

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 5 February 2024 at 6.00pm in
Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick and
via Microsoft Teams**

In the Chair: Councillor V Harte

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor P Campbell
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor C Enright	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor R Howell	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor T Kelly
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor A McMurray
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice	Councillor M Ruane
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale	

In attendance via Teams: Councillor C Bowsie Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor J Tinnelly

**Officials in attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and
Environment
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and
Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy
Communities
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director, Finance and
Performance
Mrs M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance

Via Teams:

Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director, Capital and Procurement

C/021/2024 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Gibbons and McEvoy.

On behalf of Council, the Chairperson extended deepest condolences and sympathy to the family and friends of Jamie Marks who tragically lost his life following a road traffic collision. Councillors Hanlon, Lee-Surginor, Devlin and Taylor paid tribute to Jamie on behalf of their parties.

The Chairperson along with Councillors Jackson, Lee-Surginor, Hanlon, Taylor and Devlin on behalf of their parties extended deepest condolences and sympathy to Cathy Mason, MLA and former Chairperson for Newry, Mourne and Down District on the passing of her brother Peter Noade.

The Chairperson and Councillor Hanlon sent condolences to the family of Walter Love, renowned broadcaster and journalist who was a popular volunteer of the local charity Good Morning Down.

The thoughts and prayers of everyone in Council were extended to the family of Aleta Quinn following her passing. The Chairperson advised that Aleta had worked in Customer Services in the Greenbank Depot and would be sadly missed by many.

The Chairperson advised she had met with Mary Cunningham from Rostrevor, one of 3 centenarians who she would have the pleasure of meeting in a week including Maureen O'Hare from Bessbrook and Molly O'Reilly from Downpatrick. She wished them all a very happy and special birthday on behalf of the Council.

The Chairperson sent congratulations to the Sacred Heart Grammar School on winning the Ulster U20 Championship, their first Ulster title in 21 years.

Councillors Jackson and Talyor sent best wishes to King Charles on the breaking news of his ill health and diagnosis and wished him well and thoughts and prayers were with him. Best wishes were conveyed to the Princess of Wales, who was also recovering from surgery.

Councillor Lee-Surginor paid tribute to former Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service Watch Commander Stephen Barr who had recently passed away and spoke of how he had served Ballynahinch with distinction and valour.

Councillor Truesdale on behalf of the Alliance Party congratulated Johnny Ward originally from Kilkeel, who had made history with an incredible achievement on completing the Ultimate Explorers Grand Slam and asked that the Chairperson recognise this achievement.

C/022/2024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/023/2024

TO SET A DISTRICT RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2024/25

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive and Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the District Rate 2024/25 dated 5 February 2024 **(Copy circulated)**

The Chief Executive stated, in accordance with Standing Order 21.2.a, Council was asked to agree that the paper should not be subject to call-in because it would cause an unreasonable delay which would be prejudicial to the Council's and the public's interests in striking the rate by the statutory deadline of 15th February 2024.

AGREED: The above was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, in accordance with Standing Order 21.2a.

In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Chief Executive, as Chief Financial Officer was required to provide assurance to Members on the robustness of the revenue estimates and the adequacy of the Council's reserves position as part of the rate setting process prior to submission to the Department of Communities (DfC).

The Chief Executive confirmed detailed estimates had been formulated, presented to and scrutinised by Members at Strategic Finance Working Group Meetings. These had taken into account out-turns from previous years, corporate pressures, planned savings and efficiencies, current spending plans and projected future investment and that adequate funding was available to protect frontline services.

As a result of this extensive process and the detailed analysis that had been undertaken, the Chief Executive confirmed she was satisfied that the estimates presented should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2024/25 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council had been made in the preparation of the estimates. The Chief Executive put the recommendations to Council to strike a District Rate of 6.41%.

Councillor Jackson, on behalf of DUP, stated his party was committed to securing the lowest possible rate in the context of considerable external pressures and there was a need for reform of business rates, reflecting commercial realities of business and trends. He stated that parties had the responsibility to scrutinise, question and consider the decisions which directly affected the lives of residents across the district and the DUP group was confident that they had provided that scrutiny, engaged with management, reviewed and reflected on options which would have ultimately brought the rate down below last year's level.

He spoke of how for many the festival of flight was seen as one of this district's flagship events and took the opportunity to call on officers to work to restore this festival. He proposed the establishment of working group to consider the Festival of Flight. He added his party was confident that this rate protected those vital council contributions to community projects while delivering a fair and realistic rate. He stated that his Party would continue to work alongside management to ensure a full and comprehensive review of refuse services. Council must take measures to tackle the most basic of

issues from dog fouling, littering to fly-tipping and the DUP would seek to explore avenues to increase the frequency and value of fines, and consideration must be given to employment of more enforcement staff which could work to alleviate those issues.

Councillor Jackson thanked officers, staff, and colleagues who had worked, met, scrutinised and enhanced the rate proposals and were now at a figure that offered value for money.

Councillor Hanlon stated one role as elected representatives was to oversee and scrutinise the financial management of Council and Sinn Féin took this responsibility very seriously. She said her party wanted to secure a stable financial budget for the District, one which would secure funding for capital projects and continue to deliver for communities and it was imperative that Council continued to move forward with plans to regenerate the towns and the city and expand sustainable tourism for the District.

Councillor Hanlon said it would be impossible to go down any further than the suggested rate without cutting services, service level agreements and supporting community events and ensuring jobs were safe for our staff. She stated there had been challenges for local government in terms of funding for example animal welfare being levied to Council and no assurances for the Rate Support Grant and highlighted that the figures had been scrutinised, revised and debated over many months with several meetings with officers and the rate had more than halved from what was first rate presented. A rate of 6.41%, 0.42% higher than last year was the lowest Council could safely go down to.

Councillor Truesdale advised Alliance's decision on the rate setting process was due to concerns regarding the viability of capital budgets such as the Newry Civic Centre and the Mourne Gateway Project. She said Council management had not disclosed updated project costs which the Department for Economy informed Council management of in November. This came as the Council plans to spend £2 million next year on a consultancy team for the project. She advised that as a party grouping they were not comfortable with embarking on such huge capital projects with speculative costs that may hit ratepayers in the pocket for years to come. She added that despite concerns, Alliance fully supported workers receiving the pay deal they deserved after extensive negotiations and that they were pleased to see Council were funding the animal welfare grant which was cut last year.

Councillor Byrne stated the SDLP had put forward alternative proposals around the capital fund and had sought clarity on the issue that had still not been answered. He acknowledged MRP costs and loan interest were high and set to spike in three years' time, but this should be managed across that period and the information was not available to Members as to why it could not be accessed now.

Councillor Byrne spoke at length about the rate support grant and the animal welfare cuts. He said he believed Council should be fighting to get that reinstated and needed to take from reserves to cover it at circa 300K because if it was reinstated at a later date, there was nothing that could be done about at that stage. Councillor Byrne said his party had factored that in to take the rate down and move forward at risk and put it into the hands of officers to make the case to have that money restored to local government.

Councillor Byrne highlighted other points that had been raised at SFWG, one being the possibility of striking two different rates and the other being 3 year projections and an attempt to iron out increases over a number of years.

Councillor Taylor spoke of this being the most challenging period that he had experienced as a Councillor and trying to find a way of reducing the rate levels that were imposed on citizens was a result of the challenges being faced. He spoke of the role the executive had to play to take pressure off local government going forward.

The Chief Executive addressed the question of animal welfare, stating that Council had made an allowance for animal welfare within the rate, and that was at risk because it had been withdrawn by the Departments and was currently in judicial review. In relation to the Rates Support Grant it had unfortunately been reduced year on year and SOLACE had been very strong lobbying the Departments on the matter.

In relation to the use of capital reserves, the Chief Executive referred to previous discussions with Members regarding the capital programme, whereby officials would advocate the use of capital reserves when Council had actually built or started to build the bigger capital projects, therefore there was no justification to use them at this point.

The Chief Executive referred to setting the rate the previous year, and how she had cautioned around the use of any further reserves because when reserves were used for current expenditure, what happened was money had to be found this year, and that was effectively what had to be done. If reserves had not been used, which was done justifiably at that point in a managed and measured way, then the rate would be lower but reserves were used at that time and it had to be made up this year.

Mrs Ward advised there was further work to do as a Council in relation to how to manage going forward, and there were many challenges from a cost perspective and hopefully with the Executive back in place there would be more certainty on budgets in order to move forward effectively.

Mrs Ward addressed the comment made by the Alliance Party in relation to Members not being aware of costs relating to the Mourne Gateway, in that Members involved from a project board perspective were aware that the Council cost estimates of the project had not increased. She advised there were ongoing discussions about the allowance that should be built into the project budget to cover possible future construction inflation and other risks, however, that had not been agreed at this point. She added she had met with the Permanent Secretary of the Department for the Economy, and that discussions were ongoing. A report on project costs and budgets, due to be presented by cost consultants would be brought forward imminently and pointed out that this did not impact the rate this year.

The Chief Executive further addressed comments from Alliance in relation to the Civic Centre in Newry by reiterating that this was a project that had been discussed at length within the Chamber and indeed queries that had been raised were addressed through governance review a number of years ago.

The Chairperson then put the Councillor Hanlon's proposal, seconded by Councillor Jackson to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group (as outlined within the report) and an increase in

the district rate for 2024-25 of 6.41% to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	26
AGAINST:	8
ABSTENTIONS:	5

The Chairperson declared Councillor Hanlon's proposal carried.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Jackson, to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group in relation to the 2024/25 rate setting process and, having regard to the Chief Executive's statement as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011:

1. Approve an increase in the district rate for 2024-25 of 6.41% based on an estimated penny product of 2,473,259 meaning a non-domestic rate of 29.0334 pence and a domestic rate of 0.4676 pence;
2. Approve the Medium Term Financial plan and authorise the 2024/25 expenditure included in the estimates (Appendix 1);
3. Approve the Capital Strategy Report for 2024/25 as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code. (Appendix 3);
4. Approve the Capital Programme (Appendix 4);
5. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2024/25 (Appendix 5);
6. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2024/25 (Appendix 6).
7. Approve the action sheets of the Strategic Finance Working Group relating to the rate setting process. (Appendix 7: Restricted item)
8. Recommend officers present a draft Capital Reserves policy for Members consideration.

Councillor Kelly left the meeting at this point – 6.43pm.

C/024/2024 **ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2024**

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024 (copy circulated).

C/224/2023 and C/014/2024: Notice of Motion – Violence in Gaza and Southern Israel
Councillor Byrne enquired if a response had been received from Irish Government to which Ms Taggart confirmed it had not and that Democratic Services would follow up on the matter once again.

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Andrews.**

C/025/2024 **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 JANUARY 2024**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanna.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/026/2024 **MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2024**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 15 January 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 15 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.**

C/027/2024 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 JANUARY 2024**

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2024 (copy circulated).

SPR/004/2024: Industrial Relations Update

In response to a query from Councillor D Murphy, Mrs Ward advised the matter of future considerations detailed under recommendation 3 had been put forward in a Labour Relations Agency (LRA) proposal which was being considered by SOLACE and she was unable to give a timeframe but would raise the matter at the next SOLACE meeting and with the LRA.

SPR/005/2024: Kilbroney Park Pitches

Councillor Ruane voiced concern at some of the comments made that Crotlieve Councillors would be kept out of any decision making regarding a major development within their area, He questioned the impact such discussions had on Planning Committee Members and asked for clarification on Councillor Tinnelly stating that he was the sole spokesperson for the clubs going forward.

Councillor Ruane proposed that any discussions regarding this matter should go before the DEA Forum and that any recommendations/proposals put forward by the DEA be brought forward to the relevant Committee for approval. Councillor K Murphy seconded the proposal.

In relation to concerns raised about comments made during the meeting, Mrs Kelly confirmed she was happy to take that forward and examine the audio recording and pointed out there was advice given by legal representatives at that meeting.

Councillor Reilly stated the matter was discussed in an open forum and the legal advice he had heard did not deny future participation by Planning Committee Members in future meetings.

Councillor Byrne supported the proposal for motions such as this to go to DEA Forums so local issues could be discussed before presenting to Committee and Council.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Taylor.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor K Murphy that any discussions regarding this matter should go before the DEA Forum and that any recommendations/proposals put forward by the DEA be brought forward to the relevant Committee for approval.

C/028/2024

MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2024

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2024 (copy circulated).

AHC/008/2024: Multi Sports Hub Review

Councillor Tinnelly stated the opportunity to challenge the report presented was not afforded to him at the meeting and enquired where could it be challenged and discussed if ratified by Council.

Mrs Kelly clarified that the report presented at the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting had been for noting only and that the Audit Committee was considering the matter.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 22 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Howell.**

C/029/2024 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2024**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 24 January 2024 (copy circulated).

SE/004/2024: Report on Notice of Motion, Flood Defences

In welcoming the proposals put forward in relation to flooding, Councillor Finn said that since those decisions were taken things had moved on politically and proposed that as well as Rivers Agency Council should be writing to the Minister for Infrastructure to ensure that they comment on the maintenance schedule and also write to the Minister for Economy to encourage that the next phase of flood relief funding be top of their priority list.

Councillor Byrne seconded the proposal.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 24 January 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Magennis.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Byrne that Council write to the Minister for Infrastructure to ensure that they comment on the maintenance schedule and also write to the Minister for Economy to encourage that the next phase of flood relief funding be top of their priority list.

C/030/2024 **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues arising.

In response to a query about a planning application called in for Killyleagh, Mrs Ward advised she had responded to Councillors on the matter and would respond to Councillor Hanna directly after the meeting.

Following on from the recent Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting, Councillor Reilly enquired whether there had been any improvement or ideas on how planning applications could be dealt with and reiterated that it needed to be resolved.

Mr Mallon advised officers shared Councillor's concerns and offered reassurance that processes were up to date and robust, however the key challenge being faced was in attracting the numbers of staff within the Planning Department required to deal with

the volume of work. He added that since the meeting a further recruitment exercise had been initiated, the tenth exercise carried out in 12 months, and with 5 vacancies within the department, resource was the key challenge being faced.

Mr Mallon advised he had met with Senior Planners, there was a plan in place and that it should be noted that Newry Mourne and Down District Council received the highest number of planning applications across the 11 Councils.

CORRESPONDENCE

C/031/2024 RESPONSE FROM DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/250/2023, CYSTIC FIBROSIS MEDICATION

Read: Correspondence from Department of Health dated 22 January 2024. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

C/032/2024 LETTERS FROM CAUSEWAY COAST AND GLENS BOROUGH COUNCIL AND FERMANAGH & OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/250/2023, CYSTIC FIBROSIS MEDICATION

Read: Correspondence from the Councils dated 18 January and 22 January 2024 respectively. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

C/033/2024 RESPONSE FROM AIB RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/249/2023, EURO ATMS

Read: Correspondence from AIB dated 17 January 2024. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

C/034/2024 RESPONSES FROM SOUTHERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST AND PERMANENT SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH RE DAISY HILL HOSPITAL.

Read: Correspondence from Southern Health and Social Care Trust dated 3rd February 2024 and the Permanent Secretary, Department of Health re: Daisy Hill Hospital. **(copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

C/035/2024 RESPONSE FROM EDUCATION AUTHORITY RE: NOTICE OF MOTION C/226/2023 BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Read: Correspondence from Education Authority dated 1 February 2024. **(copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

C/036/2024 RESPONSE FROM PERMANENT SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION RE: NOTICE OF MOTION ERT/154/2023 CHILDCARE STRATEGY

Read: Correspondence from Education Authority dated 2 February 2024. **(copy circulated)**

Councillor Devlin welcomed the Executive being formed at long last and made reference to comments made by the Assembly in terms of the urgent need for reform and investment in the childcare sector and that she hoped there would be a positive announcement sooner rather than later.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

C/037/2024 CONFERENCE – NORTHERN IRELAND ENVIRONMENT FORUM 2024

Read: Invitation from AgendaNI regarding a Conference on 18 April 2024 (Copy circulated)

Ms Taggart reminded Members that in line with Council policy in relation to attending conferences a report would need to be tabled by Councillor Enright and a template would be forwarded by Democratic Services for completion.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Truesdale, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor that Councillor Enright attend the Northern Ireland Environment Forum on 18 April 2024.

Councillor Reilly left the meeting at this point – 7.13pm.

C/038/2024

**NOTICE OF MOTION – RE-AFFIRMING OCTOBER 2019
CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY MOTION**

The following motion was received from Councillor Enright:

“Council re-affirms its climate change emergency motion passed unanimously in October of 2019 and desires concrete actions to arise from this motion in Newry Mourne and Down Council. In particular to implement Councils 2019 direction to the SMT that “Every plan or target that Council produces needs to have concrete measures to reflect this emergency”

As a result:

Council directs that a ‘Climate Emergency Response Plan’ be brought forward within 6 months based on the October 2019 motion similar to English Councils like Durham, East Sussex, Cambridgeshire or Worcester and many others. That the 2024-2027 Corporate Plan not be issued for consultation until it reflects the above plan. That the 2015 Area Development plans be amended on an emergency basis to reflect a Council policy of ‘Climate Change Emergency’ and ensure that ‘the energy transition’ is given serious weight in all current planning applications, following the example of English Councils like South Lakeland’s Interim planning statement, or Cornwall’s emergency amendment of its 2016 Development plan, or other English Councils who have both amended their existing Area Plans and modified their proposed development plans with the purpose of “Fast-tracking the energy transition and slashing emissions before 2030s” (United Nations)

That Council Management bring a significant financial target to Council within 3 months based on;

- a) An ambitious energy savings program like Counties Louth or Cavan who have already achieved over E300,000 pa,*
- b) generating and using or selling its own renewables like South Suffolk or Warrington and*
- c) expanding the rates base by £5 million per annum by 2030 by attracting renewable projects to our District on a similar scale to what Fermanagh & Omagh Council had already achieved by 2020. This may require the ERT Directive and Planning Team to work with NIE to upgrade the District’s electricity grid.”*

Agreed: The Chairperson advised the Motion would not be heard in accordance with Standing Order 24.2.

C/039/2024

NOTICE OF MOTION – ETHICAL PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

The following motion was received from Councillor Hanlon:

"Newry, Mourne and Down Council deplores those corporations that profit from protracted armed conflict and systematic violations of human rights, particularly in the context of Israel's continuing brutal assault on the people of Gaza and escalating settler terrorism in the West Bank; Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine; and other conflicts around the world. With this motion, the Council encourages companies to

meet their obligations to avoid contributing to adverse human rights impacts through their own activities, and to prevent or mitigate human rights abuses linked to their operations.

The Council is aware of the crucial role of local authorities and their public procurement procedures in ensuring respect for human rights by companies, as well as their obligations under widely accepted business and human rights norms - as laid down in the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and the Global Sullivan Principles (1999) - to promote respect for human rights by companies with which they do business.

The Council affirms that every endeavour is made to ensure that Council's tender processes are consistent with the above principles, including under the Fourth Geneva convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War and under customary international humanitarian law, prohibiting the importation or sale of goods or services originating in occupied territories.

This Council resolves to adopt a rights-based Ethical Procurement Policy (EPP) that takes fully into account existing obligations and standards. The EPP will incorporate widely accepted and precisely formulated international standards and explain clearly how the policy will be implemented. The primary aim of the EPP is to ensure that human rights obligations are properly acknowledged, observed and respected at all stages of the procurement process."

The motion was seconded by Councillor King.

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

C/040/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – DAISY HILL HOSPITAL

Councillor Feehan advised that given the Assembly had now been restored and the Health Minister was now in post, proposed that the motion be amended to read as follows:

“Newry Mourne and Down District Council strongly opposes the decision by the Department of Health’s Permanent Secretary to withdraw Emergency General Surgery from Daisy Hill Hospital and will write to Health Minister Robin Swann requesting that he receives a cross-party delegation from Council to face due scrutiny on that decision. Council reaffirms its position that major decisions on the future of Daisy Hill can and should only be made by a Health Minister who is accountable to the public and calls upon Health Minister Robin Swann to reinstate emergency general surgery at Daisy Hill Hospital with immediate effect”.

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

Councillor Feehan advised he had brought the motion forward because he was alarmed that a civil servant, the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health, had made the decision to permanently withdraw a critical service from Daisy Hill Hospital, emergency general surgery. He said it was more important than ever for everyone, as a Council, to present strong and united opposition to that decision.

Councillor Feehan asked for support from across the Chamber in requesting that the new Health Minister agreed to receive a cross-party delegation from Council to bring

the voice of local people directly to the new Health Minister, and to urge him to reverse the decision made by the Permanent Secretary last month.

In response for clarity on what a cross party delegation was from Councillor Hanlon, the Chief Executive advised there was precedent for delegations of Councillors meeting with Minister on pertinent issues.

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

Councillor McMurray advised Alliance would be abstaining from the motion as they believed this was an issue for either party aligned or independent MLAs to raise through Stormont and would not be comfortable sending a delegation or taking part in delegation from Council.

The Chairperson then put the Councillor Feehan's motion, seconded by Councillor McAteer to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	32
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	5

The Chairperson declared the motion carried.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Newry Mourne and Down District Council strongly opposes the decision by the Department of Health's Permanent Secretary to withdraw Emergency General Surgery from Daisy Hill Hospital and will write to Health Minister Robin Swann requesting that he receives a cross-party delegation from Council to face due scrutiny on that decision.**
Council reaffirms its position that major decisions on the future of Daisy Hill can and should only be made by a Health Minister who is accountable to the public and calls upon Health Minister Robin Swann to reinstate emergency general surgery at Daisy Hill Hospital with immediate effect.

C/041/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

The following motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

"Noting with concern findings that 98% of women in Northern Ireland have experienced at least one form of violence or abuse in their lifetime, with 50% experiencing this before they were 11 years old, this Council upholds its commitment to ending violence against women and girls; reaffirms that violence, abuse and harm against women and girls cuts across all generations and communities; calls for the delivery of a fully-funded strategy to end violence against women and girls; and commits to instituting November 25th as Elimination of Violence Against Women and Girls Day across the District with a series of events to help educate, raise awareness and end this abhorrent humanitarian abuse."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Finn.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

C/042/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – PEATLANDS

The following motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

"That this Council believes peatlands are a critical part of our ecosystems, regulating the water cycle, purifying water and supporting biodiversity; further recognises that peatlands store more carbon for long periods than any other ecosystem worldwide; and therefore resolves to protect peatlands and to end its purchase and use of peat-based compost by the end of 2024."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Enright.

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

C/043/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – MMR VACCINATIONS

The following motion was received from Councillor Devlin:

"Welcoming that between January and June 2023 that there were no cases reported of measles in the North, noting with concern the increase in measles across England and Wales, and emphasising the importance of having children up to date with MMR vaccinations, this Council affirms its support to maintain Northern Ireland as measles-free, and will undertake a public information and education campaign via print and social media to highlight to parents and guardians the importance of MMR vaccinations."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Devlin stated the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) had declared a national incident last month in the aftermath of a surge in measles cases and low vaccine uptake. Members were advised three quarters of the cases reported in the UK were in the West Midlands and fortunately at this stage, there had been no such outbreak in Northern Ireland.

Councillor Devlin said she felt that raising awareness and the importance of vaccination in this regard was really important and that a long-term concerted effort was needed to protect individuals and prevent large measles outbreaks. She asked all members to support the call which would see Council play a further role in raising awareness and ensuring that factual information was published via social media in particular.

Councillors Andrews, Truesdale, Howell and Taylor spoke in support of the motion.

Councillor Howell proposed an amendment that the motion include working in conjunction with the Public Health Agency. Councillor Devlin welcomed and accepted the amendment.

Councillor Devlin thanked Members for their support stating that the best way for parents to protect their children from measles was the MMR vaccine.

Councillor Devlin took the opportunity to pay tribute to Dr Bready, a local GP in Newcastle who been laid to rest that day and spoke of his amazing work within the local community over his lifetime.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Andrews that in welcoming that between January and June 2023 that there were no cases reported of measles in the North, noting with concern the increase in measles across England and Wales, and emphasising the importance of having children up to date with MMR vaccinations, this Council affirms its support to maintain Northern Ireland as measles-free, and will undertake a public information and education campaign via print and social media to highlight to parents and guardians the importance of MMR vaccinations. It was also agreed that Council would work in conjunction with the Public Health Agency.**

Councillor Lee-Surginor took the opportunity to wish every councillor and officer a very harmonious Chinese New Year.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.41pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 4 March 2024.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive