

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 5 August 2019 at 6.00pm in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor C Casey

In attendance:

Councillor T Andrews
Councillor R Burgess
Councillor W Clarke
Councillor Enright
Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor V Harte
Councillor R Howell
Councillor M Larkin
Councillor O Magennis
Councillor C Mason
Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor K McKeivitt
Councillor B Ó Muirí
Councillor M Savage
Councillor D Taylor

Councillor G Bain
Councillor P Byrne
Councillor D Curran
Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor G Hanna
Councillor H Harvey
Councillor L Kimmins
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor G Malone
Councillor D McAteer
Councillor H McKee
Councillor G O'Hare
Councillor H Reilly
Councillor G Stokes
Councillor J Tinnelly

(Officials)

Mrs M Ward, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr R Moore, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Mr A Patterson, Asst. Director Tourism, Culture & Events
Mr G Byrne, Audit Services Manager
Mrs L Fitzsimons, Human Resources Manager
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs L O'Hare, Democratic Services Officer

C/106/2019

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Liam Hannaway and Dorrinnia Carville Councillors Brown, Devlin, Doran, Gallagher, Hearty, Mulgrew, Ruane and Sharvin

C/107/2019

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

C/108/2019

ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2019

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 1 July 2019 (copy circulated).

C/096/2019 – Newry Pride Event

Councillor Byrne asked for an update following on from the meeting held on 3 July 2019 regarding the proposed funding for the Newry Pride event.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on this item 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 a 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 Clarke, seconded by Councillor Byrne it was agreed to ‘come out of committee’.

Marie Ward, Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism confirmed that whilst ‘in committee’ Councillors were briefed regarding the funding for Newry Pride Event and were advised that due to a number of governance related concerns the matter remained under investigation. The Council was not in a position to release any further funding and no further information could be provided at this time. A further update would be brought to Committee when available.

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 July 2019 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor McAteer.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING

C/109/2019

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2019

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 1 July 2019 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 1 July 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Harvey.

C/104/2019 – Notice of Motion – WW2 Veterans

Councillor Walker expressed concern that the motion had been referred to the Good Relations Forum and asked that any agreement by the Forum be proceeded without having to be approved by Council.

Mrs Ward advised it was hoped the Good Relations Forum would meet at the end of August and therefore any decisions would be brought to September Council which would still be timely to deal with the matter.

Councillor Byrne stated he had seconded the proposal for the Motion to be referred to the Good Relations Forum and that it was not to cause delay but to allow open discussion.

Councillor Taylor stated his party supported the motion and that it was best to have matters resolved at committee and ratified by Council.

Agreed: It was agreed that the process be commenced to identify surviving WW2 veterans within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area.

C/110/2019 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 JUNE 2019**

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 24 June 2019 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 24 June 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Burgess.

Agreed: It was agreed to circulate details of NI Water direct line to Councillors.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/111/2019 **EXTRACT FROM MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2019**

Read: Extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 26 June 2019 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The extract from the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held on 26 June 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Larkin.

C/112/2019 **MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2019**

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 3 July 2019 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 10 June 2019 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Harvey.**

Councillor Enright joined the meeting during the above discussion – 6.35pm.

CORRESPONDENCE AND CONFERENCES

C/113/2019 **ANNUAL SEMINAR 2019 – NEW MUNICIPALISM**

Read: Correspondence on the APSE Annual Seminar 2019

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Casey, seconded by Councillor McAteer for Councillor Andrews to attend the APSE Annual Seminar 2019.**

NOTICES OF MOTION

C/114/2019 **NOTICE OF MOTION – TREE STRATEGY**

The following Notice of Motion came forward for consideration in the name of Councillor Clarke:

"This Council produces a tree strategy to protect and enhance tree cover for future generations, Council recognises the importance of trees, the benefits they afford us and the increasingly important role they can play in mitigating the effects of climate change, flooding and pollution control.

Furthermore Council acknowledges that trees can greatly enhance the visual amenity of our environment, they are vital for people's sense of well-being and contribute to everyone's quality of life".

The motion was seconded by Councillor Kimmins.

The Chairperson advised that in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6 the Motion would be referred to the Neighbourhood Services Committee.

AGREED: **The motion was referred to the Neighbourhood Services Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

C/115/2019: NOTICE OF MOTION – TV LICENSING FOR THE OVER 75s

The following Notice of Motion came forward for consideration in the name of Councillor Kimmins:

“This Council notes with serious concern the plans that the British Broadcasting Corporation has announced relating to the means testing of the provision of TV licensing for the over-75s.

The Council agrees to request that the BBC immediately cease these plans and agrees also that the Chairperson of Council convenes a meeting with BBC senior officials and the Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium to hear at first hand the impact that this decision will have on our most valued and respected Citizens of Newry, Mourne and Down.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Clarke.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Kimmins stated that from June 2020, the BBC would no longer allow the provision of free TV licenses for the over 75s, except for those in receipt of pension credits.

Councillor Kimmins said, she was very aware in her job as a social worker of how important TV was for many people and often it was the only contact they had with the outside world. Social and rural isolation was a huge problem and to add a financial burden to those over 75 was unacceptable, additionally, Northern Ireland had the lowest state pension in the whole of the developed world.

Councillor Kimmins advised she had included the Newry and Mourne Senior Citizen Consortium in the Motion as they worked closely with older people right across the District and they had expert knowledge of how much this would impact on the senior citizens of Newry, Mourne and Down District.

Councillors Trainor, Walker, Reilly and Taylor spoke in support of the Motion.

In welcoming the Motion, Councillor Walker proposed an amendment ‘that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council write to the other 10 Councils seeking their support for the Motion across Northern Ireland’.

In supporting the amendment, Councillor Kimmins confirmed Belfast City Council had already passed this Motion but that she was happy for all Councils to be written to.

Councillor Ó Muirí seconded the amendment.

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Kimmins, seconded by Councillor Clarke that this Council notes with serious concern the plans that the British Broadcasting Corporation has announced relating to the means testing of the provision of TV licensing for the over-75s.

The Council agrees to request that the BBC immediately cease these plans and agrees also that the Chairperson of Council convenes a meeting with BBC senior officials and the Newry and Mourne Senior Citizens Consortium to hear at first hand the impact that this decision will have on our most valued and respected Citizens of Newry, Mourne and Down.

The Council writes to the 10 other Councils seeking their support for the Motion across Northern Ireland'

C/116/2019: NOTICE OF MOTION – NIHE GRASS CUTTING SERVICE

The following Notice of Motion came forward for consideration in the name of Councillor Tinnelly:

"This Council is concerned at the obvious deterioration in the quality of the grass cutting service delivered by subcontractors on behalf of the NI Housing Executive at their many housing developments throughout the district. Furthermore, we will write to the NIHE seeking an explanation as to how this deterioration has been allowed to manifest itself and also seek assurances that measures are being undertaken by the NIHE to address these shortcomings"

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Gibbons.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Tinnelly raised the following points:

- The vast majority of people living in NIHE accommodation took great pride in their own areas and individual gardens.
- Since the maintenance service had been privatised, the level of service that had once been applied had deteriorated to an unacceptable level.
- Communal areas of grass were becoming repeatedly overgrown due to a reduction in the number of grass cuts throughout the growing season.
- Council was obliged to give voice to the frustrations of the residents throughout the District and should seek an assurance from NIHE that they endeavour to rectify the problems and return the service to the efficient levels that were once in place.
- Council was committed to keeping the District a clean, tidy and welcoming place for residents and visitors alike and this was evident by their recent submission of 18 towns, villages and settlements into the 2019 Ulster in Bloom competition.

Members spoke in full support of the Motion with the following points raised:

- Concerns had previously been raised with NIHE with no satisfactory outcome.
- There were too many agencies involved and a review needed to be carried out at Central Government level to ascertain where areas of responsibilities lay.

- There were health and safety issues due to overgrown banks, resulting in reduced visibility.
- Transport NI also had a responsibility in that the site lines were not being cut back sufficiently.
- Communal green spaces were very important to communities and therefore it was essential they were adequately maintained.
- Onus on Council to ensure regular street cleansing was carried out.
- Downpatrick DEA had discussed the establishment of a forum to include DFI, NIHE and Council in an effort to try and address these concerns.

Councillor Taylor fully supported the Motion and asked that an amendment be made to the Motion to include writing a letter to Transport NI regarding the cutting back of site lines.

Councillor Savage, in welcoming the Motion said Council should, through Community Planning explore ways in which a cross agency approach could be adopted. Councillor Savage asked that the proposal be amended to reflect this.

In summing up, Councillor Tinnelly said he was grateful for the widespread support from all the Members and he agreed to accept the amendments proposed by Councillor Taylor and Councillor Savage. Councillor Tinnelly continued, saying he hoped correspondence from Council would generate a speedy and satisfactory response and resolution.

AGREED:

It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Tinnelly seconded by Councillor Gibbons that this Council is concerned at the obvious deterioration in the quality of the grass cutting service delivered by subcontractors on behalf of the NI Housing Executive at their many housing developments throughout the district. Furthermore, Council write to the NIHE seeking an explanation as to how this deterioration has been allowed to manifest itself and also seek assurances that measures are being undertaken by the NIHE to address these shortcomings.

It was also agreed Council write to Transport NI expressing concern regarding the site lines not being adequately cut back.

It was also agreed that Council should via Community Planning explore ways in which a cross agency approach could be adopted.

C/117/2019: NOTICE OF MOTION – POLICY RE: PLANTING TREES OF REMEMBRANCE

The following Notice of Motion came forward for consideration in the name of Councillor Clarke:

"This Council undertakes a review of the policy that refuses to allow the planting of trees in our parks to remember deceased relatives and friends. There should be a flexible policy to allow families and friends to plant a tree in council owned parks, to honour loved ones who have passed away".

Councillor Gibbons seconded the motion.

The Chairperson advised that in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6 the motion would be referred to the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee.

AGREED: The motion was referred to the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

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

Signed:

Chairman

Chief Executive

