget for 2025-26 from the ringfenced Early Learning and Childcare allocation held centrally.

This additional funding means that all Pathway applicants which have met the eligibility requirements in 2025-26 will receive an award. Early Years settings, including Little Stars received confirmation of their 2025-26 Pathway award from Early Years (EYO) on 20 May 2025.

I hope you find this information useful.

Yours sincerely

Paul Givan MLA
Minister of Education

Our Ref: CEO 233-5-25
Your Ref: C/081/2024

2 June 2025

Issued via email

Marie Ward Donna.Starkey@nmandd.org democratic.services@nmandd.org

Dear Marie

Little Stars Playgroup, Killyleagh

I am writing in response to your letter date 14 May 2025, regarding your concerns on funding to preschool groups within the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area and to Little Stars Playgroup in Killyleagh.

In your letter you have stated "Newry, Mourne and Down District Council expresses its deepest concern relating to the lack of available funding to pre-school groups across our District. This Council fully supports groups such as Little Stars Pre-School in Killyleagh who at this time are making strenuous efforts to secure the necessary funding through the Pathfinder Programme to maintain, enhance and continue the excellent standard of education and care that they provide to the community. We call upon the Education Minister and the Education Authority to expedite and release much needed funding to enable groups to do what they know best, providing a service of care and professionalism to their pupils."

The aim of the Pre-School Education Programme is to provide one year of funded pre-school education for children in their immediate pre-school year (i.e. the year before they start their compulsory schooling) for every child whose parents want it.

A function of EA's Pre-school Education Group is to undertake an annual review of provision in order to ensure that the planning and allocation of pre-school places to the voluntary/private sector continue to align with the needs of each area.

When making decisions regarding the introduction of new providers into the Programme each year, the Pre-school Education Group will ensure that existing pre-school provision meeting the established quality standards remains unaffected. New entrants will be admitted to the Programme solely to address identified shortfalls in provision.

In the Newry, Mourne and Down council area, when stage 1 of the 2025-26 admissions process closed, there were a total of 2,053 first preference applications received for a total of 2,202 places available. This confirms that the current provision exists to meet the demand.

Based on the current figures and taking into account the live birth rates (NISRA) for future years, sufficient provision exists to meet the demand for the next two academic years 2025-26 and 2026-27, however with Standardisation the provision may change, and any shortfalls will be addressed as appropriate.

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

Education Authority

40 Academy Street, Belfast, BT1 2NQ

T: +44 (0)28 9056 4000 **F:** +44 (0)28 9033 1714 **W:** www.eani.org.uk

When considering requests from providers seeking inclusion in the Pre-School Programme, the Pre-school Education Group must assess existing provision to ensure that displacement does not occur and that an over-provision of funded places is not created.

The number of places allocated to individual providers is based on the level of provision required in each area; some settings will therefore have all their places funded and others only a proportion of their places. The number of places allocated may vary from year to year, the flexibility provided by the voluntary/private sector allows for reaction to the fluctuations in demand for funded pre-school places.

Whilst I acknowledge Little Stars' Pre-School's disappointment at not receiving funded places through the Pre-school Education Programme, the outlined process does not justify the inclusion of an additional setting in the programme at this time, as existing provision is sufficient to meet current demand in the area.

I can assure you that provision will be continuously reviewed throughout the Pre-school Admissions process. As the process remains ongoing, EA will ensure thorough monitoring of areas of pressure and will address any concerns as required.

I trust this information is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Richard Pengelly CB
Chief Executive