

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 7 August 2023 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber

In the Chair: Councillor V Harte

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor P Campbell
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor L Devlin
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 M Larkin	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor A McMurray	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Truesdale

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor M Gibbons	Councillor T Kelly
Councillor C King	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor M Savage
Councillor J Tinnelly	

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and
Environment
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and
Tourism
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:**

Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Tourism, Culture
and Events
Mrs L Dillon, Democratic Services Officer

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Howell, Magennis, D Murphy, K Murphy and Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive and Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services.

The Chairperson extended sincere sympathy to the family, friends and colleagues of the late former Councillor John McArdle. She spoke of how John played an important role representing his constituents for a number of years and placed on record her gratitude for his contribution to local politics.

Councillor Savage spoke at length and paid tribute to the late John McArdle and passed on condolences to his wife Patricia, sons Cathal and Ciaran and the wider family circle.

On behalf of Council, the Chairperson remembered Elaine Coffey, a Business Support Officer from the Downpatrick office who had sadly passed away.

Good luck was extended to all those travelling to Mullingar to compete in the various competitions at Fleadh Cheoil na hEireann including members of the Abhainn an Lagáin Ceili Band, Aislinn Fegan, Ciara Maguire, Niamh Howell and Ruairí Howell. The Chairperson advised the Senior Ceili Band Competition was the highlight of the Fleadh week and the prestigious competition was a sell out every year.

The Chairperson congratulated Evie Keown from Castlewellan on winning three gold medals at the Westfield Transplant Games in Coventry last month. Evie spent the first 14 months of her life in hospital but underwent a heart transplant in November 2019 and had never looked back.

Councillor Hanna requested the opportunity to welcome and congratulate Royal County Down on their successful achievement on hosting the Irish Golf Tournament for 2024. He spoke of the massive economic benefit it would bring to the area and how it would showcase South Down and the District.

Councillor Hanna proposed a group of Mourne DEA Councillors and Council officers be established to support in planning for this key event.

Councillor Hanna suggested records from the last time the Irish Open was held in South Down in 2015 be examined as it had been a massive success.

In seconding Councillor Hanna's proposal, Councillor Clarke spoke of his delight at the event returning to Newcastle and the legacy such an event had in showcasing the District not only on TV and those going to the golf course but also for those that revisit the area.

Councillor Clarke referred to a previous grant from the Department for Communities to enhance the town the last time the event was held in Newcastle and the importance of looking at opportunities to do that.

Councillor Devlin voiced her support for such an event to be held in Newcastle, one which was a massive accolade for the town and tourism product.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Clarke to establish a working group consisting of Mourne DEA Councillors and Council officer to support the planning for the Irish Open 2024.**

C/141/2023 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

C/142/2023 **ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2023**

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

C/143/2023 **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2023**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 (copy circulated).

C/125/2023: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 June 2023 - Bonfire at Mount Crecent Car Park, Downpatrick

Councillor Sharvin advised that despite work from Council Officers and PSNI to remove items from the site, significant damage had been caused to the Council car park.

Councillor Sharvin proposed the matter be considered by Downpatrick DEA group to prevent it happening next year.

In seconding the proposal, Councillor Hanlon confirmed the matter would also be considered by the Bonfire Sub Group.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin,

seconded by Councillor Hanlon for Downpatrick DEA group to consider bonfire at Mount Crescent Car Park, Downpatrick.

C/144/2023 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 2023**

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 3 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/145/2023 **MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 4 JULY 2023**

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 4 July 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 4 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.**

Read: Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23 (copy circulated),

Agreed: **The Audit Committee Annual Report was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin to note the Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23.**

C/146/2023 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 JULY 2023**

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 24 July 2023 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 24 July 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor McEvoy.**

C/147/2023 **PLANNING SECTION**

Read: Extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 28 June 2023 in relation to the Local Development Plan (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Campbell to note the extract from Minutes of Planning Committee held on 28 June 2023 in relation to the Local Development Plan.**

CORRESPONDENCE

C/148/2023 **EMAIL RESPONSE FROM NIO RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/075/2023 – REDUCTION IN MINIMUM VOTING AGE (Copy circulated)**

Read: Correspondence from NIO regarding a reduction in minimum voting age dated 20 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

Read: Correspondence from Scottish Government regarding a reduction in minimum voting age dated 3 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Andrews thanked Councillors for their support since presenting the motion for a reduction in minimum voting age and voiced his disappointment once again at the response received.

Councillor Andrews proposed Council write to all the political parties Conservative, Labour, Lib Dems, Greens, the Welsh, Scottish and parties represented at Council and seeking the support of Independents to do the same and copying in the 10 other Councils in Northern Ireland to write to all concerned parties calling for their commitment to reduce the voting age to 16.

Councillor Quinn seconded Councillor Andrew’s proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the email response from NIO regarding Notice of Motion C/075/2023, Reduction in Minimum Voting Age.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn to write to all the political parties Conservative, Labour, Lib Dems, Greens, the Welsh, Scottish and parties represented at Council and seeking the support of Independents to do the same and copying in the 10 other Councils in Northern Ireland to write to all concerned parties calling for their commitment to reduce the voting age to 16.

C/149/2023

RESPONSE FROM PERMANENT SECRETARY RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/084/2023 – FIXED BRIDGE DESIGN FOR NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD

Read: Correspondence from the Permanent Secretary regarding the Fixed Bridge Design from Newry Southern Relief Road dated 14 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Savage spoke at length about the campaign to secure a lifting bridge to enable tall ships to enter the Albert Basin and protect the long term future viability of opening up what was the oldest navigational canal. He expressed his disappointment at the sentiments from the Permanent Secretary and how the potential budget that could be available through the Shared Island Unit had not been explored.

Councillor Savage proposed that alongside the meeting with the Department for Infrastructure that Council invite the Shared Island Unit to come and discuss the possibility to potentially provide funding and provide detail on the Narrow Water Bridge Design.

Councillor King seconded Councillor Savage's proposal.

Councillor Finn commented that it was great to see tall ships and vessels navigating the canal recently and asked that it be put on record her party's opposition to any form of fixed bridge.

Councillor McMurray supported the comments by previous speakers and stated it was very important to have it navigational by tall ships and vessels.

Councillor Hanna expressed concern that all this was delaying the Southern Relief Road and talked at length about the need for it to proceed.

Councillor Taylor commented that he was someone who supported the concept of a lifting bridge, however the points raised by Councillor Hanna were also valid with a lot of challenges that needed to be considered going forward. He welcomed the meeting with DFI and the opportunity to question them on it.

The Chairperson pointed out there was an opportunity for Members to come along to the meeting with DFI and make their feelings known.

Councillor Finn asked that it be put on record that it was not a matter of causing delay but as a representative it was vitally important that everything was done to look into the historic preservation of the area.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the correspondence received from the Permanent

**Secretary regarding Notice of Motion C/084/2023,
Fixed Bridge Design for Newry Southern Relief Road.**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Savage,
seconded by Councillor King that alongside the
meeting with the Department for Infrastructure that
Council invite the Shared Island Unit to come and
discuss the possibility to potentially provide funding
and provide detail on the Narrow Water Bridge
Design.**

Councillor Savage left the meeting at this point – 6.33pm.

**C/150/2023 RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RE:
NOTICE OF MOTION C/132/2023 – SCHOOLS SPORTS
PROGRAMME**

Read: Correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the
Schools Sports Programme dated 17 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Campbell advised Sinn Féin was disappointed by the Department’s decision
not to maintain funding for the Schools Sports Programmes and that children’s health
and wellbeing was being adversely impacted by the loss of this additional support.

**Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon,
seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the
correspondence received from the Department of
Education regarding Notice of Motion C/132/2023,
Schools Sports Programme.**

**C/151/2023 RESPONSE FROM UNIVERSITY OF ULSTER RE: NOTICE OF
MOTION C/136/2023 – UNIVERSITY GRADUATIONS**

Read: Correspondence from the University of Ulster regarding University
Graduations dated 10 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

**Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon,
seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the
correspondence received from the University of
Ulster regarding Notice of Motion C/136/2023,
University Graduations.**

C/152/2023

**RESPONSES FROM DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE,
DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND DEPARTMENT FOR
HEALTH RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/138/2023 –
CONVERSION THERAPY**

Read: Correspondence from the Department of Justice, Department for Communities and Department for Health dated 17, 19 and July 2023 respectively. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the correspondence received from the Department of Justice, Department for Communities and Department for Health regarding Notice of Motion C/138/2023, Conversion Therapy.**

C/153/2023

**RESPONSE FROM TEO PERMANENT SECRETARY RE:
NOTICE OF MOTION C/139/2023 – GLEBE HOUSE,
KILCLIEF**

Read: Correspondence from TEO Permanent Secretary dated 25 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Campbell stated funding for the voluntary sector was becoming increasingly under pressure and the strain of budgetary restrictions was impacting the most vulnerable in society and that organisations such as Glebe House that provided valued support must be maintained and welcomed the meeting with Executive Office representatives.

Councillor Galbraith echoed Councillor Campbell's comments and expressed disappointment that the decision on funding had not changed. Staff of Glebe House had asked that it be put on record that this was another example of the impact of a non-functioning Government and extended their thanks and gratitude to Council for their support over the last number of weeks.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the correspondence received from TEO Permanent Secretary regarding Notice of Motion C/139/2023, Glebe House.**

C/154/2023 **RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE**
RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/135/2023 – ELECTRONIC
COPIES OF VALID INSURANCE

Read: Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure dated 26 July 2023. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to note the correspondence received from the Department for Infrastructure regarding Notice of Motion C/135/2023, Electronic Copies of Valid Insurance.**

C/155/2023 **NOTICE OF MOTION – HOMELESSNESS**

The following motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

"That this Council notes that the number of households with homelessness status on the social housing waiting list across NI has increased from 9,878 to 26,310 households in the last ten years, an increase of 166%; notes the enormous strain the homelessness system is under with the number of households in temporary accommodation at unprecedented levels; agrees that this council has a role to play in preventing homelessness in this district alongside other organisations and bodies in the Public, Statutory and Voluntary sectors; calls on this Council to assess how it contributes to homelessness prevention through carrying out an audit of its services and requests that Officers bring back a report detailing the homelessness prevention work currently supported as well as how the Council's community planning function can further support homelessness prevention work in the local area".

The motion was seconded by Councillor McMurray.

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

C/156/2023

NOTICE OF MOTION – NEWRY CITY PARK FUNDING APPLICATION

In response to a query raised by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Chairperson advised Mr Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism would provide a verbal update once the Motion had been read.

The following motion was received from Councillor Lee-Surginor with a slight amendment to read as follows:

*"Noting the Council has failed to deliver on previously agreed motions to submit funding bids for the Newry City Park to the Levelling up and Shared Island Fund, council will now urgently prepare a capital funding bid to the Peace plus programme for the remainder of funding required to complete all phases of the project and deliver the world class park that was promised to ratepayers; and for full Council to approve this motion as deadline for this application is **Thursday 7th September 2023 at 5pm.**"*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Enright.

Mr Mallon advised in terms of Phase 1 of the park the outline business case had been completed and submitted to the Department for Communities. He had attended and presented to the Case Work Committee of DfC on 3 July 2023, and received confirmation on 5 July that the Committee had approved the presentation and the OBC submission. This was then approved by the DfC Permanent Secretary on 6 July and forwarded to the Department of Finance for consideration and approval for funding for Phase 1.

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

Councillors Jackson and Lewis left the meeting at this point – 6.41pm.

Councillor Tinnelly left the meeting during the following item – 6.44pm

C/157/2023

NOTICE OF MOTION – BACK TO SCHOOL COSTS

The following motion was received from Councillor McEvoy:

"That this Council notes the findings of the 2023 Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) survey on Back to School costs which show 41% of parents in this jurisdiction go into debt due to back to school costs, with the largest expense for both primary and secondary school parents being uniforms; is deeply concerned that the high cost of some school uniforms is a source of financial stress for many families impacting their health and wellbeing; acknowledges that the positive attributes of school uniforms, such as promoting equality amongst pupils, is at risk of being undermined by unaffordable costs; and calls for the urgent restoration of the Assembly and Executive so that legislation can be brought forward that will require schools to have competitive

tendering processes, removes requirements for expensive branded items, and permits the use of cheaper high street alternatives.”

The motion was seconded by Councillor Finnegan.

In presenting the motion, Councillor McEvoy stated workers and families were already struggling with the cost of living with fuel costs, electricity bills and mortgage interest rates and now in the days and weeks ahead families were to be faced with soaring back-to-school costs.

Members were advised a survey on back-to-school costs from the Irish League of Credit Unions found that parents could expect to spend £837 per primary school child, a rise of £81 on last year; and £989 per secondary child, an increase of £163 on last year and that research commissioned by the Irish League of Credit Unions in 2020 found that one third of parents were plunged into debt each year when buying school uniforms.

Councillor McEvoy outlined figures relating to the average debt encountered by parents when buying uniform and how it was extremely concerning that 20% of parents said they sacrificed spending on food to cover costs. Uniforms were the top expense for parents followed by lunches, extracurricular activities, transport and books.

Councillor McEvoy pointed out the Children’s society research found that where branded items or specific suppliers were stipulated by a school, this increased costs by an average of 50% (The Children’s Society, 2020) and that branded items in the north of Ireland were now the norm and most schools required bespoke blazers from limited suppliers.

Councillor McEvoy added that in the North the cost of uniform remained high whilst in England and Wales there had been an attempt to deal with the cost through statutory intervention. She added that if parents were falling into significant debt year-on-year to buy school uniforms, it was clear that the current system of voluntary guidance was not working.

Members were informed alternative remedies had already been exhausted and support afforded by the Uniform Grant was helpful, but the rate had not been increased to keep pace with inflation over the years nor did it support working families.

In Autumn 2021, the Education Minister announced a review would take place into the eligibility criteria and thresholds for Free School Meals and Uniform Grants and there had been no update in terms of this review.

Councillor McEvoy spoke of how school uniforms had changed very little in the last 50 years with the only major change to uniform policy being an increase in mandatory branded sportswear and a use of limited suppliers. Current guidance surrounding uniform policy was not on a statutory footing therefore there was nothing to compel relevant bodies to adhere to it.

Members were advised there needed to be an introduction of statutory guidance requiring schools to have competitive tendering processes, to remove the requirement for branded items, and to permit the use of cheaper high street alternatives and that

the legislative objectives of this proposal were to put guidance on uniform affordability on a statutory footing within the Department of Education.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Finnegan stressed the importance of the motion with parents under stress through the cost of living crisis without struggling to pay hundreds of pounds for school uniform. She added she had received feedback from parents and carers who had received expressions of disapproval from teachers when a child did not have the specified PE uniform to wear because the parents could not afford it.

As a Councillor and a mother Councillor Finnegan urged the DUP to end the blockade to the Executive and stop holding up important work and get this Motion passed.

Councillor Bowsie advised his party supported the spirit of the motion and that the DUP had urged the Government to remove VAT on school specific uniform items as the cost of school uniform items were extortionate and unaffordable. School uniforms were like a tax on people and caused both financial difficulties and unnecessary concern to many families across Northern Ireland, with one third of parents getting into debt each year when buying school uniforms.

He added schools also had a duty to not allow monopolies to develop and should not be instructing parents to only buy from specified suppliers or certain brands and thereby giving suppliers the ability to demand high prices for school uniforms. The price of school-specific uniforms should not become a barrier for children to attend the school of their choice.

Councillor Bowsie advised that currently under VAT rules, school uniforms for young children who are less than 14 years of age, attract a zero-rate of VAT. Members were advised the DUP's Sammy Wilson had tabled a question to ask the Chancellor of the Exchequer, whether he planned to remove VAT on school-specific uniforms in the UK and his response had been there were no current plans to extend the existing zero rate.

He advised Members the DUP was urging the Government to recognise the extortionate price of school uniform and to implement an extension of the zero rate or to introduce a price cap on the price of school specific uniforms to support our families and children within Northern Ireland and the UK.

Councillor Bowsie proposed the following amendment for the motion to read as follows:

"That this Council notes the findings of the 2023 Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) survey on Back to School costs which show 41% of parents in this jurisdiction go into debt due to back to school costs, with the largest expense for both primary and secondary school parents being uniforms; is deeply concerned that the high cost of some school uniforms is a source of financial stress for many families impacting their health and wellbeing; acknowledges that the positive attributes of school uniforms, such as promoting equality amongst pupils, is at risk of being undermined by unaffordable costs; and calls for legislation to be brought forward that will require schools to have competitive tendering processes, removes requirements for expensive branded items, and permits the use of cheaper high street alternatives."

Councillor Hanna seconded the proposed amendment.

Councillor McEvoy did not accept Councillor Bowsie's proposed amendment.

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

FOR:	3
AGAINST:	28
ABSTENTIONS:	1

The proposal was lost.

In voicing support for the motion on behalf of SDLP, Councillor Byrne referred to the number of holding letters being sent back to Council on matters that were being raised stating nothing could be done without an Assembly and Executive and expressed his disappointment. He spoke at length about the costs and statistics regarding school uniforms and the need to get in line with other devolved assembly's and a central solution was needed and that required getting everyone around the table.

In supporting the motion, Councillor Taylor said the reality was the Assembly and Executive was needed as they had the legislative authority to deal with the problems outlined in the motion and a way must be found to alleviate the costs to parents.

Councillor McMurray on behalf of Alliance voiced support for the motion and spoke of the need for the Assembly to be up and running.

Councillor Hanna spoke of the massive problems and challenges being faced by parents. He voiced his disappointment at it being turned around into a DUP bashing session and whilst his party agreed with the motion he asked Members to show respect the DUP position.

Councillor Reilly commented that it was a very good motion and that it was a pity it had been politicised and used to damage DUP position.

Councillor Hanlon spoke about the need for a functioning government to have the legislation passed during a time of a cost of living crisis.

Councillor McEvoy summed up by thanking those Members for their support of the motion and reiterating the importance of introducing measures to make school uniforms more affordable as it was a primary expense for families.

Councillor McEvoy stated Sinn Féin wanted to legislate to make uniforms more affordable for all families and reinstate vital holiday hunger payments to the tens of thousands of families who rely on them.

The Chairperson then put the Motion to a vote by way of a show of hands, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	29
AGAINST:	3
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The Motion was carried.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Finnegan that Council notes the findings of the 2023 Irish League of Credit Unions (ILCU) survey on Back to School costs which show 41% of parents in this jurisdiction go into debt due to back to school costs, with the largest expense for both primary and secondary school parents being uniforms; is deeply concerned that the high cost of some school uniforms is a source of financial stress for many families impacting their health and wellbeing; acknowledges that the positive attributes of school uniforms, such as promoting equality amongst pupils, is at risk of being undermined by unaffordable costs; and calls for the urgent restoration of the Assembly and Executive so that legislation can be brought forward that will require schools to have competitive tendering processes, removes requirements for expensive branded items, and permits the use of cheaper high street alternatives.**

Councillors Reilly and Gibbons left the meeting at this point – 7.11pm and 7.12pm respectively.

C/158/2023 NOTICE OF MOTION – YOUNG CARERS

The following motion was received from Councillor Devlin:

"Noting that there are currently 220,000 unpaid carers across the North; recognising the essential role that young carers in particular play within the community; expressing its concern that during holiday periods such carers can face increased stress, loneliness and isolation, and further noting that unpaid carers save the government an estimated £1million per year, this Council agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health calling for increased financial support for these unpaid carers to be used for respite, residential breaks or recreation for their health and well-being."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Devlin spoke of how Carers were essential within the social care system with their role often undervalued and unappreciated by Government.

Members were informed there were about 8,000 young people in Northern Ireland who undertook unpaid caring roles, with the latest census showing 2,600 of them are under-15. These carers could be caring for parents, siblings or other family members and during the summer and other holiday periods they can feel isolated and this was often magnified over the summer break when they got little or no time away from the family unit.

Councillor Devlin pointed out Government must recognise that these children often give up a significant chunk of their own childhood whilst caring for a loved one.

Councillor Devlin referred to a report from Action for Children and Carers Trust that found 86% of young carers were more stressed or worried during the summer holidays than during term-time. There were 260 young carers in the South Eastern, Belfast and Southern Trusts who needed increased support during this time of year.

She spoke of organisations such as Barnardo's NI and Action for Children who do incredible work across to support carers with local organisations such as the ADHD Hub, Unit T, Unit T Stars doing their utmost to support carers and young carers but this should not come down to charity.

This group of carers were often hidden and save the Government over £1m per year as they are too young to claim Carers Allowance. So, at the very least, Government must recognise this financial saving and look at ways to reward these young carers.

Councillor Devlin stated this was a much bigger issue than people thought and one for a local Minister in Stormont to consider now.

In voicing support for the motion, Councillor Andrews asked that correspondence be circulated to the 10 other Councils to seek support.

In supporting the motion Councillor Kearns stated the number of people caring for loved ones, working long hours unpaid was deeply concerning and that families needed support as the health service faced huge challenges due to lack of resources and understaffing and that this needed to be urgently addressed.

She added families and health workers needed a Health Minister in place and an Executive working together to invest in the health service to hire more staff, deliver more care packages and tackle waiting lists now. Members were provided with statistics on unpaid carers and told of how were forced to sacrifice their own wellbeing every day as the price of supporting their loved ones.

In speaking in support of the motion on behalf of the Alliance party Councillor Truesdale detailed funding received for the Support for Carers Fund and given that this funding had come to an end following the allocation of £1.6m in the fourth and final round of grants from the Support for Carers Fund on 3 August 2023 there was a need

to build sustainability into the motion and for Council to take a more proactive approach.

Councillor Truesdale proposed an amendment to the motion to read as follows:

"And for this Council to investigate running consistent carer specific schemes within the district either online, in person or hybrid".

In response for clarification from Councillor Devlin, Mr Mallon advised it was not something Council was responsible for or that Council delivers as part of its statutory function and without further detail on what it would entail it would be difficult to make a decision and commitment on behalf of Council at this time.

It was agreed at the suggestion of Councillor Devlin that Council officers investigate the amendment put forward by Councillor Truesdale and report back to the Strategic Finance Working Group.

Councillor Taylor thanked Councillor Devlin for bringing forward the motion and spoke of the hope that the Permanent Secretary would look on the request favourably and ensure an increase in financial support for young carers.

Councillor Devlin thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Andrews that noting that there are currently 220,000 unpaid carers across the North; recognising the essential role that young carers in particular play within the community; expressing its concern that during holiday periods such carers can face increased stress, loneliness and isolation, and further noting that unpaid carers save the government an estimated £1million per year, this Council agrees to write to the Permanent Secretary of the Department of Health calling for increased financial support for these unpaid carers to be used for respite, residential breaks or recreation for their health and well-being.

It was agreed that Council officers investigate the amendment put forward by Councillor Truesdale and report back to the Strategic Finance Working Group: *"And for this Council to investigate running consistent carer specific schemes within the district either online, in person or hybrid".*

C/159/2023 NOTICE OF MOTION – RECYCLING

The following motion was received from Councillor McAteer:

"Noting with concern estimations that while 9 in 10 people in the North recycle at home only 4 in 10 recycle while outdoors; further notes with concern DAERA estimates that consumers in the North use 420 million plastic bottles and 90 million cans every year, and welcomes that across the North the successful Hubbub CircleCity programme which has run across the UK and seen an additional 2.5million plastic bottles, glass bottles and cans recycled while outdoors, this Council agrees that more work is needed across out District to encourage recycling while outdoors, will seek a meeting with Hubbub to recommend Newry, Mourne and Down for a similar CircleCity scheme, will undertake an education programme for District residents on the benefits of outdoor recycling and will commence a pilot scheme for new recycling bins to be installed across key public spaces and parks."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Finn.

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 7.24pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 4 September 2023.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Chief Executive

