

## **NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**NMD/C/**

---

### **Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 July 2023 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber**

---

**In the Chair:** Councillor V Harte

**In attendance in Chamber:**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor P Campbell
Councillor C Enright	Councillor D Finn
Councillor A Finnegan	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor T Kelly	Councillor C King
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor A McMurray	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor M Savage
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor J Truesdale

**In attendance via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	

**Officials in attendance  
in Chamber:**

Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and  
Environment  
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and  
Tourism  
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services  
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager  
(Acting)  
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

### **C/118/2023      APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, Devlin, Howell, Lewis, K Murphy, Taylor and Tinnelly and Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive.

The Chairperson congratulated Newry All Stars Special Olympics Club on their brilliant wins at recent games in Berlin including Dearbhail Savage and her partner Chloe Hillen who won silver for golf and Leah Fegan on winning 2 bronze medals and a 5<sup>th</sup> place

ribbon for equestrian. The Chairperson advised she had the pleasure of meeting the club before they left for the games and spent an enjoyable evening with them.

The Chairperson congratulated Cathal Fegan Schools of Taekwon-do on their success at the 2023 Open European Taekwon-do Championships where they obtained 26 gold medals, over 20 silver medals and 40 bronze medals.

A huge well done was extended to young Alfie Pentony from Newry who had won the Spirit of Northern Ireland Award. The Chairperson spoke of how Alfie was an inspirational young boy who suffered from Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy and that he and his family were dedicated to raising awareness and funding for research to find a cure for this life limiting disease.

**C/119/2023      DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/120/2023      ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Savage.**

**COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING**

**C/121/2023      MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

**C/122/2023      MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 JUNE 2023**

Read:                      Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:                      The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Bowsie.**

## **COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION**

### **C/123/2023          MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 JUNE 2023**

Read:                                  Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 June 2023 (copy circulated).

#### *ERT/073/2023 – Ballykinlar Hut Relocation*

Councillor Hanna enquired if Council would consider the possibility of an interested party from Saintfield having the opportunity to re-erect and display the Ballykinlar Hut rather than have it put into storage.

Mr Mallon said he would be happy to have discussions with the individual.

**Agreed:                                  The Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Quinn.**

Read:                                  Minutes of Appeal Hearing re: Application for Entertainments Licence by Quinn’s Bar, Newcastle held on Monday 12 June 2023.

**Agreed:                                  The Minutes of Appeal Hearing re: Application for Entertainments Licence by Quinn’s Bar, Newcastle held on Monday 12 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Bowsie.**

### **C/124/2023          MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JUNE 2023**

Read:                                  Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 June 2023 (copy circulated).

#### *SPR/063/2023: Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Terms of Reference*

Councillor Byrne spoke of how he had raised concerns regarding the number of reports being considered in-committee and acknowledged officers were guided by legislation but asked if Senior Management Team could provide a response for Members.

Mrs Kelly confirmed the matter was being considered the Senior Management Team with a report to be presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August.

**Agreed:                                  The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the**

**proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers.**

**C/125/2023**

**MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 2023**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 June 2023 (copy circulated).

*AHC/058/2023: Financial Assistance*

Councillor Sharvin referred to the financial assistance award under major and minor sports capital grants advising he had been contacted by a club who had met with Council officials for the pre application process and told they met the criteria and then acquired consultants etc only to be told once they had applied that they did not meet the criteria. He asked Council officials to review the information given to applicants to avoid clubs like this one incurring costs.

Councillor Kelly echoed Councillor Sharvin's comments and enquired when the process would reopen and if feedback could be provided directly to applicants.

Mr Mallon advised he was happy to provide more detail after the meeting.

Councillor Sharvin and Hanlon both spoke of their concerns regarding dumping of materials for a bonfire at the Mount Crescent Car Park in Downpatrick and asked that PCSP get in touch with Downpatrick DEA Councillors as soon as possible.

Mr Mallon confirmed he would speak with the PCSP team and ask them to contact the DEA Councillors.

**Agreed: The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Finnegan.**

**C/126/2023**

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 JUNE 2023**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2023 (copy circulated).

**Agreed: The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 June 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Savage.**

**C/127/2023**      **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues to be considered.

**C/128/2023**      **AMENDMENT TO STANDING ORDERS**

Read:                      Report dated 3 July 2023 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive presented by Ms Taggart, Democratic Services Manager regarding an amendment to Standing Orders. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a request for training on Standing Orders from Councillor Hanlon, Ms Taggart confirmed she was in the process of rolling out training and stressed the importance of all members attending.

Councillor Byrne asked that as part of the training the pathway for motions through Council be included in the training. Ms Taggart confirmed that she was working with Mrs Kelly on that matter with a report to be presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in August.

**Agreed:**                      **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McEvoy to adopt the amendment to Standing Orders to reflect the changing title of Neighbourhood Services Committee to Sustainability & Environment Committee.**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

**C/129/2023**      **RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE RE: C/084/2023: EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – FIXED BRIDGE DESIGN FOR NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD**  
**(Copy circulated)**

Read:                      Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure regarding the fixed bridge design for Newry Southern Relief Road dated 19 April 2023.

Councillor Savage voiced his disappointment at the response received to the strongly worded letter sent from Council outlining concerns for the bridge design in Newry and spoke at length about the need for a lifting bridge solution for the oldest navigational canal in Newry and how there was an obligation to look beyond short term potential.

Councillor Savage proposed Council write to the Permanent Secretary to ask if engagement could be sought from the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach for an engineering solution to allow access for tall ships and vessels to the Newry Canal and ask what other potential engineering opportunities were there aside from a lifting bridge and if they had all been explored and exhausted.

Councillor Savage further proposed that Council write to the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to ask if there was a possibility of bridging the gap in funding for the project.

Councillor McAteer seconded Councillor Savage's proposal.

Councillor King stated he shared frustration at the response received and the intention to proceed with the fixed bridge design.

Councillor McMurray echoed the sentiments of both Councillors Savage and King and voiced support for the canal to be navigational for tall ships.

Councillor Hanna voiced concern at any delay to the Southern Relief Road and asked that it be enquired of the Permanent Secretary if any change to the bridge design would delay the delivery of the Southern Relief Road.

**Agreed: It was agreed to note the correspondence received from Department for Infrastructure regarding the fixed bridge design for Newry Southern Relief Road dated 19 April 2023.**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Council write to the Permanent Secretary to ask if engagement could be sought from the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach for an engineering solution to allow access for tall ships and vessels to the Newry Canal and ask what other potential engineering opportunities were there aside from a lifting bridge and if they had all been explored and exhausted ; and that Council write to the Shared Island Unit in the Department of the Taoiseach to ask if there was a possibility of bridging the gap in funding for the project.**

**C/130/2023**

**RESPONSE FROM SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/075/2023 – VOTING AGE REDUCTION**

Read: Email from the office of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland regarding Notice of Motion C/075/2023, Voting Age Reduction.  
**(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Byrne voiced his disappointment at the response received from the NI Office and the way it was written simply stating that their position remained unchanged.

Councillor Byrne stated there were a number of speeches made on the night regarding changes and they needed to be addressed.

Councillor Quinn also voiced concern at the unsatisfactory response received and proposed Council write back on the matter.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed to note the correspondence received from Secretary of State regarding Notice of Motion C/075/2023, Voting Age Reduction and to write indicating the Council's disappointment at the unsatisfactory response received.**

**C/131/2023** **NOTICE OF MOTION – DISPOSABLE BARBEQUES**

The following motion was received from Councillor Clarke:

*"Council notes with concern the damage caused by the irresponsible use of disposable barbecues to some council facilities as well as to vulnerable environmental areas; In response to the situation, Council should explore options to reduce the use of disposable barbecues in all Council facilities and on Council land which is deemed to be environmentally sensitive; Council should also seek to develop an awareness programme in partnership with relevant stakeholders to highlight the potential harm that disposable barbecues can cause to sensitive environmental areas".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

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

**C/132/2023** **NOTICE OF MOTION – SCHOOLS SPORTS PROGRAMME**

The following motion was received from Councillor Campbell:

*"This Council opposes the recent decision taken by the Department of Education to end the funding for the Primary School Sports Programme in response to Tory budget cuts; Recognises the negative impact this will have on the physical and emotional well-being of thousands of children and young people across the district; Agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, outlining this Councils opposition to these funding cuts and to urge him to reconsider this proposal in advance of the new school term in the Autumn".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Brennan.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Campbell stated that as someone who had volunteered in the local sporting community for over 15 years, it was deeply concerning that the funding for the primary schools' sports programme was to be cut. It was a vital sports programme delivered by GAA and IFA coaches to over 200 schools and over 24,000 children across the north with many schools within the District being set to miss out.

Members were advised dedicated coaches delivered much-needed physical education lessons and this ensured pupils were getting some form of physical activity and was proven to help children and young people both physically and mentally and was essential in supporting their overall wellbeing.

Councillor Campbell stated it was another consequence of immoral and indefensible Tory cuts that had decimated public services and was punishing children and young people. He stated the British government must end the cycle of cuts and properly invest in the education system and the Executive to be established now was also needed so local parties could support children and young people. At Council level, there was a need to demonstrate opposition to this decision and collectively urge Department of Education officials to rethink this decision.

Councillor Sharvin voiced support for the motion on behalf of SDLP and spoke of the great programme that was offered. He pointed out that the cuts went against the Council's own corporate objective of an active and healthy society. He spoke of how the programme provided extra PE classes and lessons in athletics, dance, games, gymnastics as well as soccer and GAA and provided advice to teachers. Councillor Sharvin stated it was vital the programme was reinstated and funded.

Councillor Kelly echoed the comments from Councillors Campbell and Sharvin and spoke of how cuts such as this were due to the lack of Stormont Executive.

Councillor Jackson voiced support for the motion.

Councillor Campbell thanked Members for their support.

**Agreed:**                    **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Brennan that Council oppose the recent decision taken by the Department of Education to end the funding for the Primary School Sports Programme in response to Tory budget cuts; Recognises the negative impact this will have on the physical and emotional well-being of thousands of children and young people across the district; Agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education, outlining this Councils opposition to these funding cuts and to urge him to reconsider this proposal in advance of the new school term in the Autumn.**

### **C/133/2023            NOTICE OF MOTION – STUDY OF LANGUAGES**

The following motion was received from Councillor O'Hare:

*"This Council notes with concern the British Council's Language Trends 2023 report which showed that pupils in the north are required to learn languages less than those in any other country in Europe;  
Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person's development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his*



*officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here”.*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

In presenting the motion, Councillor O’Hare referred to the British Council’s recent report which stated that the north had the shortest curriculum time for compulsory language learning of anywhere on the continent of Europe. She spoke of how learning different languages brought with it a range of cognitive and social benefits.

Councillor O’Hare added that in recent years, the direction of travel was fixed towards the modern economy and equipping young people with the skills necessary to succeed in a world of technology and the report confirmed recent findings that languages played a significant role in international trade and that investment in languages had huge financial benefits.

Members were informed the report also found young people often did not see the value of languages for their future career, or the importance of languages in the global workplace and Councillor O’Hare said that had to change.

She added Newry, Mourne and Down was an ever diversifying and multi-cultural District and it was up to policy makers to take on board these concerns and look at new ways in which language learning could be promoted and enhanced from primary level onwards. In the absence of a functioning Assembly and Executive, it was important platforms and forums such as Council register concerns and called on fellow members to support the motion.

In thanking Councillor O’Hare for bringing the motion forward Councillor Bowsie proposed the following amendment:

*"This Council notes with concern the British Council’s Language Trends 2023 report which states that ‘Northern Ireland has the shortest time for compulsory language learning of any country in the continent of Europe’; Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person’s development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here”.*

Councillor O’Hare accepted Councillor Bowsie’s amendment.

Councillors Enright and Byrne spoke in support of the motion and the amendment.

Councillor O’Hare thanked Members for their support.

**Agreed:                    It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O’Hare seconded by Councillor Mathers that Council notes with concern the British Council’s Language Trends 2023 report which states that ‘Northern Ireland has the shortest time for compulsory language learning of any country in**

**the continent of Europe’; Council recognises the range of benefits which learning languages can have to a young person’s development; and agrees, in the absence of an Education Minister, to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Education and encourage him and his officials to consider the report and to explore options which would increase the learning of languages in schools here.**

**C/134/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – LEISURE CENTRES**

The following motion was received from Councillor Hanlon:

*"This Council recognises that in the aftermath of Covid our local leisure facilities & services across the district are experiencing a number of significant challenges; Notes that residents and service users are not getting the services or access to the facilities that they are entitled to; And calls for an urgent and robust review of the planning; management; and delivery of Newry, Mourne & Down’s leisure services to be undertaken in order to sustain an operation model that meets the needs of service users, ratepayers, and supports council staff in their ability to deliver first class services".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

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

**C/135/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – ACCEPTING ELECTRONIC COPIES OF VALID INSURANCE CERTIFICATES FOR THE PURPOSES OF CAR TAXATION THROUGHOUT NORTHERN IRELAND POST OFFICES**

The following motion was received from Councillor Lee-Surginor:

*"The practice of requiring paper copies of insurance certificates for car taxation purposes at Northern Ireland Post Offices, is considered obsolete and archaic, creating unnecessary burdens on individuals and organisations in our jurisdiction, when presentation of electronic copies are just as valid, efficient and more practical. I call on this council, in recognising the advantages of electronic documentations and best practice in Great Britain, proposes the following actions: This Council will contact other Northern Ireland councils, seeking their agreement that electronic copies of valid car insurance certificates or cover notes, should be accepted at Northern Ireland Post Offices. Additionally, a letter will be drafted to the Department of Infrastructure Permanent Secretary; to implement administrative changes, allowing the acceptance of electronic insurance certificates or cover notes, at all Northern Ireland Post Offices for car taxation purposes".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor McMurray.

Councillor Lee-Surginor stated that for many it was a simple process when they get a new car to present insurance papers, MOT papers and choose how long they wish to tax it for and how to pay. However, for some people in our society, it was not that straightforward.

Councillor Lee-Surginor explained the motion was brought forward following problems met by an older gentleman who had been denied a simple service at his local post office because he did not have a printout of his car insurance. He explained it had been observed that in Great Britain, it wasn't a requirement. Even though every registered car with a valid car insurance was entered into a central database that could be accessed to confirm if a car had valid car insurance or not. Post Offices in Northern Ireland used the same infrastructure as those in GB. He stated it was time Northern Ireland car taxation services were more aligned with Great Britain's to make car taxation easier for everyone that lived in Northern Ireland.

During discussion Councillors Hanna, Hanlon and McAteer questioned the motion as processes were in place to enable cars to be taxed easily online and without the need to produce hard copy documents. It was acknowledged by Members that it may be a requirement if showing change of ownership of a vehicle for the first time.

Despite this Members did however support the motion. Councillor Hanlon commented that her party were happy to support if it was restrictive for people who were elderly, vulnerable and needed support.

Councillor Lee-Surginor thanked Members for their comments and advised the motion was being presented to make life easier for everyone.

The motion was put to a vote by way of a show of hands and voting was as follows:

FOR:	28
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	4

The motion was carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor McMurray that the practice of requiring paper copies of insurance certificates for car taxation purposes at Northern Ireland Post Offices, is considered obsolete and archaic, creating unnecessary burdens on individuals and organisations in our jurisdiction, when presentation of electronic copies are just as valid, efficient and more practical. I call on this council, in recognising the advantages of electronic documentations and best practice in Great Britain, proposes the following actions: This Council will contact other Northern Ireland councils, seeking their agreement that electronic copies of valid car insurance certificates or cover notes, should be**

**accepted at Northern Ireland Post Offices. Additionally, a letter will be drafted to the Department of Infrastructure Permanent Secretary; to implement administrative changes, allowing the acceptance of electronic insurance certificates or cover notes, at all Northern Ireland Post Offices for car taxation purposes”.**

**C/136/2023**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – UNIVERSITY GRADUATIONS**

The Chairperson advised the motion had not been withdrawn from the agenda as previously advised.

The following motion received from Councillor Rice had been amended to read as follows:

*"This Council notes recent concerning reports that many university students may not be able to graduate and receive their qualifications as normal this summer; Council recognises that this is an issue for many students across this district who have worked hard over a number of years in their respective universities; Calls on Ulster University to use their influence to urge the Universities and Colleges Employer Association (UCEA) to engage constructively with workers on demands for fair pay and working conditions, fair pensions and an end to casualisation; and further calls on the University to end the uncertainty for the students in relation to their Grades and their Graduation”.*

The motion was seconded by Councillor King.

In presenting the motion Councillor Rice welcomed that the issues had been resolved with staff and unions at Queens University, with all marking to be completed by 7th August 2023. This had been a welcoming development for students and staff, ending a period of incredible uncertainty and confusion however in Ulster University the issue was still ongoing.

Councillor Rice called on Ulster University to engage similarly with the unions as their counterparts in Queens University. He added academic staff in local institutions performed a vital service for students and were invaluable to the economic and social wellbeing of society and it was paramount that they were valued and listened to. Students and staff needed reassurances and senior management were implored to address these long standing issues as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Rice stated local universities must use their influence within Universities UK to encourage meaningful negotiations in order to bring about a fair and acceptable resolution.

In seconding the motion, Councillor King commented how over the past few weeks, Members had seen how frustrating this whole ordeal had been for students, especially those who were left in limbo regarding their graduation and future plans and it was

recognised this could not be left at the door of University Staff, as they have been forced into taking industrial action after a long campaign for better working conditions. Councillor King implored University Management to do everything they could to resolve the current impasse.

Councillor Kelly voiced support for the motion.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor King "This Council notes recent concerning reports that many university students may not be able to graduate and receive their qualifications as normal this summer; Council recognises that this is an issue for many students across this district who have worked hard over a number of years in their respective universities; Calls on Ulster University to use their influence to urge the Universities and Colleges Employer Association (UCEA) to engage constructively with workers on demands for fair pay and working conditions, fair pensions and an end to casualisation; and further calls on the University to end the uncertainty for the students in relation to their Grades and their Graduation".**

### **C/137/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – SEASONAL WORKERS**

The following motion was received from Councillor Byrne:

*"This Council recognises the acute pressures that apple and mushroom producers are currently under as a consequence of the severe shortage of seasonal workers.*

*This Council calls on the UK Government to relax immigration rules to allow for visas for seasonal agriculture workers to ensure that food can be fully harvested and to prevent the collapse of the horticulture industry as a consequence of the inability to acquire necessary workers".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Councillor Byrne spoke at length about the perilous position the food and vegetable industry was facing particularly mushroom growers due to labour shortages and the discrepancies that now existed north and south as a result of Brexit.

Members were advised of the following key points; the mushroom industry in Northern Ireland which was particularly at risk accounted for 40% horticultural output with the sector estimated to be worth £65m per annum, providing 10% of mushrooms across the UK. There were over 1,000 people employed in the mushroom supply chain including those in transportation, packaging, compost and casing manufacture, equipment supply and manufacture and marketing. Councillor Byrne advised the industry had approximately 95% of people employed in the sector that come from EU member states and outlined the reasons for this.

Councillor Byrne explained that what was unique to Northern Ireland was its shared border with an EU member state and the comparative advantage it provides to the ROI. The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme (SAWS) enabled fruit and vegetable growers to employ migrant workers as seasonal workers for up to six months at a time. With a minimum training time of 16 weeks, growers in Northern Ireland could expect a maximum of three months efficient output. This impacted on production levels and the efficiency of operations, and when considered against the context of the advantages the Republic of Ireland enjoy, this made the NI product less competitive.

Members were informed many workers were travelling south of the border after the expiry of their visa. As an EU member state, the Republic of Ireland benefited from freedom of movement as well as more favourable visa conditions for migrants with non-domestic workers able to stay for up to five years.

Councillor Byrne advised he had visited a mushroom farm in Mayobridge and listened to the problems being faced.

In seconding the motion Councillor Hanlon spoke of how it was such an important issue and how the Sinn Féin MP team had recently met with mushroom farmers to provide support to them and how it was extremely worrying that immigration rules were restricting seasonal workers from accessing work.

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

Councillor Hanna proposed an amendment to the motion to include the fishing industry. Councillor Jackson seconded the proposed amendment.

In understanding the sentiment of Councillor Hanna's amendment, Councillor Byrne did not wish to take away the focus from the horticulture industry which was on the brink of collapse and whilst he did not accept the amendment to the motion he agreed to include the shortage of workers within the fishing industry within the wording of the correspondence to be sent.

**Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon that Council recognises the acute pressures that apple and mushroom producers are currently under as a consequence of the severe shortage of seasonal workers. This Council calls on the UK Government to relax immigration rules to allow for visas for seasonal agriculture workers to ensure that food can be fully harvested and to prevent the collapse of the horticulture industry as a consequence of the inability to acquire necessary workers.**

## **C/138/2023      NOTICE OF MOTION – CONVERSION THERAPY**

The following motion was received from Councillors Finn & Quinn:

*"Acknowledging Council's previous agreement to oppose conversion therapy practices; expressing its disappointment that the Executive failed to act on the outlawing of this practice; expresses further dissatisfaction that the practice of conversion therapy remains legal; stands in solidarity with members of the LGBT+ community and recognising the ongoing absence of an Assembly, Executive and Ministers, this Council reaffirms its opposition to conversion therapy and support for the LGBT+ community, and will write to the Permanent Secretaries of Health, Justice and Communities to detail what work can be undertaken by their offices to prepare for the implementation of such a ban in advance of a re-established Executive".*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Quinn.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Finn spoke of how in Newry that week young people from across organisations and communities in the city had come together to host a number of events as part of youth pride and congratulated all of those involved.

Members were reminded that over two years on from a Stormont motion which rejected the practice of conversion therapy and called on the Communities Minister to bring forward legislation, progress was yet to be seen. Councillor Finn stated she believed Council had the capacity to fight to ensure that no person was subjected to this cruel and regressive practice.

Councillor Finn spoke of how conversion therapy had many forms, and in its most basic it was the practice of trying to suppress or change someone sexual identity and could often leave people with lifelong mental or physical health impacts. She said there were countless harrowing accounts from those who had been subjected to conversion therapy and how difficult it made their journey to come to terms with who they were and that she believed nobody should ever be made to feel ashamed because of who they love or who they were.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Quinn voiced disappointment at having to re-highlight this issue due to a lack of Assembly.

She spoke of how despite its name, conversion therapy was not therapy and how the practice inflicted severe pain and suffering, resulting in long-lasting psychological and physical damage. Reference was made to the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and it was noted that conversion therapy constitutes an egregious violation of rights to bodily autonomy, health and freedom of expression.

Conversion therapy was outlawed in many parts of the world and the practice had been rejected by mainstream medical and mental health organisations with evidence that it causes significant mental and physical harm with extent of the damage done by conversion therapy both unlimited, and underreported.

Councillor Quinn stated Sinn Féin condemned the practice of Conversion Therapy and what it stood for and were resolute in our opposition to homophobia, and discrimination of any type. She added that under international human rights law, the State had a duty

to protect its citizens and provide so they can live freely without interference. She stated as a person with family, friends and colleagues who identify as LGBTQ+ she found it disheartening that we were still having to discuss a person's right to be who they are.

During the debate, Councillors Lee-Surginor and Byrne spoke in support of the motion on behalf of their parties.

Councillor Jackson advised the DUP believed discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation was wrong and that everyone should be treated with respect and dignity and supported a ban on the harmful and coercive practices involved with conversion therapy. He added the party would not support any legislation which did not contain robust protection of religious freedom.

Councillor Jackson expressed concern with many practices previously promoted under the umbrella of conversion therapy including electroconvulsive therapy, forced isolation, aversion therapy, food deprivation, hormone therapy and hypnotherapy. He advised there was broad agreement on the need to ban conversion therapy but the difficulty for any legislation was actually defining what conversion therapy was. That had led to very wide-ranging legislation in other jurisdictions. The lack of a clear definition was what had delayed legislation being brought in at Westminster.

Councillor Jackson advised legislation could not realistically proceed on that basis as a clear and evidence-based definition of conversion therapy was needed and it was the lack of this, not the absence of an executive, that was the main barrier to progress and would be abstaining from the motion.

Councillor Byrne voiced disappointment at the DUP's commentary and touched on his own personal experiences and called on the DUP to engage and listen to people. The motion was put to a vote by way of a show of hands and voting was as follows:

FOR:	30
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	3

The motion was carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Quinn in acknowledging Council's previous agreement to oppose conversion therapy practices; expressing its disappointment that the Executive failed to act on the outlawing of this practice; expresses further dissatisfaction that the practice of conversion therapy remains legal; stands in solidarity with members of the LGBTQ+ community and recognising the ongoing absence of an Assembly, Executive and Ministers, this Council reaffirms its opposition to conversion therapy and support for the LGBTQ+ community, and will write to the Permanent Secretaries of**



**Health, Justice and Communities to detail what work can be undertaken by their offices to prepare for the implementation of such a ban in advance of a re-established Executive.**

**C/139/2023      EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – GLEBE HOUSE, KILCLIEF**

The Chairperson 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 Savage, seconded by Councillor Hanlon to suspend Standing orders 16.1.1 at this point in the meeting to allow for the tabling of the emergency motion.

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

**FOR:                      33**  
**AGAINST:                0**  
**ABSTENTIONS:        0**

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

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

*"Newry, Mourne and Down Council call on the Executive Office to restore funding levels to Glebe House, Kilclief which enables people of all backgrounds to explore conflict and difference within our community, to promote self-confidence and build mutual respect, tolerance, and trust through positive shared experiences.*

*The Council will write to the Permanent Secretary highlighting the impact the funding cut will have on Glebe House staff and programmes, and the wider community".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

In presenting the emergency motion Councillor Galbraith stated that with having 22yrs experience as a youth worker he saw the positive impact provisions such as Glebe House had on young people.

Members were informed funding for Glebe House was reliant on grants from the NI Executive Government Departments. Recent pressures on the Northern Ireland budget had directly impacted on the funding that Glebe House might have otherwise had and the decision by the Executive Office to not provide any funding had reduced Glebe House salary contributions by more than £69k. As a result, and regrettably, Glebe House management had proposed commencing a redundancy consultation process for all posts as the situation was unviable.

In seconding the motion Councillor Sharvin informed Members Glebe House had been providing support to all members of the community since 1975 and as someone that attended many programmes throughout his life he had experienced first-hand the great work they do. Glebe House provided for good relations, wellbeing and environmental programmes that had participants coming from across County Down and the island.

On an annual basis Glebe House has over 200 people aged from 9 to 90 involved in their programmes with a small staff team of 6 and a team of volunteers. Their work had been funded by a wide range of funders over the year, but key to this had been support from the Department of Health and the Executive Office. With the ever missing Stormont Executive and the continued budget difficulties, the key funding from the Department of Health had been halved and in the last week The Executive Office funding has gone from £90,000 to nothing. For an organisation that had given so much to the community, it now faced immediate viability and sustainability challenges.

Councillors Hanlon, Enright and Jackson voiced the support of their parties for the emergency motion.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Sharvin that Newry, Mourne and Down Council call on the Executive Office to restore funding levels to Glebe House, Kilclief which enables people of all backgrounds to explore conflict and difference within our community, to promote self-confidence and build mutual respect, tolerance, and trust through positive shared experiences.**

**The Council will write to the Permanent Secretary highlighting the impact the funding cut will have on Glebe House staff and programmes, and the wider community.**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.11pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 August 2023.

**Signed:**

---

**Chairperson**

---

**Chief Executive**

**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**RECORDED VOTE**

DATE: 3rd July 2023    VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre    MEETING: Council Meeting

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Qualified Majority Vote to Suspend Standing Orders to hear Emergency Motion – Glebe House, Kilclief

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews				1
C Bowsie	1			
J Brennan	2			
P Byrne	3			
P Campbell	4			
W Clarke	5			
L Devlin				2
C Enright	6			
D Finn	7			
A Finnegan	8			
C Galbraith	9			
M Gibbons	10			
O Hanlon	11			
G Hanna	12			
V Harte	13			
R Howell				3
J Jackson	14			
G Kearns	15			
T Kelly	16			
C King	17			
M Larkin	18			
D Lee-Surginor	19			
A Lewis				4
O Magennis	20			
A Mathers	21			
D McAteer	22			
L McEvoy	23			
A McMurray	24			
S O'Hare	25			
D Murphy	26			
K Murphy				5
S Murphy	27			
A Quinn	28			
H Reilly				
M Rice	29			
M Ruane	30			
M Savage	31			
G Sharvin	32			
D Taylor				6
J Tinnelly				7
J Truesdale	33			
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>