

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 1 August 2022 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber

In the Chair:

Councillor M Savage

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor R Burgess
Councillor C Enright	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor A McMurray	Councillor K Owen
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor

In attendance via Teams

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor C Casey
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor A Finnegan	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor G Malone
Councillor R Mulgrew	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor G O'Hare	Councillor B Ó Muirí
Councillor H Reilly	

Officials in attendance in Chamber:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism
Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/128/2022

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Curran, Gallagher, Howell, Magennis, McKeivitt, Rice, Stokes, Tinnelly, Trainor and Walker.

The Chairperson passed on condolences of Council to the family and colleagues of former Down Councillor and member of the DUP, Mr John Finlay.

The Chairperson paid tribute to and passed on condolences to colleagues in the Ulster Unionist Party on the passing of Lord Trimble who had sadly passed away. He extended the sympathies of the Council to Lord Trimble's wife Daphne, children, grandchildren, party colleagues and friends at this sad time.

Councillors Taylor, Hanna, McMurray, Sharvin and Ó Muirí paid tribute to and joined in passing on deepest condolences to the families of John Finlay and Lord Trimble on behalf of their respective Parties.

The Chairperson congratulated Ethan O'Kane and Rachel Carville from Cathal Fegan's School of Taekwon-Do on securing the title of world champions in the Netherlands..

The Chairperson congratulated Killeavy Minor Ladies on securing the Armagh Division 3 title.

The Chairperson passed on condolences of all at Council to Councillor Rice on the passing of his grandmother.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2022

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 4 July 2022 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 4 July 2022 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING

C/131/2022 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2022

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 4 July 2022 (copy circulated).

C/122/2022: Minutes of Neighbourhood Services Committee Meeting held on 22 June 2022

Councillor McAteer enquired about an update in relation to the new vehicle bin lorry fleet.

The Chief Executive confirmed Mr Cassells would email Members with a detailed briefing on expected timings of the fleet.

Mr Cassells informed Members early indications were that the first refuse collection vehicles were due to arrive early September 2022. He added there was an expectation of a lead in time of 1 year from time of order with some mechanical street sweeping vehicles to be delivered imminently.

Councillors Hanna and Reilly voiced concerns about bin collection service and were advised to raise any issues with Mr Cassells directly.

The Chairperson added that a report would be presented to the Sustainability and Environment Committee on how Mr Cassells planned to improve the service and encouraged Members to attend that meeting with any concerns they may have.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to formally welcome Mr Cassells to Council and wished him well in his new role.

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 4 July 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Burgess.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/132/2022 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 JULY 2022

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 19 July 2022 (copy circulated).

Councillor Sharvin raised concerns at there not being a quorum at the Audit Committee Meeting and the Chairperson encouraged Members to attend as very important issues were considered by the Committee.

Agreed: The Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 19 July 2022 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Murphy.

C/133/2022 **PLANNING MINUTES**

Read: Extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 29 June 2022. (Copy circulated)

Noted: **The extract from the Planning Committee Minutes of Meeting held on 29 June 2022 was noted on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor McEvoy.**

CONFERENCES

C/134/2022 **NATIONAL ENERGY ACTION (NEA) ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION**

Read: National Energy Action Annual Conference and Exhibition from Monday 19th September to Wednesday 21st September 2022 - Birmingham Conference and Events Centre, Holiday Inn, Birmingham.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Owen that Councillors Reilly and Andrews attend the National Energy Action Annual Conference and Exhibition.**

C/135/2022 **NILGA REGIONAL PROGRAMME**

Read: NILGA Regional Programme August 2022 to January 2023.

Councillors Burgess and Andrews encouraged Members to attend events contained within the programme.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Burgess that any Councillors wishing to attend events contained within the NILGA Regional Programme for August 2022 to January 2023 contact Democratic Services Department.**

NOTICES OF MOTION

C/136/2022 NOTICE OF MOTION – CRISIS WITHIN PRIVATE RENTED SECTOR

The following Notice of Motion was received from Councillor Devlin:

"This Council calls on the Communities Minister to immediately act and assist with the crisis within the Private rented sector, which is particularly affecting our tourist towns and villages. That consideration be given to the reintroduction of the "Living Over the Shops Scheme" or other such initiatives that would allow for vacant properties to be brought back to life for private rental."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Devlin spoke at length of the housing crisis right across the District and how it had been magnified in recent months. She referred to Newcastle as an example and how it was the same for many of towns and villages with a marked increase in families seeking alternative accommodation as landlords had decided to sell property or opt for the holiday rental market. The supply of long term private rental had dried up significantly and families who lived in Newcastle, for example their whole life were facing a situation where they did not know where they would be in a few months' time and were unsure if their children would be able to return to their same school come September.

Councillor Devlin highlighted concerns regarding the long term viability of schools, clubs etc if private rented properties were being retained for tourists. She added that whilst she fully supported tourism and was certainly not discouraging tourism the Communities Minister must intervene and provide alternative options or schemes to deal with the housing crisis. More affordable and social housing was required, as well as schemes that tackled the dereliction in many towns and villages, as these were properties which could be utilised by families seeking accommodation.

Councillor Devlin pointed out that whilst the motion mentioned the former 'Living over the Shops Scheme' she was not focusing on this one scheme but rather calling for innovative solutions to tackle what was already a disastrous situation and one which was set to worsen greatly. She added that whilst she appreciated there was no Executive the Communities Minister had a duty to act to assist these local families who are very much in need.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Andrews stated it was relevant especially in the times we found ourselves in and that action was now needed to avert more homelessness as a result of what was happening. He added that Housing Executive and Housing Association and other such organisations should be lobbying for more funding to deal with the housing shortage.

Councillor Ó Muirí voiced support for the motion commenting that all Members acknowledged the identified need for housing right across the District especially in bigger towns and the City of Newry.

Councillor Ó Muirí proposed an amendment that a report be brought back on planning considerations on schemes such as *the* "Living Over the Shops Scheme" mentioned in the motion and that the report include the following:

- Collate a list through the Department of Communities of schemes that would assist with the motions intention.
- What public land exists as to enable the most to be made of surplus assets for any potential in increasing housing stock within the District.

The Chief Executive advised she was happy to bring back a report and would need to establish which relevant Committee would present it.

The Chairperson welcomed the motion and hoped that previous papers and the work of Housing Conferences could be built upon.

Councillors Hanna, McMurray and Taylor on behalf of their parties all voiced support for the motion.

Councillor McAteer referred to a previous scheme closed in 2009 due to budgetary pressure and never since then had there been as much pressure than now and that the motion was very timely with approx. 25% of vacancies within town centres. He referred to Councillor Ó Muirí's suggestion of looking at vacant space and suggested Council may have enough work already done within the Local Development Plan to put a paper to the Minister for Communities.

Councillor Devlin thanked Members for their support and advised she was happy to accept Councillor Ó Muirí's amendment for a paper to be returned to Committee with the current schemes that exist and were available at present, and an audit of public land at present within the District, but that Council should write now and register concerns to the Minister for Communities.

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Andrews that Council calls on the Communities Minister to immediately act and assist with the crisis within the Private rented sector, which is particularly affecting our tourist towns and villages. That consideration be given to the reintroduction of the "Living Over the Shops Scheme" or other such initiatives that would allow for vacant properties to be brought back to life for private rental.

It was also agreed that that a report be brought back on planning considerations on schemes such as the "Living Over the Shops Scheme" mentioned in the motion and that the report include the following:

- **Collate a list through the Department of Communities of schemes that would assist with the motions intention.**

- **What public land exists as to enable the most to be made of surplus assets for any potential in increasing housing stock within the District.**

C/137/2022 NOTICE OF MOTION – AMENITY SITE HEIGHT RESTRICTIONS

The following Notice of Motion was received from Councillor Hanna:

"Council has installed height restriction on entry into amenity sites which prevents higher vehicles/vans excessing amenity sites. Height restrictions should be removed immediately as they prevent a lot of rate payers disposing of domestic waste at the sites".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 18.39pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 5 September 2022.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive