

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 4 August 2025 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Campbell

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
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 V Harte	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor C King
Councillor Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
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 G Sharvin	Councillor J Tinnelly

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor L McEvoy	Councillor M Rice
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor H Young	

Officials in attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Health Communities
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: Mr K O'Donnell, Belfast Legal Services

C/111/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Howell, Kearns and Ruane and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism.

The Chairperson stated that the last month had been nothing short of inspiring across Newry, Mourne and Down as he continued to be moved by the selfless spirit of individuals who were committed to bettering their communities, not for recognition but out of genuine

care for others. He stated that these people dedicated their time and energy to causes that built civic pride, preserved shared heritage and enriched local culture.

The Chairperson said that from meeting the volunteers behind brilliant cultural and heritage events like the Ulster Fleadh, Fiddlers Green Festival, Castlewellan Show and the Leitrim Festival he had seen first-hand how community-led efforts helped the community to learn more about traditions and each other.

The Chairperson advised he had had the privilege of spending time with local groups and societies who worked tirelessly to support those in need. He took the opportunity to speak of Marian McGreevy of Newcastle Lions, recently elected District Governor for all Lions Clubs in Ireland and Joan McAteer, now High Chief Ranger of the Irish National Foresters, the first woman to hold the title in the organisation's 146 year history.

The Chairperson said it had been an honour to welcome Economy Minister, Dr Caoimhe Archibald to his hometown of Downpatrick to discuss the important regeneration work being driven by the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group.

C/112/2025 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Sharvin declared an interest in Item 8.2: Letter from Derry City & Strabane District Council in relation to Motion, Call for Central Government Policy and Guidance on applications for data centres.

C/113/2025 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2025

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 July 2025.

C/104/2025: Minutes of Strategic Policy and Resources Committee Meeting 12 June 2023: Newry Canal

Councillor Feehan raised his concerns at the lack of progress on the regeneration of Newry Canal. He made reference to two motions passed at Council that supported the regeneration in November 2024 and April 2025 and despite a call for urgent and visible steps to revitalise the canal there had been no meaningful progress update brought to Councillors.

Councillor Feehan asked that a written update on the Newry Canal Regeneration be brought to the next Council Meeting including a timeline of actions taken since November 2024 including any barriers that had been identified by officers and a plan going forward with milestones.

The Chief Executive advised that in line with Standing Orders reports of that nature did not go to Council but were brought through the relevant Committee and confirmed a report would be brought to the Sustainability and Environment Committee in September 2025

In response to a request from Councillor Feehan, Mrs S Murphy agreed to endeavour to have a report for the August Committee and if not, confirmed it would be presented at September Committee Meeting.

Mrs Murphy took the opportunity to advise work was ongoing in the background at officer level with steps progressing and an update report would be provided as soon as possible.

C/109/2025: Nutrient Action Plan

In response to Councillor Reilly who spoke of the anguish within the farming community and whether a response from the DAERA Minister had been received as yet, the Chief Executive advised any responses were included within the correspondence report presented at item 8 on the agenda.

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 July 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy.**

The Chairperson advised item 4: Call in from Planning Committee held on 19 June 2025 would be taken after items 5 and 6 on the agenda.

C/114/2025 **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 JULY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 7 July 2025 (copy circulated).

*Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15.05.2025:
SPR/073/2025: Approach to City, Town and Village Signage*

In referring to the above and procedural issues he had raised, Councillor Bowsie stated the Chief Executive had not reverted to the Party as she had advised.

The Chief Executive stated she would revert to the DUP after the meeting pointing out that at the time when Councillor Bowsie had raised procedural concerns, she had advised Call-In procedures were set in legislation and not set by Council.

Councillor Bowsie stated his Party had concerns about how the consultation had been dropped from the Report at the 11th hour and that still needed to be looked into regardless of a successful Call-In. He added that if the DUP were to rejoin the Equality and Good Relations Working Group those concerns needed to be taken seriously.

The Chief Executive replied that those concerns had been addressed previously in correspondence with the Party and were taken seriously.

Councillor Sharvin took the opportunity to point out that if Councillor Bowsie had concerns from a procedural perspective that the Audit Committee should consider such.

The Chief Executive reiterated that she had previously responded to those perceived procedural concerns and she could bring a Report back through the SP&R Committee, where the Equality Relations reported and then, if necessary, it would follow through to the Audit Committee.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 July 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

C/115/2025

**COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF
SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26 JUNE 2025**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 26 June 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 26 June 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor O'Hare.

**ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE
LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained in legal proceedings.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

C/116/2025

CALL-IN PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD ON 19 JUNE 2025

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Call-In Planning Committee held on 19 June 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

The Chief Executive highlighted that legal opinion was provided for Members and to go against this may be to their detriment, however, it was their decision to make as to whether they accepted the legal opinion.

Agreed: It was agreed following a recorded vote, the results of which were 21 for, 11 against and no abstentions, to accept the legal advice as provided. **(copy attached)**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor D Murphy that a Report be brought back to the relevant Committee outlining the costs to Council associated with obtaining the legal advice on this matter.

C/117/2025

PLANNING SECTION

There were no issues arising.

C/118/2025

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 4 August 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council in relation to Motion, call for central government policy and guidance on applications for data centres

Councillor Reilly spoke of the importance of this issue as it was putting enormous stress on the electricity system with growing concern among the business community in the South at rising costs of electricity due to the demands data centres were putting on it and that it could affect the whole community.

Councillor Reilly proposed writing back in support of the Motion from Derry City & Strabane Council calling for central government policy and guidance on applications for data centres. Councillor Hanna seconded the proposal.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanna to write to Derry City & Strabane Council offering support to their Motion calling for central government policy and guidance on applications for data centres.

Correspondence received from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in response to NOM – Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support (C/044/2025, C/056/2025, C/093/2025)

Referring to the correspondence received, Councillor Reilly commented that the Home Office was saying to employ local people to do this work yet there was no training facility in Northern Ireland for fishing and that should be examined. He spoke of a commitment several years ago that a College course specifically aimed at the fishing community would be established for skipper's licences, health and safety etc however that had not transpired.

Councillor Reilly pointed out that this would be an incentive that could improve the fishing industry, especially with investment.

Councillor Reilly proposed to write to Southern Regional Education College asking them to work with Council to devise a scheme for the creation of a course to train fishermen. Councillor Hanna seconded the proposal.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanna to write to the Southern Regional Education College asking that they work with Council to devise a scheme for the creation of a course to train fishermen.

Correspondence from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in relation to second homes and short-term holiday rentals

Councillor Truesdale proposed Council carry out a scoping exercise similar to that carried out by Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in relation to the second homes and short-term holiday rentals. Councillor Young seconded the proposal.

In voicing support for the proposal, Councillor Clarke said this was raised by Mournes Councillors a number of years ago and spoke of the importance of establishing a clear picture of the number of second homes and short term holiday lets within the Council area particularly in coastal and major tourism areas.

Councillor Clarke spoke of difficulties faced by low income residents to buy or rent due to increases in price and the exercise would be useful to feed into the Housing Supply Strategy and the Council's Local Development Plan.

In welcoming Councillor Truesdale's proposal, Councillor Sharvin suggested Council write back to Causeway Coast and Glens Council to understand how they were undertaking the exercise to establish if they had an approach Newry Mourne and Down Council could adopt rather than recreating the wheel and if there were any learnings that would be beneficial.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Andrews that Council write to Causeway Coast and Glens Council to request if they had an approach that Newry Mourne and Down District Council could adopt in order to carry out a scoping exercise into the second homes and short-term holiday rentals.**

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

- **Correspondence from Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council in relation to second homes and short-term holiday rentals.**
- **Correspondence from Derry City & Strabane District Council in relation to Motion, call for central government policy and guidance on applications for data centres.**
- **Correspondence received from Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in response to NOM – Fishing Industry Visa and Enhancement Support (C/044/2025, C/056/2025, C/093/2025).**

C/119/2025

CONFERENCES/EVENTS

Read: Report dated 4 August 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Conferences/Events (copy circulated).

Ms Taggart advised nominations were being sought for 6 Councillors to attend the first of a series of Insights Exchange Events by NILGA. Members were asked to forward nominations to the Democratic Services Department.

Agreed: **It was agreed to note the Conference/Event report with nominations for 6 Councillors to attend the Insights Exchange Event by NILGA to be forwarded to the Democratic Services Department.**

C/120/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – VOTING AGE TO BE REDUCED TO 16

The following Motion was received from Councillor Andrews:

"Newry, Mourne and Down District Council welcomes the announcement that the voting age is to be reduced from 18 to 16 ahead of the next Council and Assembly elections in 2027.

Young people deserve a say in who represents them and the future of this island.

This Council calls on the UK government to work with Stormont to ensure the legalisation is implemented successfully".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Finn.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Andrews said this was the third time he had spoken on what was a very important topic, a vote for 16 years up. On previous occasions it had been knocked back by the previous administration but with Labour Governments recent announcement of bringing it through on to the statute book it was to be welcomed and supported.

Councillor Andrews spoke at length at how young people were already active in politics as they marched, organised and the campaigned for change. At 16 they could work, pay tax, marry and serve in armed forces and deserved the right to vote as well. He added young people cared deeply about the future and were often ahead of politicians on major issues such as climate and equality and letting them vote could shift politics to better reflect their needs and priorities.

In the interest of all young people the Motion should go further with the First Minister and and the Deputy First Minister seeking the devolution of the required powers to introduce the legislation. Councillor Andrews asked for support in the interests of the 45,000 young people who were aged 16 and 17 in Northern Ireland by giving them the say that they deserved in their society and in democracy.

Councillor Quinn voiced support for the Motion on behalf of Sinn Féin, stating that every time Members sat in the Chamber they made decisions that directly affected the lives of all people but importantly young people and now finally they would have a direct role in shaping those decisions through the ballot box.

She spoke of how for too long, young people had been sidelined from the democratic process, despite being at the heart of real and lasting change and how at 16, young people could start work, make decisions about their education and pay tax and National Insurance.

In Scotland and Wales, 16 and 17 year olds already had the right to vote and across Europe in Austria, Germany, Malta and others voting rights had been extended to over 16s and the results were clear, a more engaged, informed and representative electorate.

On behalf of the Alliance Party, Councillor Lee-Surginor voiced support for the Motion welcoming the decision to lower the voting age to 16 ahead of the next Council and Assembly elections in 2027. He said young people were already engaged in many aspects of public life and were informed, passionate and directly affected by the decisions made in Council chambers and other legislatures and it was only right that they had a democratic say in shaping the future of this island.

Councillor Lee-Surginor agreed it was vital the UK Government worked closely with Stormont to ensure legislation was implemented smoothly and effectively with proper education and support in place to help young voters make informed choices.

Councillor Bowsie questioned what the Motion was meant to achieve, referring to previous debates where the position on it was clear with the DUP voting against it. He added that the other parties had got what they wanted and that this Motion was just asking for it to be done successfully.

Councillor Bowsie spoke at length about how throughout the globe voting rights were generally reserved for adults. He said 18 was the international recognised age for adulthood and the UN Convention of Rights for the child defined a child as human beings below the age of 18 years and his Party were against children being the target of political campaigns. He spoke of how until 18 they could not take out mortgages, credit cards or personal loans, serve on a jury, get married without permission, watch certain movies or purchase alcohol, tobacco, fireworks etc and for that reason the DUP would be voting against the Motion.

In supporting the Motion, Councillor Truesdale proposed an amendment to include a timeframe and a request for urgent clarification that it would be implemented by the 2027 elections.

Councillor Andrews accepted Councillor Truesdale's amendment.

The Chairperson put Councillor Andrews's amended Motion to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	27
AGAINST:	5
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The Chairperson declared the amended Motion passed.

Councillor Andrews thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Finn that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council welcomes the announcement that the voting age is to be reduced from 18 to 16 ahead of the next Council and Assembly elections in 2027. Young people deserve a say in who represents them and the future of this island. Council calls on the UK**

government to work with Stormont to ensure the legalisation is implemented successfully and request a timeframe and urgent clarification that it would be implemented by the 2027 elections.

C/121/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – PRESIDENT OF IRELAND

The following Motion was received from Councillor Sharvin:

"This Council fully acknowledges the outstanding 14 years President Michael D Higgins has served to his country and the people of this island. Championing equality, inclusion, human rights, and civic ethics — often speaking out on social justice and global solidarity. He notably undertook the first-ever state visit by an Irish President to the UK in April 2014, marking a significant step in post Troubles reconciliation and international diplomacy. This Council will write to President Higgins to thank him for his commitment, passion, and duty of service to the people across this island".

AGREED:

The Motion was deferred to September Council.

C/122/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – FUNDING CUTS BY THE ARTS COUNCIL TO THE NATIONAL YOUTH CHOIR

The following Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

"Newry Mourne and Down District Council expresses disappointment and sadness at the funding cuts by the Arts Council to the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland, acknowledges the significant cultural impact the organisation has on music in Northern Ireland, and calls on the Minister for Communities and Arts Council to intervene to prevent the closure".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Finn said it seemed like Groundhog Day that Council were yet again speaking about cuts to an already beleaguered arts budget.

Members were provided with background information about the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland which was founded in 1999 and how over its 26 year life span the choir had been an exemplar of inclusivity and integration, with a current membership of 360 young people. The choir had been a platform for thousands of young singers from across Northern Ireland and a career platform for well-known performers many of whom who had gone on to represent Northern Ireland on the world stage.

Councillor Finn stated that whilst this cut was appalling, it was not at all a surprise given the current arts picture across the North. Since 2009 there had been 66% fall in public spending in this region on arts, comparatively to 18% in Wales and 22% in Scotland and this region would now be the only one across the islands without a choir for young people.

Councillor Finn pointed out the purpose of the Motion was not to place blame but to ask that action was taken to prevent an act of cultural vandalism and support young people who wanted to develop their talents and write to the Communities Minister and the Arts Council

to find a way forward to prevent the collapse of this institution as well as writing to ask the other 10 Councils to do the same.

The amended Motion read as follows:

"Newry Mourne and Down District Council expresses disappointment and sadness at the funding cuts by the Arts Council to the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland, acknowledges the significant cultural impact the organisation has on music in Northern Ireland, and calls on the Minister for Communities and Arts Council to intervene to prevent the closure and write to ask the other 10 Councils to do the same".

Councillor King on behalf of Sinn Féin voiced support for the Motion and expressed concern over the recent decision by the Arts Council to withdraw funding from the National Youth Choir. He stated this was a major blow for the North especially to the young people of Newry and Armagh who had benefited so much from this organisation over the years.

Councillor King stated this decision was the direct result of over a decade of austerity forced upon public services by a British government that had shown time and again that it did not prioritise the arts and the wellbeing of communities.

Councillor Jackson stated the DUP also shared concern at the impact of the decision by the Arts Council had on those involved in the National Youth Chor for Northern Ireland including individuals and communities benefiting from their activities. He added his Party believed youth art should receive fair and adequate funding and whilst the Communities Minister was unable to intervene in what was an operational matter he was continuing to make the case for increased investment in the Arts.

Councillor McAteer voiced support for the Motion stating he was flabbergasted when the news broke and how the Youth Choir was unique and very important for young people to get involved in broadening their horizons in culture and arts and hoped it would be reinstated.

Councillor Young confirmed the Alliance Party supported the Motion and spoke of how this decision meant Northern Ireland was the only one of the UK's national regions not to support a youth choir. She added over the past year four organisations had been forced to close and a fifth with Coleraine's Riverside Theatre, closing its doors for the last time on 1 August.

The Chairperson declared the Motion was unanimously passed.

Councillor Finn thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Sharvin that Newry Mourne and Down District Council expresses disappointment and sadness at the funding cuts by the Arts Council to the National Youth Choir of Northern Ireland, acknowledges the significant cultural impact the organisation has on music in Northern Ireland, and calls on the Minister for Communities and Arts Council to intervene to prevent the closure and write to ask the other 10 Councils to do the same.

The following Motion was received from Councillor Feehan:

"That this Council:

Recognises the urgent need for patients in Northern Ireland requiring CAR-T cell therapy to have timely and compassionate access to treatment closer to home.

Notes with deep sadness the death of Catherine Sherry, who passed away on 12th May 2025, aged just 42, in King's College Hospital, London, while receiving CAR-T treatment. Commends the courage and commitment of Fergal Sherry and his sons, who are now advocating for CAR-T treatment to be made available to Northern patients at St James's Hospital in Dublin.

Acknowledges that the Department of Health in the Republic has an existing Memorandum of Understanding on All-Island Cancer Services, signed following the Good Friday Agreement in 1999 and renewed in 2021, which provides a framework for cross-border cooperation in oncology.

Further recognises that CAR-T treatment will not be available in Northern Ireland until 2030/31 at the earliest, and that access to St James's Hospital — where CAR-T services are already in place — would allow patients to receive treatment within driving distance of home, with the vital support of their families.

We therefore call on:

- 1. The NI Department of Health to immediately begin negotiations with their counterparts in the Republic to secure access to CAR-T therapy at St James's Hospital for eligible Northern Ireland patients;*
- 2. The Irish Government to support and facilitate this cooperation as a matter of urgency;*
- 3. This Council to write formally to Ministers Mike Nesbitt and Jennifer Carroll MacNeill requesting their intervention;*
- 4. Other councils across Northern Ireland to support this motion and stand in solidarity with Fergal Sherry, his family, and all others who may face similar hardship".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Devlin.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Feehan advised he had brought it forward on behalf of the family of Catherine Sherry, wife to Fergal and mother of three young boys along with Catherine's aunts who cared for her sons whilst she was receiving treatment in London. Catherine's aunts had joined Members in the chamber.

Councillor Feehan spoke of how Catherine had passed away in May this year while undergoing CAR-T treatment in King's College Hospital in London. The treatment was working but the repeated air travel, while severely immune suppressed had weakened Catherine and left her unable to fight the infection which led to her death. Catherine passed away far from home and far from her children.

Members were advised the treatment that Catherine needed was available just 60 miles away in Dublin but she could not access it as there was still no agreement between the Department of Health in the North and their counterparts in Dublin to allow Northern patients to access the specialist therapy in the Republic despite it being routinely delivered in St James's.

Councillor Feehan pointed out it was not a capacity issue nor a funding issue, it was a political failure and note there had already been a commitment both North and South to work together on cancer care and referred to how following the Good Friday, a tripartite

arrangement had been established to enhance cancer research, promote education and training and underpin improved cancer care on the island of Ireland.

Councillor Feehan further advised that Lymphoma Action UK warned that flying put cancer patients at serious risk of blood clots, deep vein thrombosis and increased risk of infection and asked Members to support the motion and make a strong and collective call on government to act now and establish an All-Island pathway for CAR-T treatment.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Devlin stated operating on a cross-border basis in terms of health and proposals of this nature were right and proper and had to happen from a humane perspective. She added no family should be separated and the heartbreak that Catherine's family had to endure should not happen to any family ever again.

Councillor Lee-Surginor expressed full support for the Motion and commended the compassion and urgency behind it and spoke of how it was tragic that the Sherry family had to travel to London for CAR-T cell therapy, a journey made more difficult by distance, stress, and the emotional toll of separation when such treatment could have been accessed a few hours away from their home in Northern Ireland.

Councillor Lee-Surginor spoke of how Northern Ireland was lagging behind when it came to new medical technology being implemented and how his mother had to travel to Hong Kong for Proton therapy. He said whilst he acknowledged that CAR-T treatment was not yet available in Northern Ireland, that could not be an excuse for inaction.

Councillor Hearty on behalf Sinn Féin voiced support for the Motion and reiterated previous points made that the specific treatment Catherine needed was not available in the north, it was available in Dublin, just over an hour away from the family home and the stress that caused in an already stressful situation with air travel presenting additional risks for patients undergoing this treatment. He confirmed Sinn Féin fully supported the family's campaign for all-Ireland provision of CAR T-cell therapy to make sure no other family had to endure what this family went through. He stated it was owed to all patients, present and future to fight for the highest level of healthcare to be accessible to all citizens going forward.

Councillor Hanna on behalf of DUP voiced support for the Motion and the need to expedite the work required to embed this service within Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland as soon as possible. He stated his Party supported cross-border corporation for health and care mutual benefit in terms of timely access to vital services and treatment however this should not be at the expense of Northern Ireland and access to the wider NHS and should enable referrals which could not be delivered in Northern Ireland. He added decisions should be taken not on the basis of politics but on clinical evidence and what was best in terms of maximising outcomes of cancer patients and everybody should get the same treatment.

The Chairperson declared the Motion was unanimously passed.

Councillor Feenan thanked Members for their support for the Motion and asked all Councillors to work with party colleagues to influence change at the Executive to facilitate access for this treatment in Dublin.

On behalf of Council, Members from each Party passed on their condolences to Catherine's family.

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Devlin that That this Council: Recognises the urgent need for patients in Northern Ireland requiring CAR-T cell therapy to have timely and compassionate access to treatment closer to home. Notes with deep sadness the death of Catherine Sherry, who passed away on 12th May 2025, aged just 42, in King's College Hospital, London, while receiving CAR-T treatment. Commends the courage and commitment of Fergal Sherry and his sons, who are now advocating for CAR-T treatment to be made available to Northern patients at St James's Hospital in Dublin. Acknowledges that the Department of Health in the Republic has an existing Memorandum of Understanding on All-Island Cancer Services, signed following the Good Friday Agreement in 1999 and renewed in 2021, which provides a framework for cross-border cooperation in oncology. Further recognises that CAR-T treatment will not be available in Northern Ireland until 2030/31 at the earliest, and that access to St James's Hospital — where CAR-T services are already in place — would allow patients to receive treatment within driving distance of home, with the vital support of their families. We therefore call on:

- 1. The NI Department of Health to immediately begin negotiations with their counterparts in the Republic to secure access to CAR-T therapy at St James's Hospital for eligible Northern Ireland patients;**
- 2. The Irish Government to support and facilitate this cooperation as a matter of urgency;**
- 3. This Council to write formally to Ministers Mike Nesbitt and Jennifer Carroll MacNeill requesting their intervention;**
- 4. Other councils across Northern Ireland to support this motion and stand in solidarity with Fergal Sherry, his family, and all others who may face similar hardship.**

C/124/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – AUTISM FRIENDLY TOWNS

The following Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

"Acknowledging the Councils good work in the promotion of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Masterclasses for Employers. That this Council reinstates the action to continue the Promotion of Newcastle as an Autism Friendly town in the next Disability Action Plan as this was not included to sit within the finalised Disability Action Plan 2023-2027 and that the learning from this initiative now extends to all towns across the district in the next Action Plan. In the interim period Council sets up the disability forum and returns with regular progress updates on the inclusion of neurodiversity within the Disability Action Plan. This would include using best practice from Autism charities and Neurodiversity partnerships and the setting up of learning and awareness events".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Young.

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.45pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 September 2025.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 4 August 2025 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Vote to accept the Legal Advice as provided regarding Call-in

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	1			
C Bowsie		1		
J Brennan				1
P Byrne	2			
P Campbell	3			
W Clarke	4			
L Devlin	5			
C Enright		2		
K Feehan				2
D Finn				3
C Galbraith	6			
M Gibbons		3		
O Hanlon	7			
G Hanna		4		
V Harte	8			
M Hearty	9			
R Howell				4
T Kelly				5
J Jackson		5		
G Kearns				6
C King	10			
M Larkin	11			
D Lee-Surginor		6		
A Lewis		7		
O Magennis	12			
A Mathers	13			
D McAteer	14			
L McEvoy	15			
D Murphy	16			
K Murphy	17			
S Murphy	18			
S O'Hare	19			
A Quinn	20			
H Reilly		8		
M Rice				7
M Ruane				8
G Sharvin	21			
D Taylor				9
J Tinnelly		9		
J Truesdale		10		
H Young		11		
TOTALS	21	11	0	9