

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 2 June 2025 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor G Kearns

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor C Enright	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor M Gibbons	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor T Howie	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor H Young	

In attendance via Teams: Councillor R Howell Councillor J Truesdale

Officials in attendance: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mrs S Muphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/082/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell, Hearty, McEvoy, Ruane and Tinnelly. Apologies were also received from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson, Councillor Kearns assumed the Chair.

C/083/2025

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 MAY 2025

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 6 May 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor S Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 MAY 2025

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 6 May 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor D Murphy.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 MAY 2025

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 8 May 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 8 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

**MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 MAY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 May 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 12 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.

MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 MAY 2025

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 May 2025 (copy circulated).

SPR/073/2025: Approach to City, Town and Village Signage

Councillor Bowsie stated the DUP regretted Council could not come to a reasonable consensus on signage that was accurate, proportionate, respectful and reflective of communities within the District. He went on to question the merit of the Equality and Good

Relations Group saying the purpose of the group should be about understanding each other's perspective and reaching consensus.

Councillor Reilly stated he was very disappointed that Council as a matter of policy was prepared to drive this matter through and was becoming a Nationalist Republican Council for the Nationalist Republican people and that Unionists within it did not count anymore.

Councillor Sharvin spoke of his disappointment at hearing the same comments coming from DUP again after 13 meetings in relation to the matter. He reminded Councillor Bowsie of his use of some of the words particularly at the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee directed at officers. He spoke of the importance of Councillors and officers having a good working relationship and acknowledged officers' independence of their views and proposals brought to Committee.

Councillor Sharvin stated he had provided a number of examples to the Group where Council unanimously supported a number of financial assistance calls and referred to recent VE Day celebrations as an example.

Councillor Hanlon said it was disappointing that there was not overall consensus towards the decision however it was important to recognise Council had a bilingual policy. She commended the work of the Equality and Good Relations Group and the Officers who carried out an enormous amount of work to provide information to allow open discussions to take place but unfortunately not when it came to this matter.

Councillor Hanna questioned the justification for this policy of Council given there was 23% of the Council area that were British Unionists and in referring to Councillor Sharvin's comment about financial assistance for VE Day which he felt implied they were given money stated that their Party could not be bought. He referred to areas within the Mournes and questioned why Council would want to put in place signage that would divide communities.

Councillor Lewis said he understood Irish language was a part of peoples culture however he felt uncomfortable how in modern times the Irish language was being misused and abused. He stated that Council would be met with hefty repairs as signs had been damaged in the past and would happen again adding that he did not support such attacks and vandalism. He stated Council should accept that not every town and village within the District would see the Irish language with the same level of respect.

Councillor Bowsie replied to Councillor Sharvin's comments and said Council officers were open to criticism and the specific remarks that he responded to was regarding the Corporate Services position that the DEA consultation that had been completed was no longer relevant because it was only for certain settlements and not others was ridiculous.

Councillor Taylor said as someone that had served on the Equality and Good Relations Group through his time in Council this was one of the limited number of occasions where it had failed in its role and he had found it to be a constructive forum with many debates and arguments about areas of concern and issues that were sensitive to the communities represent.

In reply to comments made by Councillor Hanlon, Councillor Taylor said he did not find it was Unionists that were taking a limited mindset approach in regard to this as they genuinely tried to find a way forward that would work for everybody. He added there was a determination from Sinn Féin to move forward with a policy that was not going to be conducive to good relations and stated he was sorry a way forward that would be acceptable to everybody could not be found.

In referring to Councillor Hanna's comments about signage within his area in the Mournes, Councillor Howie said the paper was not saying that all signs were going to be changed immediately and would more than likely be gradual over the next few years. She pointed out that in Wales and Scotland minority languages were included on signage and did not see why Newry Mourne and Down be any different.

Councillor Sharvin took the opportunity to point out that in the recording from the Committee meeting, Councillor Bowsie had stated that the findings of the DEA Forum did not suit the officer.

The Chief Executive made clear that Council officers prepare papers and people were entitled to their views and that officers were always open to criticism however it was a very serious allegation if the comments as articulated had been said by Councillor Bowsie and if so asked him to consider his statement and withdraw it.

FOR:	30
AGAINST:	6
ABSTENTIONS:	0

Agreed: The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer.

MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON 19 MAY 2025

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 May 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 19 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Mathers.**

C/090/2025 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 MAY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 May 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/056/2025: Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty & Air Quality Management Areas

Ms Taggart advised there was an amendment to the record of the vote to read as follows:

FOR	11
AGAINST	2
ABSTAIN	1

The proposal was carried.

Councillor Reilly took the opportunity to point out that 70% of electricity bills were taken up by subsidies, green taxes etc and that was hurting ordinary working class people and reinforced his opposition to the Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 21 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Brennan, seconded by Councillor Enright, subject to the agreed amendment.**

C/091/2025 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 MAY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Special Audit Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Special Audit Committee Meeting held on 23 May 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare.**

C/092/2025 **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues arising.

C/093/2025

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 2 June 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Response from Minister of Health re: C/065/2025 Notice of Motion – Endometriosis

Councillor Devlin welcomed that the drug treatment for Endometriosis was now available in Northern Ireland and whilst it was not going to solve the problems of every woman with endometriosis it was now an option for clinicians to consider, albeit on a case by case basis.

Councillor Devlin went on to advise that since tabling the Notice of Motion, Cork City had opened its doors in April to a brand new state of the art Endometriosis centre. This facility was due to deliver a new model of care, one that met the complex needs of women with endometriosis while providing timely, equitable access to essential services for women living with the condition.

Councillor Devlin proposed Council write to the Minister of Health and ask him to consider some additional collaboration with the Government in the South to see if women who were severely impacted by Endometriosis could access the service in Cork.

Councillor Finn seconded Councillor Devlin's proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Finn that Council write to the Minister of Health and ask him to consider some additional collaboration with the Government in the South to see if women who were severely impacted by Endometriosis could access the service in Cork.**

Response from DAERA re: C/056/2025 Notice of Motion – Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support

Councillor Rice welcomed support from the Agriculture Minister in relation to the issues on obtaining seasonal workers, particularly in the fishing industry and the reset of relations between the EU and the British Government. He added hopefully this would begin to redress some of the disastrous implications of Brexit, however as outlined by the Minister this would be at the mercy of the British Government and referring to recent comments by Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, it was feared the continued issues with seasonal workers would not just persist but accelerate the impact on fishing towns and communities across the north.

Councillor Reilly voiced his disappointment at the response received and that there was no movement for the fishing industry. He referred to Councillor Rice welcoming relations between the UK and Brussels and stated that was a disaster and one of the biggest betrayals for the fishing community.

Councillor Sharvin commented that the Minister clearly had no impact on the UK Government. He referred to how recently the Labour Government had announced a Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund of £360 million however it was unclear what each harbour would receive.

Councillor Sharvin proposed Council write to the Minister of Fisheries in the UK Government to ask his opinion and to get commitment to resolving the issue and write to the Westminster

Minister to ask where the £360 million was and how much of that would the three ports within this District actually receive.

Councillor Devlin seconded Councillor Sharvin's proposal.

The Chief Executive advised that following the Motion, Council did write to the UK and Scottish Governments, however a response had not been received to date.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Devlin that Council write the Minister of Fisheries in the UK Government to ask his opinion and to get commitment to resolving the issue and write to the Westminster Minister to ask where the £360 million was and how much of that would the three ports within this District actually receive.**

Response from Minister of Education and Education Authority re: C/081/2025 Notice of Motion – Funding to Pre School Groups

Councillor Andrews thanked Members for their support for the Motion advising that in recent days the facility had secured the necessary funding that was to be welcomed with thanks to the Minister of Education.

Councillor Hanna joined Councillor Andrews in thanking the Minister of Education.

Response from DAERA re: C/066/2025 Notice of Motion – Wildfires in the Mourne Mountains

Councillor Hanna stated he felt this was weak response from the DAERA Minister and that action was needed as soon as possible.

Councillor Devlin concurred with Councillor Hanna's comments stating there had been little action from the huge fire in April 2021 and referred to the Northern Fire and Rescue Service, Mourne Heritage Trust, Mourne Rescue etc who were paying the price every time stating that it was to time to see action and not just words.

Councillor Devlin enquired if a date had been set for the Special Council Meeting to which the Chief Executive confirmed a meeting had been arranged for 26 June 2025 with Mourne Heritage Trust, NIFRS and the National Trust.

Councillor Clarke joined Councillors Hanna and Devlin in their comments stating that Council had been told throughout the process that there was an issue with the procurement exercise to deliver a wildfire plan for the Mournes. He spoke of concerns that it was not yet mid-summer season and there was serious risk to habitats and how it seemed every organisation had a different approach to the potential of wildfires and a common approach from all partners was needed.

Councillor Clarke proposed Council write back to DAERA Minister to request a time frame regarding the procurement exercise to deliver a Wildfire Plan for the Mournes and also write to all statutory partners to get clarity on a common approach to deal with wildfires.

Councillor Hanna seconded Councillor Clarke's proposal.

Agreed: It was agreed Council write back to DAERA Minister to request a time frame regarding the procurement exercise to deliver a Wildfire Plan for the Mourne and also write to all statutory partners to get clarity on a common approach to deal with wildfires.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor D Murphy to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:

- Correspondence from Planning Appeals Commission to Department for Infrastructure in relation to Regionally Significant Planning Application, Lands approximately 650m south west of 40 Mullaghgarraff Road, Hilltown, Newry
- Minutes from the Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes from a meeting held on 10 April 2025
- Response from the Minister of Health in relation to a Notice of Motion C/065/2025, Endometriosis
- Response from the DAERA Minister in relation to Notice of Motion C/056/2025, Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support
- Response from the Minister for Communities in relation to Notice of Motion C/042/2025, Arts Funding
- Response from DAERA Minister in relation to Notice of Motion C/066/2025, Wildfires in the Mourne Mountains
- Response from Minister of Education and the Education Authority in relation to Notice of Motion C/081/2025, Funding to Pre School Groups

C/094/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – SUPREME COURT RULING

The following Motion was received from Councillor Jackson:

"That this Council welcomes the recent Supreme Court ruling which clarified that under the Equality Act 2010:

• a 'woman' is a biological woman or girl (a person born female) • trans women (biological men) should not be permitted to use the women's facilities • if somebody identifies as trans, they do not change sex for the purposes of the Act, even if they have a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC) Furthermore, it accepts the initial assessment by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland that this judgement, in the context of our corresponding equality law, the Sex Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 ('SDO'):- "is likely to be deemed by our industrial tribunals and courts to be highly persuasive and, consequently, it is likely to be followed in cases where similar issues arise."

Accordingly, Council resolves to urgently review all relevant Council policies and to make it clear that if a space or service is designated as women-only across the District, a person who was born male but identifies as a woman does not have a right to use that space or service."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Councillor Jackson voiced his and that of his Party disappointment that the Notice of Motion was not to be heard by Council and advised that on that basis and the earlier discussion on Irish Language signage the DUP had made the decision to withdraw from the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group until further notice. He added that as other Notice of Motions were being heard while the one he had tabled was not, that the DUP Party Members would not take part and withdraw from the Council Meeting.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to Equality and Good Relations in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

Councillors Bowsie, Hanna, Jackson, Lewis and Reilly left the meeting at this point - 7.02pm.

C/095/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – “GOOD JOBS” EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS LEGISLATION

The following Motion was received from Councillor Hearty, presented by Councillor D Murphy:

“This Council calls for the delivery of equal and fair rights for all workers and welcomes the “Good Jobs” Employment Rights legislation currently being considered by the Stormont Assembly.

This bill presents an unparalleled opportunity to grow a productive regional economy that benefits our businesses, our workers and their families within the all-Ireland and global economic contexts.

Good jobs, which deliver fair wages, guarantee secure employment, with strong union recognition and collective bargaining rights, are the cornerstone of an economy that values inclusive growth and a fairer distribution of wealth.

The bill will ensure the fairer treatment of workers in regard to pay, tips and gratuities, holiday pay and parental leave as well as bringing tangible benefits to workers’ lives across our entire community.

This Council endorses strong, progressive workers’ rights legislation; to build a strong, regional economy; in which both businesses and workers prosper and we finally begin to eradicate the scourge of workplace inequalities.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor D Murphy advised the “Good Jobs” Employment Rights legislation that was due to come before the Assembly was the most progressive employment legislation ever to be introduced in the north and presented an unparalleled opportunity to grow a productive regional economy that benefited businesses, workers and their families within the all-Ireland and global economic contexts.

He stated good jobs which delivered fair wages, secured employment, strong union recognition and collective bargaining rights were the cornerstone of a fair and inclusive economy and the Windsor Framework had helped to protect from much of the insecurity and trading turbulence associated with an unregulated Brexit. As a result, the north’s regional economy was increasingly merging with the economy of the south and the European Union.

Members were informed that studies from the Centre for Business Research (CBR) concluded that “labour laws boost productivity and inclusivity,” and that “strong labour protection was associated with higher employment and lower unemployment.” These also stated that labour laws including those regulating flexible working, working time and employee representation had positive productivity effects.

Councillor D Murphy pointed out that going forward it made sense that legislation for workers' rights should be standardised on an All-Ireland basis and was a policy area which could be explored and progressed by the North South Ministerial Council. The "Good Jobs" bill would bring tangible benefits to workers' lives across the entire community. Workers' rights transcend the historic community divisions that have hampered political, social and economic progress.

Councillor Taylor stated the Ulster Unionist Party was committed to building an economy that worked for all including within Newry, Mourne and Down District where there were many businesses who were small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). He added his Party was dedicated not only to wealth creation and supporting businesses but also to protecting workers' rights and believed that access to good jobs, where workers had a voice, a decent income, job security, satisfying work and decent working conditions should be integral to public policy.

Councillor Taylor said the Motion presented may sound promising on paper however the finer details were far from ideal. He said the legislation recently presented to the Assembly lacked significant backing and major business endorsements and the UUP party had engaged extensively with businesses including the Federation of Small Businesses which had raised grave concerns about the consultation process for the Bill.

Councillor Taylor stated time was needed to properly scrutinise the legislation being brought forward to the Assembly and the Ulster Unionist Assembly team would hold the Minister to account and ensure that this legislation was thoroughly examined and until such time and the Council should not endorse or support poorly scrutinised legislation

Councillor Sharvin on behalf of SDLP spoke in support of the sentiments of the Motion and following on from a private members bill by his colleagues to address regional balance across the north. He added SDLP wanted to see fair, secure employment and growth and opportunities however it was difficult to have a full and honest debate about something that had not yet been published and shared and given that it was not published it was for the current executive to consider for endorsement and then to the assembly.

Councillor Sharvin proposed an amendment to the Motion to read as follows:
"that this Council calls for the delivery of equal and fair rights for all workers and welcomes the "Good Jobs" Employment Rights legislation currently being considered by the Stormont Executive."

Councillor Finn seconded Councillor Sharvin's proposed amendment.

Councillor D Murphy accepted Councillor Sharvin's amendment.

Councillor Howie spoke in support of the amended Motion on behalf of her Party.

It was noted Councillor Taylor did not support the Motion.

The Chairperson declared the Motion was passed.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Hanlon that this Council calls for the delivery of equal and fair rights for all workers and welcomes the "Good Jobs" Employment Rights legislation currently being considered by the Stormont Executive.**

This bill presents an unparalleled opportunity to grow productive regional economy that benefits our businesses, our workers and their families within the all-Ireland and global economic contexts.

Good jobs, which deliver fair wages, guarantee secure employment, with strong union recognition and collective bargaining rights, are the cornerstone of an economy that values inclusive growth and a fairer distribution of wealth. The bill will ensure the fairer treatment of workers in regard to pay, tips and gratuities, holiday pay and parental leave as well as bringing tangible benefits to workers' lives across our entire community.

This Council endorses strong, progressive workers' rights legislation; to build a strong, regional economy; in which both businesses and workers prosper and we finally begin to eradicate the scourge of workplace inequalities.

C/096/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – VOTING RIGHTS FOR THE ELECTION OF THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

The following Motion was received from Councillor Quinn:

"That this Council notes that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both; recalls that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 counties the right to vote in presidential elections; further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Rice.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Quinn urged Members to support the Motion calling on the Irish Government to fulfil their responsibility and extend the right to vote in Irish presidential elections to the hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens living in the North of Ireland. She said it was long past time for an Irish Government to resolve this unacceptable democratic deficit and set the date for a referendum to allow Irish citizens here to have their say in electing the president of Ireland.

Members were reminded 12 years had passed since 2013, when the constitutional convention in Dublin voted overwhelmingly by a margin of 78% to extend the voting rights to Irish citizens living in the North and abroad. This was an important recognition of the reality of the hundreds of thousands of Irish citizens living here and of the vast Irish diaspora across the globe. That position had since been endorsed by all the main parties in the South.

Councillor Quinn added that despite these strong endorsements, there had been a total lack of progress on delivering this proposal. In 2014, Sinn Féin introduced legislation in the Dáil to give effect to the recommendations of the constitutional convention. In 2017, the Irish Government agreed to hold a referendum on amending article 12 of the Irish constitution to extend voting rights, but no progress had been made since then. Even the 2020 Programme

for Government pledged to deliver this, yet nothing had been done. In another backward step, the current Government had failed to prioritise this measure in its current Programme for Government, representing a regressive omission that denied the clearly defined and recognised rights of Irish citizenship and ran counter to the democratic will of people.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Rice said the Motion called the Irish Government to build a responsibility and finally extend the right to vote in Irish presidential elections. He asked Members to reflect on the unique situation that the District which held both all Ireland titles, the Tailteann Cup and the Sam McGuire yet if the election was held tomorrow, neither the teams nor their supporters would be able to vote in the Irish presidential elections. The Irish Government must give a timeline to set a date for the referendum and finally act on the 12 year commitment to extend voting rights to the North.

Councillor Feehan confirmed SDLP support for the extension of presidential voting rights to Irish citizens in the north which was well established with Council having adopted a position in support of extending the franchise to those in the North back in 2015 and were happy to reaffirm that support today.

Councillor Feehan confirmed SDLP would be supporting the Motion as a vote of confidence for a more inclusive representative Ireland, one where every citizen mattered and one where every vote counted.

Councillor Howie thanked Councillors Quinn and Rice for bringing the Motion and said the Good Friday Agreement recognised the right to identify as British, Irish or both or neither and subsequent legal tests affirming that this applied to citizenships for people from across Northern Ireland, and they can hold British, Irish or both citizenships.

Councillor Taylor commented that motions on voting rights in Presidential Elections had been presented periodically during his time on Council and the most recent one by Sinn Féin may be a response to a Bill presented by Peadar Tobin in the Republic which referred to this same issue. It was clear this had not been a priority issue for successive Irish Governments and there were practical concerns raised by legislators and commentators in the Republic around the constitution such as how people would register, how to verify voters who were abroad and what the political consequences would mean so even in the Republic, there was far from any consensus on the issue. Councillor Taylor stated that with that in mind he would not support any proposal for voting rights to be extended to citizens in Northern Ireland.

Councillor Quinn thanked Members for their support and the Chairperson declared the Motion was passed.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Rice that this Council notes that the 1998 Belfast/Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the north to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both; recalls that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 counties the right to vote in presidential elections; further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby

extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland.

C/097/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – ESTABLISHMENT OF ARTS WORKING GROUP

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

“That NMDDC recognises the impact that regional inequalities in funding has had on our district’s arts sector, acknowledges the support that artists, creatives and groups require and the gap in what they will need in the future, particularly given the closure of Newry Town Hall, and seek to establish an arts working group to provide support and create a roadmap for the sector across our district”.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.25pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 July 2025.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive