

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Tuesday 4 May 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 W Clarke
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 L McEvoy
Councillor H McKee	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 J Trainor
Councillor W Walker	

(Officials)

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services
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)
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs P McKeever, Democratic Services Officer

C/094/2021

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Doran and Hanna and Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active and Healthy Communities.

The Chairperson spoke at length about the devastation following the fire in the Mournes which had been heart-breaking to witness and caused fear among the community. The Mournes were so much more than a mountain range and symbolised heritage and hopes for the future so to see that damaged in such a dramatic way and furthermore, to learn that the NIFRS investigation concluded that the "cause of fire was believed to be deliberate" had been very hard to take in.

The Chairperson praised and thanked the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and all their partner agencies. She also paid tribute to the generosity from the local community towards the firefighters. She spoke of the urgent need for an overall strategy in tandem with long term funding from Central Government and thanked Mrs Marie Ward, Chief Executive who co-chairs the Southern Emergency Planning Group. In the immediate aftermath of the fire, a meeting of the co-ordinating groups was convened to look at recovery in both the short / medium and long term and this group would continue to meet and progress.

The Chairperson referred to an emergency Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor McMurray calling for a Special Council meeting to be arranged which would tie in the work the Chief Executive had been doing with all partner agencies and elected members.

The Chairperson advised that given the importance of this issue, arrangements had already been made for a Special Council Meeting so there was no need for the motion to be heard. Councillor McMurray then spoke and listed the names of physical locations scarred indelibly by fire, as well as the many flora and fauna burned, and their habitat destroyed.

Councillor McMurray commented that this had not been the first such fire with many areas scarred and thousands of call outs received each year by the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service. He welcomed that the Special Council Meeting had been called, commenting that this would only be the beginning of the process and that how to manage and interact with the outdoor environment were the fundamental questions that needed addressed.

The Chairperson reiterated how careful people needed to be when in the Mourne and also referred to the sickening incident where Fire Service personnel had been targeted while attending a fire in Downpatrick at the very same time as the Mourne were engulfed in flames. The local Downpatrick community were outraged and stood in absolute solidarity with the Fire Service and even more so with 4th May 2021 being Firefighters Memorial Day.

The Chairperson passed on her condolences to the family of Mr Denis Lynn of Finnebrogue Artisan, Downpatrick who had sadly passed away. Mr Lynn's vision and entrepreneurial spirit made a huge contribution to the local economy and the devastating loss would be felt by many across the District.

The Chairperson said it would be remiss, if Council did not take a few moments to remember and acknowledge the life of Prince Philip who passed away last month. The pain of his loss was felt not just by his family, but by many fellow Councillors here, and so many people across the District. The respect that was shown to those who grieve his loss from all corners of the Chamber last month was a powerful thing and something we should all be very proud of.

The Chairperson condemned an attack Mid-April on a Syrian family in Newry, stating that Newry was an incredibly diverse and vibrant city and for any individual or family to be targeted simply because of their nationality or ethnicity was appalling and had no place in our Council area nor our society.

The Chairperson highlighted the roll out of the Covid 19 vaccination programme and encouraged as many of our citizens to avail of it, not just for themselves but for the greater good within the community.

The Chairperson congratulated Downpatrick resident Daniel McMenamin who had been crowned the Champion Conditional Jockey 2020/2021.

The Chairperson advised a Mayobridge girl, Sophie Lennon had auditioned on RTE for the Junior Eurovision and everyone looked forward to September for the show to air and that Council was behind her.

C/095/2021

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Chairperson declared an interest in Item SPR/02/59/2021, Drumee Road, Castlewellan – The Lane within the Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2021.

C/096/2021

ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 APRIL 2021

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 7 April 2021 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 April 2021 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Savage.

Agreed: Response from Department of Justice dated 30 April 2021 Re: NOM C/087/2021 and NOM C/088/2021 was noted.

Agreed: Response from Department of Health dated 29 April 2021 Re: NOM C/092/2021 was noted.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING

C/097/2021

MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 APRIL 2021

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 7 April 2021 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 April 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor O'Hare.

C/098/2021

MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2021

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28 April 2021 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 28 April 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor Magennis.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/099/2021

MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 APRIL 2021

Read: Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 April 2021 (copy circulated).

ERT/066/2021: Economic Assessment of Water Based Activities

In response to a request for clarity from Councillor Mulgrew, Mr Mallon confirmed the recommendation as presented to the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee was

that the Committee consider the findings of the independent economic assessment on the potential future economic benefit of lifting bridge would bring to Newry City as part of the Southern Relief Road proposals and submit an assessment to DfI officials.

The Chairman advised that as the discussion was in relation to a meeting held outside of the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee she would move on with the Council meeting.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 April 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Stokes, seconded by Councillor McAteer.**

C/100/2021 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 APRIL 2021**

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2021 (copy circulated).

SPR/041/2021: Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting

In response to a query from Councillor Brown, the Chief Executive advised that the matter Councillor Brown referred to was after the Strategy Policy Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2021 and that it would be dealt with at the next Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting.

SPR/055/2021: Women's Working Group

In response for an update from Councillor Owen, Mrs Carville confirmed the first meeting for the group would be arranged this month and that nominations to the Women's Working Group were being sought. Councillor Owen nominated herself as the only female on the DUP grouping.

Miss Taggart asked that any outstanding nominations to the Women's Working Group be forwarded to the Democratic Services Department as a matter of urgency.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2021, were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

C/101/2021 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 APRIL 2021**

Read: Minutes of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 April 2021 (copy circulated).

AHC/074/2021: Financial Assistance – Call 1

Councillor Mason commented that a lot of clubs and groups were left without funding for vital projects and enquired that, given the year it had been, whether something could be done to obtain extra funding for those applications who did pass initial stages but were not awarded funding.

Mrs Ward confirmed Mr Lipsett would report back to Councillor Mason on the matter.

Councillor McAteer's proposal was put to a vote and voting was as follows:-

FOR: 8
AGAINST: 27
ABSTENTIONS: 3

The Motion was declared lost.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 April 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McKevitt, seconded by Councillor Mason, with the exception of item AHC/077/2021, Fairtrade Signage.**

C/102/2021 **MINUTES OF NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 APRIL 2021**

Read: Minutes of Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting held on 21 April 2021 (copy circulated).

NS/068/2021: Refuse Collection Calendars

In response for an update from Councillor Lewis, Mr McBride confirmed the target completion for issuing Refuse Collection Calendars was the start of June 2021, with updated calendars to be made available on the Councils website in the coming weeks.

NS/067/2021: Cleaner, Greener Communities Initiative

The Chairperson took the opportunity to say a huge thank you to all involved in this initiative.

NS/060/2021: Tree Planting Strategy

In response to a query from Councillor Casey regarding trees on Abbey Way, Newry Mr McBride confirmed he would report back to him directly on the matter.

NS/061/2021: Bus Shelter Request for Main Street, Hilltown

Mr McBride informed Councillor O'Hare that subject to ratification of the Minutes as presented and call in, officers would be able to move forward with the decision and be in the position to provide details on a timetable week commencing 10 May 2021.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting held on 21 April 2021 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McKevitt, seconded by Councillor Andrews.**

PLANNING

C/103/2021 **PLANNING MINUTES**

Read: Extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meetings held on 10 March 2021 and 8 April 2021.

Noted: **The extracts from the Planning Committee Minutes of Meetings held on 10 March 2021 and 8 April 2021 were noted.**

FOR NOTING

C/104/2021

NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING COUNCIL BULLETIN – APRIL 2021

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

Agreed: The Northern Ireland Housing Council Bulletin was noted.

C/105/2020

NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING COUNCIL MINUTES MARCH 2021

Read: Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes dated 11 March 2021. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: The Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes dated 11 March 2021 were noted.

C/106/2020

NORTHERN IRELAND HOUSING COUNCIL, ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS 2020/21

Read: Correspondence dated 1 April 2021 from the Northern Ireland Housing Council re: Attendance at meetings 2020/21 (Copy circulated)

Agreed: The correspondence was noted.

In response for an update from Councillor Savage regarding the progression of forthcoming 2nd Housing Needs Symposium, Mr Mallon confirmed a number of meetings of the working group established to assist with the rollout of the housing symposium in late October/ early November had taken place, with further workshops to be held to agree the agenda and line up.

Councillor Savage advised Lou Macari, a former Celtic player and Stoke on Trent Manager had intimated that he would be happy to share his housing experience as a high-profile person involved on helping homeless people with sleeping pods.

C/107/2021

RESPONSE FROM MINISTER OF HEALTH RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/091/2021, COMMITMENT TO THE RETENTION AND EXPANSION OF DAISY HILL HOSPITAL, NEWRY AND TO DOWNE HOSPITAL, DOWNPATRICK

Read: Correspondence dated 19 April 2021 from the Minister of Health re: C/091/2021, Commitment to the retention and expansion of Daisy Hill Hospital, Newry and to Downe Hospital, Downpatrick. (Copy circulated)

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Councillors Walker, Hanlon, Sharvin and Owen voiced their disappointment at the correspondence received from the Minister of Health and that he would not meet a delegation from the Council's Health Working Group.

Councillor Hanlon proposed Council write back to Minister of Health and ask him to reconsider. Councillor Sharvin seconded the proposal adding that Council should ask the Minister to identify a date and time that does suit him to meet.

C/109/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – DIGITAL POVERTY

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

“This Council acknowledges that blended learning is likely to be with us for some time to come due to the graduated easing of restrictions relating to the Pandemic.

Council recognises that Digital Poverty needs to be urgently addressed across our district and throughout the North in order to tackle growing inequalities in education with children in many families unable to access online learning due to lack of computers in the home and lack of access to adequate broadband.

Council agrees to set up a Working Group to work with local schools, community groups, youth organisations and sports clubs to devise a community-based short-term initiative to assist families to gain access to online learning and adequate broadband.

Council calls for a Digital Poverty Task Force to be set up within the NI Executive to ensure that no child loses out in their education due to lack of access to a computer or broadband and requests that the Council Chief Executive writes to the Education Minister and the Executive Office outlining the Council’s call for a Digital Poverty Taskforce to be established.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Gallagher.

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

C/110/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – COUNCIL COMMITTEE

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

“I refer to recent announcements by the Government on its proposals to provide additional funding to Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales totalling 800m. This funding is to replace lost EU funding and will target Town/ City Centre regeneration etc. I am calling on the Council to set up a committee including Councillors, Senior Management Officers, Chambers of Commerce, Newry Bid, Voluntary Sector etc to develop an innovative strategy and action plan to maximise our opportunities with this substantial pot of money. I also request that the Council’s Number 1 priority ie; ‘The People’s Park’ on the Albert Basin site be seriously considered as a priority for this funding.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Gibbons.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

C/111/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – DENTAL SERVICES DURING COVID 19 PANDEMIC

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

“That this Council notes the severe impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on people and communities across our district; offers our thanks and support to health service workers who have gone the extra mile to keep our communities safe; congratulates

the Minister for Health on the successful implementation of the vaccination programme; expresses concern at the delay and disruption to routine health and dental services during the pandemic; further notes that women who have given birth have not been able to access the promise of free dental care in pregnancy and the 12 months following delivery of their child due to the cessation of dental services and; agrees to write to the Minister of Health asking him to explore an extension to the 12 month free dental care period for mothers who have given birth during the Covid-19 pandemic”.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor McKevitt paid tribute to all the health care workers and people in the area who had shown their true colours in response to the Covid 19 pandemic and she commended Minister Swann on the successful implementation of the vaccine programme roll out. Councillor McKevitt expressed concern that due to the disruption of dental services, expectant mothers would lose the opportunity of free dental care which would otherwise be available to them during pregnancy and for 12 months following the birth of their child. Councillor McKevitt referred to the arrangement that had been put in place for MOT / vehicle testing, whereby Temporary Exemption Certificates had been granted and said the Maternity Exemption Certificate should be extended to ensure expectant mothers did not lose out and she stressed the importance of dental care.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor Sharvin thanked Councillor McKevitt for bringing forward the Motion and said he acknowledged the challenges faced by expectant mothers and the limited access to dental care throughout the Covid pandemic.

Councillor Finnegan expressed support for the Motion and said some of her female constituents had been forced to seek private dental care during the Covid pandemic and said that Nicola Brogan MLA and Órfhlaith Begley MP had jointly written to the Health Minister requesting an extension to the NHS dental care funding for pregnant women.

Councillor Taylor expressed support for the Motion saying his wife had recently benefitted from it.

Councillor Walker expressed support for the Motion and asked if Councillor McKevitt would accept an amendment to the proposal to include writing to the other 10 Councils seeking their support for the Motion.

Councillor McKevitt said she would be happy to include this in the Motion.

Councillor McMurray expressed support for the Motion, saying it was a very worthwhile Motion and said he was aware of the difficulties that had been faced by dentists throughout the pandemic.

In summing up, Councillor McKevitt thanked colleagues for their support for the Motion and said it was important to start to address the issues that pregnant women had faced during the pandemic.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McKevitt, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, that this Council notes the severe impact that the Covid-19 crisis has had on people and communities across our district; offers our thanks and support to health service workers who have gone the extra mile to keep our communities safe; congratulates the Minister for Health on the successful implementation of the vaccination programme; expresses concern at the delay and disruption to routine health and dental services during the pandemic; further notes that women who have given birth have not been able to

access the promise of free dental care in pregnancy and the 12 months following delivery of their child due to the cessation of dental services and; agrees to write to the Minister of Health asking him to explore an extension to the 12 month free dental care period for mothers who have given birth during the Covid-19 pandemic period.

This Council to also write to the other 10 Councils seeking their support for the Motion.

C/112/2021

NOTICE OF MOTION – ACCESSING HEALTHCARE SERVICES

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

“This Council believes that any member of the public accessing healthcare services is entitled to do so free of abuse, fear and intimidation and will write to both the Health Minister and the Justice Minister asking them to take steps to ensure this.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Magennis.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Howell said it was very important to stress this Motion was not about abortion and everyone had the right to protest and freedom of choice, however she said recent protests at the entrance to health care sites had had major repercussions for a range of people across the community.

Councillor Howell acknowledged the issue was a highly sensitive one and said some of the slogans and images displayed by protesters were very upsetting to many people, including the vulnerable, children and young people. She said numerous staff members from across various health care sites had contacted Sinn Féin elected representatives and constituency offices in recent weeks raising concern about the impact the protests were having both on them and on patients attending the health care sites for various inpatient and outpatient appointments.

Councillor Howell stated she had been contacted by women who had been through the traumatic experience of miscarriage and still birth and were having to face the images as they attended follow up appointments, a process they found extremely distressing and painful. She stated this was just a snapshot of the feelings of the wider community in the district and that staff, patients, families and members of the public had all expressed serious concerns around these protests being allowed to take place at the entrance to health care sites.

Councillor Howell asked that Council write to both the Health and Justice Ministers urging them to work together to put in place exclusion zones, or safe zones to protect everyone attending and accessing healthcare without fear, abuse or intimidation.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor Magennis said she wished to stress the Motion was not about abortion and that peoples’ right to vote and freedom of choice was paramount, and she reiterated the issues highlighted by Councillor Howell.

Councillor Magennis said Liz Kimmins MLA had written to both the Health Minister and the Justice Minister urging them to work together to put in place exclusion / safe zones, and the Ministers’ had responded positively to Ms Kimmins letter, however Councillor Magennis said this issue needed to be progressed urgently as the protests were on-going and causing significant distress to many people.

Councillor Magennis said she recognised it was an extremely sensitive issue for all involved, however, it was very important the concerns from constituents were addressed when it was adversely affecting their mental health and well-being.

The DUP, SDLP, UUP and Alliance parties all expressed their support for the Motion, saying whilst they recognised peoples' right to protest, it should be done in a respectful manner and that people should be free to attend health care appointments without being harassed.

Councillor Owen said the imagery on the banners was very graphic and upsetting and referred to the campaigns carried out by Department for Infrastructure saying the images and graphics used in their campaigns had to be formerly approved by Ofcom to ensure their suitability and she said there was no form of moderating conducted on the banners used by the protesters at the health care sites and consequently this resulted in upset and distress for a lot of people.

In summing up, Councillor Howell thanked Members for their support and said everyone should be free to attend medical appointments without feeling intimidated and she said she hoped safe zones would be put in place in the near future.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Magennis this Council believes that any member of the public accessing healthcare services is entitled to do so free of abuse, fear and intimidation and will write to both the Health Minister and the Justice Minister asking them to take steps to ensure this.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.30pm

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 June 2021.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

