

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 1 February 2021 at 6.00pm via Hybrid in Downshire Chamber and Microsoft Teams

In the Chair: Councillor L Devlin

In attendance:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor P Brown
Councillor R Burgess	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor C Casey	Councillor D Curran
Councillor C Enright	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor H Gallagher	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte	Councillor R Howell
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor G Malone
Councillor C Mason	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor K McKeivitt	Councillor A McMurray
Councillor R Mulgrew	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Owen	Councillor G O'Hare
Councillor B Ó Muirí	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor M Savage
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor G Stokes
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor W Walker	

(Officials)

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services
Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr J McBride, Director of Neighbourhood Services (Acting)
Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal & Administration (Acting)
Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Culture, Tourism & Events
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Ms L O'Hare, Democratic Services Officer

C/017/2021

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Doran, McEvoy and McKee.

The Chairperson referred to news reports and scenes at hospitals in recent weeks and praised and thanked all those working on the front line. She also referred to the roll out of the Covid vaccination programme which was a very positive step and asked people to be patient.

The Chairperson highlighted Covid stats in the District remained very high and reminded everyone of the importance of adhering to public health guidance.

The Chairperson advised it was "Time to Talk" Day on 4th February 2021 and asked people to call a neighbour, a friend or a family member as the number of people feeling isolated had risen due to Covid and the restrictions.

The Chairperson advised item 20 relating to a notice of motion from Councillor McKeivitt had been added to the agenda.

Members were advised the wording of an emergency motion from Councillor Savage had been circulated prior to the meeting. In order for the motion to be heard, it would require the suspension of standing orders and 80% of those members present and voting. If successful, the motion would be dealt with after all other matter of business.

C/018/2021 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/019/2021 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 JANUARY 2021

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 4 January 2021 (copy circulated).

C/003/2021: Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 07.12.2020 - It was agreed to invite the Trade Unions to address the Special Meeting of the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee.

In response to Councillor Brown, the Chief Executive advised the matter was currently with legal services and therefore she could not comment further at this time. She advised that an update would be brought back to Council when it was concluded.

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 4 January 2021 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING

C/020/2021 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 JANUARY 2021

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 4 January 2021 (copy circulated).

SPR/192/2020 – PHA Report

In response to Councillor Andrew's call to make further requests for testing site facilities in Downpatrick and Newcastle, the Chief Executive confirmed matters had been raised with the Public Health Agency and an update would be provided following the meeting.

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 4 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor Burgess.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/021/2021 MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 JANUARY 2021

Read: Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 January 2021 (copy circulated).

Councillor Hanna commended the Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism for the swift action taken by the department following recent storm damage at the Annalong Harbour.

Agreed: The Minutes of the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Curran, seconded by Councillor Stokes.

C/022/2021 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JANUARY 2021

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 12 January 2021. (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 12 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Devlin.

C/023/2021 MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 JANUARY 2021

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 January 2021 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Magennis.

C/024/2021 MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2021

Read: Minutes of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2021 (copy circulated).

AHC/003/2021: Action Sheet of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting – Willie Maley Statue

In response to Councillor Casey, Mr Lipsett confirmed officers were working with the group to identify a suitable site for a statue and advised both he and the DEA Co-ordinator would contact Councillor Casey regarding the matter.

Agreed: The Minutes of the Active and Healthy Communities

Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor O'Hare.

C/025/2021

MINUTES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2021

Read: Minutes of Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2021 (copy circulated).

Councillor Walker highlighted concerns regarding an updated position regarding dog fouling and it was agreed Mr McBride would contact him directly.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor McKevitt.**

PLANNING

C/026/2020

EXTRACT OF DRAFT PLANNING MINUTES 13 JANUARY 2021

Noted: There were no issues referred from the Planning Committee Meeting held on 13 January 2021.

FOR NOTING

C/027/2020

NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING COUNCIL MINUTES DECEMBER 2020

Read: Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes dated 10 December 2020. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **The Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes dated 10 December 2020 were noted.**

C/028/2021

NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING COUNCIL BULLETIN – JANUARY 2021

Read: Bulletin dated January 2021 from Northern Ireland Housing Council. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **The Northern Ireland Housing Council Bulletin was noted.**

CORRESPONDENCE

C/029/2021 **FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL RE: CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IMPACT ON GCSE & A-LEVEL STUDENTS**

Read: Correspondence dated 4 December 2020 from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council re: Coronavirus Pandemic Impact on GCSE & A-level Students. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **The correspondence was noted.**

C/030/2021 **ARMAGH CITY, BANBRIDGE & CRAIGAVON BOROUGH COUNCIL RE: CONTRIBUTION TO HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE WORKERS**

Read: Correspondence dated 12 January 2021 from Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council re: Contribution to Health & Social Care Workers. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Walker commended the Health Minister for delivering on the calls for contributions to Health and Social Care and Care Home Workers.

Agreed: **The correspondence was noted.**

C/031/2021 **CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED RE: C/186/2020 ANNUAL CHRISTMAS DRINK DRIVE CAMPAIGN**

Read: Correspondence dated 19 January 2021 from the Department of Justice and correspondence dated 22 January 2021 from the Department for Infrastructure re: C/186/2020 Annual Christmas Drink Drive Campaign. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Sharvin voiced disappointment at the response received from the Department of Justice commenting that although legislation was the responsibility of the Minister for Infrastructure, the Department of Justice held an oversight and feedback role. He advised that it had been hoped and the aim of the motion was to create a partnership in tackling drink driving.

Councillor Owen referred to the reply from the Minister for Infrastructure detailing that 35 of the 280 arrests made in Northern Ireland over the Christmas period were within the Newry, Mourne and Down District which highlighted this was an issue within the District and how to address it for next year.

Agreed: **The correspondence was noted.**

C/032/2021 **RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE RE: PEDESTRIAN ROAD SAFETY MEASURES**

Read: Correspondence dated 11 January 2021 from the Department of Finance re: Pedestrian Road Safety Measures. (Copy circulated)

In response to a query from Councillor Magennis, Democratic Services Manager, Miss Taggart confirmed correspondence had been sent to both the Minister of Finance and the

Minister for Infrastructure.

Councillor Murphy expressed disappointment that a response had not been received from the Minister for Infrastructure, however Members were advised a response had only been received in recent days, copies of which were circulated to them via email.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Members expressed concern at reports of an underspend for Roads. Concerns were also raised regarding the lack of funding for infrastructure and the need for Ministers to work collectively to ensure an increased budget and major investment into infrastructure across Northern Ireland and within Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Murphy that Council seek clarity from the Department for Infrastructure on the funding models used for the Newry, Mourne and Down District area and what provisions were given to each section and how it was administered.**

Agreed: **The correspondence was noted.**

C/033/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – UNIVERSAL CREDIT PAYMENTS

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

“As part of his Covid-10 response the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak increased Universal Credit payments by £20 per week until March 2021. This was a welcome and timely initiative given increased heating, energy and food costs from the pandemic. It must be noted that not all benefits were increased and so some in need did not get support. We must remember benefit cuts, in real terms took place over the past 10 years. However, this increase for what it is worth, is welcome. The Chancellor of the Exchequer now needs to ensure that the £20 increase extends beyond March of this year. As the economic facts show, this extra amount has helped families and claimants to meet the extra costs due to the pandemic and has supported many local businesses. In this motion we are asking that Newry Mourne and Down District Council to support the campaign to retain this extra payment and extend it to other benefits, the 120,000 children living in poverty in Northern Ireland deserve any assistance available to them”.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Andrews made an urgent appeal, for the Government, especially the Chancellor of the Exchequer to cancel the cutback to Universal Credit that would come into effect on the 1 April 2021 if the deadline was not extended.

Councillor Andrews asked that should the motion be passed that Council write to the other 10 Councils seeking their support and write to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor outlining our unequivocal support in extending the existing Top Up to Universal Credit to remain.

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

Councillor McAteer highlighted that the reduction to a one off £500 payment brought it back to £9.61 for as long as it would last and spoke of many anomalies of the proposed cut.

Councillors Walker, Finnegan, Taylor, McMurray and the Chairperson each spoke in support of the motion.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor McAteer to approve the motion as follows and write to the other 10 Councils seeking their support and write to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor outlining Newry, Mourne and Down District Councils support in extending the existing top up to Universal Credit to remain:

“As part of his Covid-10 response the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rishi Sunak increased Universal Credit payments by £20 per week until March 2021. This was a welcome and timely initiative given increased heating, energy and food costs from the pandemic. It must be noted that not all benefits were increased and so some in need did not get support. We must remember benefit cuts, in real terms took place over the past 10 years. However, this increase for what it is worth, is welcome. The Chancellor of the Exchequer now needs to ensure that the £20 increase extends beyond March of this year. As the economic facts show, this extra amount has helped families and claimants to meet the extra costs due to the pandemic and has supported many local businesses. In this motion we are asking that Newry Mourne and Down District Council to support the campaign to retain this extra payment and extend it to other benefits, the 120,000 children living in poverty in Northern Ireland deserve any assistance available to them”.

C/034/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – STEEL IMPORT DUTY

This notice of motion was removed from the agenda at the request of the Councillor as the situation had been resolved.

C/035/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – OUTDOOR RECREATION GROUP

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

“In light of the increase on visitors accessing outdoor amenities which are prevalent in our district, this Council shall, within its structures, create a group regarding Outdoor Recreation within the district. The primary objectives of this group will be to Manage, Promote and Educate regarding outdoor recreation within our district. This will be a constituted group within Council. Its makeup will be representative of both statutory and voluntary sector agencies. As well as those who have a remit for development & management of outdoor recreation. Communication will be made in the first instance with National Governing Bodies and Agencies to ascertain what role Councils in other areas of Ireland, Britain and Europe have had in positively managing access and recreation with our outdoor spaces”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Enright.

Agreed:

The Motion was referred to the Active and Healthy Communities Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

C/036/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – STUDENT CHOICES

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

"This Council supports the choice of students to wear trousers as opposed to skirts and vice versa as part of their regulation uniform. In this age of equality, fairness and indeed comfort, no person should be forced to wear an item of uniform which is traditionally gender related. This Council will make contact with all schools in the City and District of both primary and secondary level to encourage and promote that this choice be included in their uniform policy. Furthermore, to contact the Education Authority and Education Minister seeking their support in this matter."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Trainor.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Equality and Good Relations Forum in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

C/037/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – STUDENT SUPPORT GRANT

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

“The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all citizens and that the impact on our young people has been severe. This Council recognises the difficulties faced by those young people in full-time third level education, both at universities and further education colleges, who, because of restrictions, are unable to attend classes in person or live in student accommodation which they have paid for. This Council recognises that many university students have found themselves suffering financial hardship which has caused significant distress and led to poor mental health. This Council calls on university accommodation providers and private landlords who have not provided rent waivers to do immediately and calls on the Department for the Economy and Department of Finance to develop and fund a Student Support Grant for all full time third level students, many of whom cannot gain any employment at this time and are unable to claim benefits”.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Stokes spoke of the difficulties faced by young people in full time third level education and the impact the Covid pandemic has had on them. Due to restrictions students of 2020/21 have had to self-isolate on arrival at universities, advised not to travel home at weekends and have been unable to work to support themselves as jobs in hospitality and non-essential retail sector continuously close.

Student financial support schemes were made available in the Republic of Ireland and Wales but unfortunately not yet for students in Northern Ireland with students not eligible for Universal Credit. They have had to continue paying rent for accommodation they don't need and have had high travel costs after being sent home short notice from universities and colleges. Councillor Stokes asked Members to support his motion.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Curran who also spoke of the financial hardships faced by students and the need for a grant fund to support students in this challenging time.

Councillor Howell welcomed Councillors Stokes motion stating Sinn Féin recognised the hardships faced by students, who were not getting the full learning experience they had signed up and paid for.

Councillor Howell referred to the Finance Minister having confirmed his commitment to allocating money to the Department for Economy and proposed the following amendment to the second paragraph to read as follows:

“This Council recognises that many university students have found themselves suffering financial hardship which has caused significant distress and led to poor mental health. This Council calls on university accommodation providers and private landlords who have not provided rent waivers to do so immediately *and welcomes the Finance Minister’s commitment to support students and urges the Economy Minister to develop a Student Support Grant for all full time third level students, many of whom cannot gain any employment at this time and are unable to claim benefits*”.

Councillor Howell’s amendment was seconded by Councillor Hanlon and accepted by Councillor Stokes.

Councillor Owen then proposed an amendment to the wording of the first paragraph for reference to young people to be changed to students and for it to read as follows:

“The Covid-19 pandemic has affected all citizens and that the impact on *students* has been severe. This Council recognises the difficulties faced by those *students* in full-time third level education, both at universities and further education colleges, who, because of restrictions, are unable to attend classes in person or live in student accommodation which they have paid for”.

Councillor Owen’s amendment was accepted by Councillor Stokes.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor Curran that Covid-19 pandemic has affected all citizens and that the impact on students has been severe. This Council recognises the difficulties faced by those students in full-time third level education, both at universities and further education colleges, who, because of restrictions, are unable to attend classes in person or live in student accommodation which they have paid for.

This Council recognises that many university students have found themselves suffering financial hardship which has caused significant distress and led to poor mental health. This Council calls on university accommodation providers and private landlords who have not provided rent waivers to do so immediately and welcomes the Finance Minister’s commitment to support students and urges the Economy Minister to develop a Student Support Grant for all full time third level students, many of whom cannot gain any employment at this time and are unable to claim benefits.

C/038/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – CHILD POVERTY TASK FORCE

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

“This Council notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which show that 122,000 children in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the

previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children. This Council calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force, to set out how her department will reduce child poverty by next year and over the next decade”.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Sharvin advised the aim of the motion was to highlight and create awareness of the challenges being faced by many in society, particularly children.

Councillor Sharvin referred to the Department for Communities Family Resources Survey which showed 122,000 children were living in poverty within society and spoke of the impact of Covid, the ending of the Furlough Scheme and the two-child tax and benefit caps would have on adding even more pressure onto families.

Councillor Sharvin also referred to the ‘New Decade, New Approach’ committing to the establishment and implementation of a new anti-poverty strategy to be published by December 2021. He stated families and children could not wait that long for a strategy and that was why Council was being asked to write to the Minister for Communities to ensure work was being done to tackle poverty and protect families now.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Devlin who spoke of recent visits to local foodbanks and engagement with community and voluntary sector who assist in tackling what could only be described a tsunami of poverty. She spoke of the need for action as families and society could not afford to wait.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the motion and referred to work the Minister for Communities had undertaken so far to try and tackle childhood poverty and push the issue forward. Councillor Hanlon commented that whilst the Department for Communities was the lead on this, issues needed to be addressed across the Executive.

Councillor Hanlon proposed an amendment to Councillor Sharvin’s motion for Council to also write to the Department of Health and the Department of Education as follows:

"This Council notes with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which show that 122,000 children in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children. This Council writes to Departments of Communities, *Health and Education* and calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force, to set out how their departments will reduce child poverty by next year and over the next decade”.

Councillor Sharvin accepted Councillor Hanlon’s amendment.

Councillors Taylor, Hanna and McMurray each spoke in support of the motion.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Devlin that this Council with alarm the Department of Communities Family Resources Survey 2018/2019 which show that 122,000 children in Northern Ireland live in relative poverty (24% of children) with 109,000 of those living in absolute poverty and expresses deep concern that these figures have increased significantly since the previous year and have not improved at all in the last five years. The rise of the Universal Credit claimant count and expected end of the furlough scheme could see a further increase

in these numbers, with the two-child tax credit rule and benefit cap only adding to the pressure on families with children. This Council writes to Departments of Communities, Health and Education and calls on the Minister for Communities to immediately convene a child poverty task force, to set out how their departments will reduce child poverty by next year and over the next decade".

C/039/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – BREXIT, SHARED PROSPERITY FUND

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

“This Council expresses deep concern about the financial consequences of Brexit for Executive departments including the loss of £70 million in EU Structural Funds for the Department for the Economy; regrets that the level of funding promised to the devolved institutions by the British government will not be equivalent to EU Structural Funds; notes that any loss of funding will result in significant negative consequences for Northern Ireland’s economy and society; expresses concern that plans to operate the UK Shared Prosperity Fund from Westminster represent moves to centralise regional development policy; and calls upon the Minister for the Economy and the Minister of Finance to urge the British Government to commit to using the Shared Prosperity Fund to replace in full the EU funding lost as a result of Brexit and operate in a way that respects devolution settlements”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Byrne.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Brexit Working Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

Councillor Walker had left the meeting during the above discussion – 7.45pm

C/040/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – BIG SPRING CLEAN UP

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

“Throughout the Covid pandemic, many residents of and visitors to our district have taken the opportunity to exercise in the parks, rural roads & pathways of our towns & villages to help their physical and mental wellbeing and in so doing, many have found a renewed sense and awareness of the stunning beauty of our district. Regrettably, this increased volume of cyclists and walkers has also lead to a marked increase in the amount of rubbish that is discarded along those very roads and pathways.

To that end Newry Mourne & Down Council will organise and supervise a district wide ‘Big Spring Clean Up’, particularly on our rural roads on a chosen Saturday morning this coming Springtime, delivered through the respective DEA’s and involving as many community groups, schools and residents of our district as possible, public health advice permitting.

Councils role will be to coordinate what is happening within each DEA and to provide logistical support like litter pickers, bags, hi-vis vests, rubbish collection points etc; on request, and to engage external groups who may wish to partner us in this project.

If successful, this initiative will then become an annual event for our council to lead, in this time of increased environmental awareness”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Enright.

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

Mrs Ward advised an emergency Notice of Motion had been received, the wording of which had been emailed to all Councillors and to enable it to be heard, it would be necessary to suspend Standing Orders 16.1.1 for which a qualified majority vote was required. (80% of Members present and voting).

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Andrews to suspend Standing orders 16.1.1 at this point in the meeting to allow for the tabling of the emergency motion due to the urgency of the issue and its importance to the district.

The Chairperson put the matter to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	35
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	0

It was unanimously agreed by qualified majority vote to suspend Standing Orders 16.1.1 (copy attached).

C/041/2021 NOTICE OF MOTION – PROPOSED CUTS TO ADVICE SERVICES

The following Emergency Motion came forward from Councillor Savage proposing:

‘This Council notes with concern reports that the Department for Communities 2021-22 draft budget includes no allocation for the independent advice sector to support welfare change which equates to a £1.5 million reduction. The independent Advice Sector supports some of the most vulnerable in our council area, and whilst we are in the grips of a pandemic that is creating further hardships, a reduction in the budget will hamper the ability of this sector to continue providing much needed support.

Council calls on the Minister for Communities and Minister for Finance to work proactively to ensure that funding can be allocated appropriately for the Independent Advice Sector within the budget for 2021-22.’

In proposing the motion, Councillor Savage advised that the cuts proposed in the latest Department for Communities budget would see work on fast tracking payments for the terminally ill dumped and vital advice and support services stripped from the most vulnerable.

An Equality Impact Assessment on the Executive Draft Budget for 2021/22 revealed that none of the £57.7million the Department for Communities requested to meet commitments the New Decade, New Approach deal had been provided and this money was intended to fund a range of mitigations recommended by the NI Human Rights Commission including additional support for people impacted by welfare reform, progressing a change to welfare rules to allow terminally ill people to apply for benefits 12 months before they die as opposed to 6 months and £28million to offset the two child policy. The plans also include cuts to 45 advice jobs and youth unemployment programmes postponed.

Councillor Savage spoke of the lifeline the advice services provide to society and the increased need particularly during these times of times real hardship and the pandemic we face.

Councillor Trainor seconded the motion and reiterated the impact of Department for Communities 2021/22 budget cut for advice services and pointed out that whilst the motion calls on the Minister for Communities and the Minister of Finance if work was required by the Executive then so be it as something needed to be done to ensure the vulnerable within our community were protected.

Councillor Finnegan stated the Communities Minister had clearly identified money to be allocated for the independent advice sector and that all Departments were now having to operate on a budget cut that came from the British Government, and a one-year budget as opposed to the three-year budget.

Councillor Finnegan proposed an amendment that Council write to the Chancellor of the Exchequer instead to challenge them as to why they are not honouring the commitment to the North.

Councillor Savage advised he would accept writing to the Chancellor of the Exchequer requesting further funds from Whitehall to deal with services from the pandemic.

Councillors Andrews, Taylor, Hanna, McMurray and Murphy all spoke in support of the emergency motion.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Trainor that Council notes with concern reports that the Department for Communities 2021-22 draft budget includes no allocation for the independent advice sector to support welfare change which equates to a £1.5 million reduction. The independent Advice Sector supports some of the most vulnerable in our council area, and whilst we are in the grips of a pandemic that is creating further hardships, a reduction in the budget will hamper the ability of this sector to continue providing much needed support.

Council calls on the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Finance to work proactively to ensure that funding can be allocated appropriately for the Independent Advice Sector within the budget for 2021-22.'

Councillor Enright had left the meeting during the above discussion – 7.55pm

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.10pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 March 2021.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: _01/02/2021 VENUE: Teams Meeting MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Suspension of Standing Orders – 80% of those present and voting.
35 present and voting – 28 FOR votes required.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	1			
P Brown	2			
R Burgess	3			
P Byrne	4			
C Casey	5			
W Clarke				1
D Curran	6			
L Devlin	7			
S Doran				2
C Enright	8			
A Finnegan	9			
H Gallagher	10			
M Gibbons	11			
O Hanlon	12			
G Hanna	13			
V Harte	14			
R Howell	15			
M Larkin	16			
A Lewis	17			
O Magennis	18			
G Malone	19			
C Mason	20			
D McAteer	21			
L McEvoy				3
H McKee				4
K McKeivitt	22			
A McMurray	23			
R Mulgrew	24			
D Murphy	25			
G O'Hare	26			
B O Muirí	27			
K Owen	28			
H Reilly				5
M Ruane	29			
M Savage	30			
G Sharvin	31			
G Stokes	32			
D Taylor	33			
J Tinnelly	34			
J Trainor	35			
B Walker				6
TOTALS	35			6