

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 6 October 2025 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Campbell

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor T Howie	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor A King
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor H Young	

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor R Howell
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor J Truesdale

Officials in attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Health Communities
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

C/140/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, McEvoy and Gibbons.

Councillor Campbell offered heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of Oran Marron, a young Crossmaglen man who had moved to Australia and had, sadly, recently made his final journey home. He extended his condolences to Oran's Crossmaglen Rangers teammates.

The Chairperson also expressed the Council's sorrow on the passing of Manchán Magan, who had made a significant contribution to Irish culture, heritage, history, folklore, and the Irish language. He noted that Mr. Magan was a unique character and a national treasure who would be sadly missed.

Councillor Campbell condemned the disgraceful and cowardly act in which a viable device had been left outside the constituency office of Liz Kimmins MLA and Daire Hughes MP, describing it as a blatant disregard for the safety of the citizens of Newry.

Reflecting on the previous month, Councillor Campbell stated that he was reminded of the principles of care and support in service of others and wished to acknowledge four remarkable groups that embodied those values. He commended PIPS for its work in raising awareness of suicide; Positive Futures, which recently celebrated its 30th anniversary; Downpatrick Family and Autism Support for its advocacy on behalf of families with children with autism; and Cuan Mhuire for its continuous and tireless support for families and individuals affected by addiction across the District.

Councillor Campbell emphasised that organisations such as these served as reminders of shared humanity that offered support to all, regardless of background, ethnicity, or religion. He highlighted that their collective endeavours represented the best of community and exemplified selfless service. He added that their compassion and understanding should inspire everyone to build stronger and kinder communities.

Councillor Campbell extended his thanks to Councillor Sharvin for his many years of service and wished him every success in his future endeavours.

Councillor Campbell also noted that an emergency Notice of Motion had been received, which would be dealt with at the appropriate time during the meeting.

C/141/2025 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/142/2025 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2025

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 September 2025.

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 September 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.**

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/143/2025 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 SEPTEMBER 2025

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 1 September 2025 (copy circulated).

C/110/2025 – Notice of Motion, ReGen Waste, Warrenpoint: In response to a query from Councillor Ruane, Mrs Ward advised that a response had not yet been received as yet.

Councillor Ruane stated that the odour surrounding the harbour in recent weeks was foul and that the lack of response from the Minister, following a request to meet to discuss the issue, was unacceptable.

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 1 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Devlin.**

C/144/2025 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26 AUGUST 2025**

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

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 26 August 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Quinn.**

C/145/2025 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 22 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 22 September 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 22 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor D Murphy.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/146/2025 **MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 8 September 2025 (copy circulated).

ERT/086/2025 – Establishment of Arts Working Group – Notice of Motion

Councillor Bowsie commended Councillor Finn for bringing the motion forward and expressed his eagerness to be involved. He referred to a previous motion to establish an Ulster Scots Working Group, which received a response at the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee in October 2022 that stated that Council aimed to reduce the number of working groups due to their volume. He expressed concern regarding what he perceived as inconsistency towards his community and queried when the Council's position on working

groups had been amended.

Mrs Ward advised that the Ulster Scots Working Group was being considered under the Equality and Good Relations Forum and was included on the agenda for its upcoming meeting. She explained that it would be for the Forum to discuss and make a recommendation to the Committee for action.

Councillor Taylor expressed his wish to contribute to the Arts Working Group and queried how its members would be identified.

Mr Mallon confirmed that the first meeting of the Arts Working Group was scheduled for the current week with a skeleton membership and advised that it would be for the members of the group to determine any expansion to the membership.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the public consultation, noting that it was long overdue, but expressed concern that the Arts Working Group had been established within a short timeframe, with its first meeting arranged prior to ratification at full Council. He stated that both the Irish Language and Ulster Scots had legal recognition, yet more than ten years after Council amalgamation, an Ulster Scots Working Group had still not been established.

Councillor Hanlon stated that her Party had always been, and continued to be, supportive of establishing an Ulster Scots Working Group, expressing her confusion as to why the Arts Working Group had progressed more quickly.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 8 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Kearns.**

C/147/2025

**MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 September 2025 (copy circulated).

SPR/150/2025 – Castlewellan Forest Park Resources

Councillor Devlin welcomed the additional resource, stating that there was a notable difference within the area.

SPR/145/2025 – Reserves Policy

Councillor Hanna expressed concern that the item had been tabled with limited detail, stating that he would be unable to support the policy without further information. He urged all Councillors to adopt the same position and proposed that the item be deferred to allow additional information to be provided. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Lewis.

Mrs Kelly advised that she had previously discussed the document in detail with other Members and confirmed she would be happy to meet with Councillor Hanna regarding the matter. She reminded Members that a policy, by its nature, was a high-level principle of governance and therefore would not contain extensive operational detail.

Councillor Hanna reiterated his objection to approving a policy he believed lacked sufficient detail and queried whether an existing reserves policy was already in place.

Mrs Kelly clarified that the item before Members was to establish a formal reserves policy, noting that the current process operated as an agreed procedure rather than a policy.

Councillor Taylor stated that he supported the principle of a reserves policy but wished to ensure that all Members were clear about what was being proposed. He supported Councillor Hanna's proposal to defer the item to allow for further information, acknowledging the policy's importance for governance but emphasising the need for Member confidence in its content.

Councillor Hanlon advised that she had previously engaged in a detailed discussion with officers regarding the policy in order to provide feedback to her Party. She reiterated that, in line with good governance, the policy would strengthen the Council's financial position, but she supported Councillor Hanna's proposal to allow for additional scrutiny.

Councillor Byrne highlighted the importance of good governance in relation to reserves and expressed his Party's frustration concerning the rates-setting process and usable reserves. He supported the proposal to defer the item but requested that it be re-tabled before the commencement of the rates-setting process.

Councillor Reilly stated that he had full confidence in Mrs Kelly to present a comprehensive paper on the matter and although he had voted against the proposal at Committee, he recognised that some colleagues wished to obtain an independent view from the auditor.

SPR/147/2025 – AHC Capital Projects Delivery

Councillor Finn wished to congratulate the officers involved in progressing the project to date and welcomed the forward momentum of the project.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, with the exception of SPR/145/2025.**

SPR/145/2025: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Lewis, to defer the item to allow additional information to be provided.

C/148/2025

MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 SEPTEMBER 2025

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 15 September 2025 (copy circulated).

AHC/074/2025 – Council of Sanctuary

Councillor Byrne stated that the Council chamber was a place for political debate where differing views should be respected and discussions conducted with honesty, openness,

respect and transparency. He emphasised that while political disagreement was expected, debate must be grounded in truth and integrity and he reminded members that Councillors were also human beings, motivated by concern for the safety, dignity, and truth that should underpin the Council's work.

Councillor Byrne clarified that "Council of Sanctuary" status did not relate to immigration policy, describing claims to the contrary as false and dangerous, reiterating that immigration policy was determined by Westminster and the Home Office, not by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council. He criticised the DUP for what he described as a deliberate misrepresentation of this fact, alleging that DUP members had voted against receiving further information about the proposal, then claimed publicly that such information had been withheld. Councillor Byrne asserted that this was dishonest and had contributed to the spread of misinformation and hostility.

Councillor Byrne stated that the misinformation had fuelled unprecedented levels of abuse directed at councillors, including online attacks labelling members as "traitors" and directing misogynistic slurs at female councillors. He cited examples of such language, describing it as violent, degrading, and hypocritical. He condemned the racist abuse directed at a Councillor from a Chinese-background and noted other instances of threats, intimidation, and accusations of corruption, describing them as a "coordinated campaign of threats and intimidation" and asked the DUP directly whether they supported or condemned such behaviour.

Councillor Byrne further condemned attempts to vilify members who supported inclusion and diversity, referencing online posts questioning councillors' support for LGBT people, ethnic minorities, and Palestinians. He affirmed that this representation reflected his own values and stated, as a gay councillor, that he would not apologise for standing publicly with the LGBT community.

He stated that he had represented the Council at events at the DUP's request and asked whether that same inclusivity extended to LGBT people and ethnic minorities, or whether those groups were to be excluded under a false narrative that they were a threat. He declared that he would not be intimidated or silenced for standing for inclusion and justice.

Councillor Byrne posed direct questions to the DUP, asking whether they accepted the accuracy of information provided by Council officers regarding the Council of Sanctuary proposal, whether they condemned threats made against councillors, and whether they believed that people who looked, worshipped, or loved differently should be excluded from the protections of the Council.

Councillor Hanna responded to comments made by Councillor Byrne, stating that he perceived them as a rant and that they had insulted himself, his Party, and everyone who worked alongside the DUP. He confirmed that he had attended and spoken at a recent rally but emphasised that he had not threatened anyone nor had he shared false information. He further stated that he did not believe the information received from Council had been substantiated by any other sources and that he had been advised of contrary information. He reiterated that his Party's position was that immigration should be properly managed to ensure available resources, such as housing and healthcare, could be effectively allocated.

Councillor Hanna also stated that it had been a Council officer who had suggested the option to join the Council of Sanctuary initiative, and confirmed that he would not support the proposal, asserting that such an item should have been tabled by a Councillor rather than a

Council officer.

Councillor Jackson stated that any response from the DUP regarding the item had focused solely on the information provided and was not related to accusations about immigration. He acknowledged that there was an immigration crisis both domestically and in Europe and emphasised that the DUP was listening to the public and sought to give voice to those with genuine concerns regarding the impact of illegal and uncontrolled immigration, particularly given the unprecedented pressures on schools and healthcare. He highlighted that ratepayers should not face additional burdens resulting from the unauthorised arrival of individuals.

Councillor Jackson queried the merit of introducing a policy that might encourage further illegal and uncontrolled immigration, noting that it could grant external bodies influence over Council policy. He further stated that the Council already had policies in place that aligned with the principles of the Council of Sanctuary charter.

Cllr O'Hare left the meeting at this stage – 6.54pm

Councillor Lewis condemned any threats directed towards elected representatives, emphasising that all individuals should be able to carry out their duties without fear of violence. He stated that Councillor Byrne had encouraged the perception that the DUP were bigoted or racist, despite their actions reflecting a democratic objection to a policy that Council officers were attempting to progress.

Councillor Lewis referenced members of the public present in the chamber, noting that they had contacted every elected representative, but the DUP were the only group who had listened. He stated that he welcomed legal immigrants and that the entire District should be a District of Sanctuary, regardless of your background but asked that the policy was examined fully. He clarified that the objections raised were not against immigration in general but specifically concerned singling out a particular minority for special status.

Councillor Reilly addressed Councillor Byrne's statement that the DUP had not received any information from Council regarding the Council of Sanctuary prior to attending the rally in Newry. He noted that Councillors had received a restricted document and stated that Members had been advised that an Equality Impact Assessment was unnecessary, as the matter was not considered controversial.

Councillor Reilly emphasised that, according to the rules of the Council of Sanctuary, any proposal to join must be brought to Council via a Notice of Motion and it was therefore inconceivable for a Council officer to act independently in bringing the item forward for consideration. He also remarked that statements asserting that immigration was managed by the Home Office were irrelevant, given that the Home Office had subcontracted aspects of immigration handling to private companies and questioned whether Members could be confident that these private companies would not acquire properties within the District.

Councillor Taylor condemned the threats made against elected representatives, urging Members to exercise caution with their language and to avoid making accusations without supporting evidence. He stated that, following his engagement with the public, he had raised concerns about the Council signing up to a proposal over which it would effectively have no control. He emphasised the importance of wording in the documentation, noting that the decision stating an Equality Impact Assessment was not required because there were "no adverse impacts at this time" did not guarantee that there would be no adverse impacts in

the future.

Councillor Finn addressed the recent abuse she had received, emphasising that individuals did not come into office to be treated in such a manner. She refuted claims that she had ignored the people of Newry and requested that any questions regarding the information provided by Council be addressed within the Council chamber, which she stated was the appropriate forum for open and frank discussion on the relevant matters.

Councillor D Murphy offered his solidarity to those who had been subjected to abuse, commending them for standing up for their beliefs. He stated that it appeared some individuals either did not want to understand the information provided or simply did not read it. He referenced recent staffing challenges at Daisy Hill Hospital, noting the recruitment of clinical staff from India to maintain services for the District and surrounding areas. He highlighted that some of these staff members had been targets of racist abuse, which had led a trade union to hold a rally in support of international staff, commenting on those who had attended and those who had not. He commended colleagues who had faced abuse while standing up for their principles and expressed hope that, following the Council's decision, the matter would be concluded, stating that he did not want to live in a world dominated by hatred and division.

Councillor Howie expressed support for Councillor Byrne's statement and conveyed her disappointment with the DUP and UUP Parties. She extended her solidarity to those who had suffered recent abuse as a result of misinformation that had been circulated. She emphasised that the issue was not about illegal immigration and stated that she did not believe there was an immigration crisis, citing recent ONS figures that showed only a marginal increase in net population, with this District being the only area to record a decrease. She reiterated that misinformation was misleading and was impeding the critical work of supporting minority communities within the Council area.

Councillor Lewis stated that it was not his responsibility to raise questions on behalf of the objectors, noting that he understood they were not DUP supporters but were simply engaging with a Councillor who had responded to them.

The Chairperson called the meeting to order following interjections by Councillors Finn and Hanna. He reprimanded Councillor Finn for her interruption and Councillor Hanna for his language directed towards a fellow Councillor.

Councillor Finn subsequently apologised for her interruption.

Councillor Reilly stated that Councillor D Murphy was deliberately conflating the issues of immigration and illegal immigration, emphasising that the DUP was fully supportive of Daisy Hill staff. He addressed Councillor Byrne, condemning a statement made suggesting the DUP was anti-gay, describing it as wholly inappropriate.

Councillor Reilly also highlighted that certain issues remained unresolved, including the need for a coordinated approach among all UK Councils and the potential implications for Council actions within the District. He noted that this information had not yet been provided by Council officers.

Councillor Jackson queried whether an Equality Impact Assessment had been carried out and, if so, whether it would be possible for Members to have sight of it.

Mr Patterson advised that equality screening had been conducted and would be reported in the quarterly screening report as per Council Policy, confirming that this information had already been provided to all Members on several occasions.

Councillor Hanna proposed to remove the item from the agenda entirely. This was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

Councillor Hanna requested a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows: (copy attached)

FOR	6
AGAINST	31
ABSTENTION	0

The proposal was declared lost.

AHC/080/2025 – Newcastle Centre Site Selection

Councillor Clarke emphasised the importance of agreeing the next steps regarding the Newcastle Centre Site Selection, stating that the project could not tolerate further delays. He noted that many considered the proposed location appropriate, particularly given the active travel measures required to help mitigate climate change. Highlighting that the issue had been under discussion for 24 years with numerous public consultation events, he proposed that the contents of the report on the development of the Newcastle Centre be noted, identifying it as the preferred site for redevelopment into a modern leisure complex.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Hanna, who expressed concern over the level of misinformation surrounding the project and stated that it was now time for action.

Councillor Devlin emphasised the importance of maintaining momentum on the project, noting that Councillor Truesdale had not been an elected representative during the majority of discussions and suggested meeting with the Director of Active and Healthy Communities to review the project's progress to date. She stressed the need for all Members to be united on moving the project forward.

Councillor Truesdale stated that her inquiry had been limited to understanding which sites had been scoped and the reasons for any rejections, referencing a previous proposal to build a base station in Donard Park if available space in Newcastle was so limited.

Councillor Reilly thanked officers for their work to date and stressed that the project should remain a high priority for Council.

Mr Patterson advised that Council would soon be in a position to appoint a consultancy team to advance the proposal to the planning stage. He confirmed that this would be tabled for decision at a forthcoming Active & Healthy Communities Committee meeting and that details of the site selection process could be provided at a DEA meeting if required.

Councillor Campbell confirmed that all Members were in agreement with the proposal.

Agreed:

The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 15 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor

Brennan, with the exception of AHC/080/2025.

AHC/080/2025 – It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanna, to note the contents of the report on the development of the Newcastle Centre as the preferred site for the redevelopment into a modern leisure complex.

C/149/2025

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 16 September 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 16 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Feehan.

C/150/2025

PLANNING SECTION

There were no issues arising.

C/151/2025

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 6 October 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Correspondence from SEHSCT in response to NOM, Enhancement of Services at Downe. (C/058/2025)

Councillor Hanlon both welcomed and expressed concern over the communication, noting that it detailed the good services available in the Downe, however she stated that it did not address what had been asked for within the Notice of Motion. She proposed to write back to the SEHSCT and request that the Notice of Motion be addressed.

Councillor Galbraith seconded the proposal and also to include a request that the associated consultation report be formally tabled at the Council's Health Working Group as an opportunity to remain informed, engaged and in a position to represent the community effectively with any future developments. Councillor Hanlon accepted this as part of her proposal.

Correspondence from Home Office in response to NOM – Fishing Industry & Enhancement Support (C/044/2025)

Councillor Rice noted the cross-party consensus that the motion had achieved, stating that the response did not give him any confidence that the issues raised would be addressed, but exacerbated. He expressed his frustration that the fishing industry was under immense pressure and would only get worse.

*Correspondence from Health Minister in response to NOM – CAR-T Cell Therapy
(C/123/2025)*

Councillor Feehan expressed his disappointment with the response, stating that it largely reiterated the Department of Health's (DoH) position. He highlighted that, since the motion had been passed, his Party had tabled the item at Stormont for debate and had facilitated a blood cancer round table at Parliament, which included senior clinicians, haematologists, representatives from Blood Cancer UK, and families impacted by the diseases. He noted that the outcomes of the round table were concerning, as they conflicted with the DoH information regarding timelines for delivery and capacity issues.

Councillor Feehan confirmed that the Minister had invited Members of Stormont to test the assertions of his Department at the Health Committee if they were dissatisfied with its position. He proposed that Council write to the Assembly Health Committee requesting that they examine the Minister's assertions regarding the timeline and capacity for delivering CAR-T Cell therapy at City Hospital, in consultation with the relevant clinical experts.

This was seconded by Councillor Byrne.

Cllr Enright left the meeting at this stage – 7.33pm

Councillor Hearty noted the positive note that the communication had opened on, recognising the benefits of establishing cross border health care and patient care. He noted the disappointing end of the communication, summarising the communication as the Minister advising that things just were the way they were, with patients having to travel to England while suffering from a horrific illness. He expressed his support for Councillor Feehan's proposal.

*Correspondence from NI Fish Producers Organisation in response to arranging a visit
(C/128/2025)*

Councillor Reilly proposed all Councillors to take up the invite from NI Fish Producers Organisation, which was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Councillor Campbell requested that any interested Councillors advise Democratic Services so that a date could be arranged.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Galbraith, that Council respond to the SEHSCT communication and ask that the original Notice of Motion be addressed, and that Council request a copy of the associated consultation report be formally tabled at the Health Working Group as an opportunity to remain informed, engaged and in the position to represent the community effectively with any future developments**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Byrne, Council write to the Assembly Health Committee and request that they test the Minister's assertions in relation to timeline and capacity of delivering CAR-T Cell therapy at City**

Hospital, in conjunction with the relevant clinical experts.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanna that any Member who wished to avail of the visit to the NI Fish Producers training facility in Portavogie should contact Democratic Services.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Magennis to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:

- Correspondence from SEHSCT in response to NOM – Enhancement of Services at Downe (C/058/2025)
- Correspondence from Health Minister in response to NOM – CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025)
- Correspondence from Home Office in response to NOM – Fishing Industry & Enhancement Support (C/044/2025)
- Correspondence from NI Fish Producers Organisation in response to arranging a visit (C/128/2025)

C/152/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – DUNLEATH PARK SAFE SPACE FOR DOG OWNERS

The following Motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

"This Council acknowledges growing concerns from members of the public regarding dog fouling and incidents involving off-lead dogs at Dunleath Playing Fields. In response, this Council agrees to explore the feasibility of creating a secure, fenced area within Dunleath Playing Fields where dog owners can safely exercise their dogs off-lead. Such a facility would help promote responsible dog ownership, reduce the risk of dog-related incidents in shared public areas, and provide a dedicated, safe space for dogs and their owners."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor A King.

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

C/153/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – LADIES WITH LETTERS

The following Motion was received from Councillor Finn (deferred from September 2025):

"Newry, Mourne and Down recognises the courage and bravery of the 'ladies with letters' campaign group who are representing 17,500 women, will amplify their frustration with the Department of Health and will write to the Minister of Health to show our support for their continued calls for an independent inquiry".

Councillor Finn noted that the week commencing 6 October 2025 marked two years since 17,500 women within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust were informed that their cervical smear tests may have been reviewed incorrectly. She acknowledged the courage of those affected and expressed concern over continued delays in follow-up reports. She supported the Ladies with Letters campaign and reaffirmed the Council's call for an independent inquiry, urging women to continue attending screening appointments.

Councillor A King seconded the motion and described it as deeply personal to many. She praised the bravery of the campaigners and stated that the scandal represented a betrayal of trust. She called for a statutory inquiry and affirmed the SDLP's full support.

Councillor K Murphy welcomed the motion and confirmed Sinn Féin's support for an independent inquiry. She emphasised the importance of listening to the lived experiences of affected women and stated that answers were long overdue.

Councillor Young confirmed Alliance Party support for the motion. She highlighted the long-standing impact of cervical screening failures and called for a fully independent public inquiry, recognising the dignity and persistence of those affected.

Councillor Devlin stated that many women in the district had been devastated by the scandal and continued to seek truth and accountability. She supported a statutory inquiry and urged the Council to send a clear message to the Department of Health. She encouraged continued participation in screening and expressed full support for the motion.

Councillor Hanna described the situation as a disgrace and questioned the lack of scrutiny in the screening process. He emphasised the urgency of addressing the failings and confirmed the DUP's support for the motion.

Councillor Taylor commended the Ladies with Letters group for their advocacy and supported their call for a statutory independent public inquiry. He expressed hope that their concerns would be addressed and that confidence in the screening system would be restored.

Councillor Finn thanked Members for their input and support for the Motion.

The Chairperson declared the Motion passed unanimously.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor A King that Newry, Mourne and Down recognises the courage and bravery of the 'ladies with letters' campaign group who are representing 17,500 women, will amplify their frustration with the Department of Health and will write to the Minister of Health to show our support for their continued calls for an independent inquiry.

The following Motion was received from Councillor Quinn:

"This Council notes the growing public discussion on the constitutional future of this island and recognises the provision within the Good Friday Agreement for the people of Ireland to decide that future through referendums. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Office of An Taoiseach, urging the Irish Government to plan and prepare for Irish unity through the following actions:

- Establish an all-island Citizens' Assembly and a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish Unity;*
- Produce and publish a plan towards Irish unity in conjunction with civic society and key stakeholders, including local government;*
- Work to secure a date for a referendum on unity, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement.*

This Council further commits to ensuring that the voices of people across Newry, Mourne and Down are heard as part of this important conversation about the future of our island."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

AGREED:

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

Councillor Tinnelly left the meeting at this stage – 7.49pm

Councillor Byrne raised a point of order seeking clarity on the referral of the previous Motion to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group suggesting that this represented an overstretch of Standing Orders, as in his view the Motion did not fall within the remit of any committee.

He stated that the Motion simply proposed writing a letter to the Irish Government on a matter only it could enact. He noted that it had long been the Council's position that motions involving correspondence with external bodies beyond its remit should not be referred to committee. He argued that the Motion was being incorrectly conflated with a previous New Ireland Motion, which involved establishing a working group within the Council's remit. Councillor Byrne expressed concern that referring such motions under Standing Order 16.1.6 to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group was inappropriate, particularly when unanimous agreement was required for their return. He maintained that the Council had the authority to write to external bodies and that the Motion should be heard.

Councillor Taylor expressed support for the Motion being referred to the Equality and Good Relations Working Group, acknowledging the potential implications for community relations and the importance of appropriate scrutiny.

The Chairperson clarified that the referral had been prompted by the wording of the Motion's final sentence. Councillor Byrne referenced a separate Motion involving correspondence with the United States and underscored the need for consistency.

He also cited a previous instance in which the Council had issued a letter concerning the Irish Presidential Election, which had been discussed in the Chamber.

The Chairperson affirmed that the decision to refer the Motion had been made at his discretion and stated that he stood by that decision.

C/155/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – MURDER OF CHARLIE KIRK

The following Motion was received from Councillor Lewis:

"That this Council notes with deep concern the murder of Charlie Kirk, a prominent American political commentator, who was shot and killed while exercising his right to speak at a public event; believes that freedom of speech and expression are hard-won cornerstones of democracy; remembers those who have been targeted by terrorists in Northern Ireland due to their political and religious beliefs; resolves to condemn the murder of Charlie Kirk and reaffirm our commitment to the principle of free speech; and further, that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council sends our condolences to his wife Erika and their two young children."

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Lewis expressed deep concern over the murder of Charlie Kirk, a prominent American political commentator, who was killed while exercising his right to free speech. He stated that the attack represented both a personal tragedy and a broader assault on democratic principles. Councillor Lewis reflected on Northern Ireland's history of politically motivated violence and stressed the importance of defending democratic values and protecting freedom of expression. He noted Mr Kirk's global influence, particularly among young people, and requested that the Council send condolences to Mr Kirk's wife and children.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Bowsie reaffirmed the Council's commitment to free speech and non-violence. He paid tribute to Mr Kirk as a respected advocate of conservative Christian values, noting his respectful approach to public debate and his influence on young people and described Mr Kirk as a man of faith who was killed for expressing his beliefs.

Councillor Mathers proposed an amendment to the Motion as follows;

"That this Council notes with deep concern the murder of Charlie Kirk, a prominent American political commentator, who was shot and killed while exercising his right to speak at a public event; believes that freedom of speech and expression are hard-won cornerstones of democracy; Notes with grave concern recent politically motivated violence and attacks on free speech; acknowledges that free speech and expression, within the law, are foundational to any democratic system and celebrates the diversity of our identities, religious or none, sexual orientation, gender, disability, age or ethnic origin that NMDDC send our condolences to his wife and two young children."

Councillor D Murphy seconded the amendment proposed by Councillor Mathers.

Councillor Lewis declined to accept the proposed amendment.

The Chairperson put Councillor Mathers' proposed amendment to the Motion to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows (copy attached):

FOR: 28
AGAINST: 6
ABSTENTIONS: 0

Councillor Lewis expressed disappointment with the proposed amendment and requested that the Motion be withdrawn.

Mrs Ward advised that, under Standing Orders, the amended and agreed Motion now constituted the substantive Motion before the Council.

Councillor Taylor opposed the amendment and expressed concern over attempts to diminish the realities of the Troubles. He condemned the incident involving a device left at the Newry office of MLAs Kimmons and Hughes, stating that no elected representative should face threats or intimidation.

The Chairperson proposed an adjournment to seek advice from Democratic Services regarding the withdrawal request. It was agreed, on the proposal of Councillor Campbell and seconded by Councillor Taylor, that the meeting be adjourned.

The meeting did then recess – 8.12pm
The meeting did then resume – 8.21pm

Mrs Ward advised that in accordance with Standing Orders the amended motion was the substantive motion on the floor, however, subject to the Chamber's agreement, the Motion could be withdrawn. Following discussion, Members unanimously agreed to withdraw the Motion.

Agreed: It was agreed to withdraw the Motion.

C/156/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – CLIMATE CHANGE ACT 2022

The following Motion was received from Councillor Reilly:

"That this Council requests the Northern Ireland Assembly to repeal the Northern Ireland Climate Change Act (2022) and replaces it with workable legislation".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Hanna

AGREED: The Motion was referred to the Sustainability & Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION

The Chairperson advised an Emergency Notice of Motion had been received, the wording of which had been emailed to all Councillors and to enable it to be heard, it would be necessary to suspend Standing Order 16.1 for which a qualified majority vote was required, no fewer than 80% of Members present and voting.

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

FOR: 28
AGAINST: 6
ABSTENTIONS: 0

Ms Taggart confirmed that as there were 34 Members present and voting, a qualified majority had been reached.

The Chairperson advised that Standing Order 16.1 would be suspended by qualified majority vote to hear the motion.

C/157/2025 EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – FREEDOM FLOTILLA

The following Motion was received from Councillor Hearty:

"That this Council condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the illegal Israeli interception and boarding of boats in the Freedom Flotilla and the abduction of those on board, including at least 22 Irish citizens; Calls for the immediate release of all those abducted by Israel; Urges the Irish and British governments to begin legal proceedings against Israel for this latest breach of international law; Demands an end to the genocide in Palestine and an end to the Israeli blockade of humanitarian aid; And expresses solidarity and support with all those aboard the flotilla as well as the besieged people of Gaza."

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Hearty condemned the Israeli military's interception of the Global Sumud Flotilla, which had been delivering humanitarian aid to Gaza. He stated that the flotilla was hijacked in international waters and carried essential supplies, including baby formula. He reported that approximately 500 participants from over 40 countries, including 22 from Ireland and his party colleague Seanadóir Chris Andrews, were forcibly taken and mistreated.

Councillor Hearty referenced international legal findings and human rights reports which, in his view, confirmed the illegality of the blockade and the interception. He cited Article 55 of the Fourth Geneva Convention and statements from organisations including Amnesty International and the United Nations. He further stated that the individuals were abducted without due process and referenced recent rulings and expert opinions describing Israel's actions in Gaza as genocide. He urged Members to consider the moral implications of their vote.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor C King.

Councillor Devlin described the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the interception of the flotilla as deeply distressing stating that those aboard acted out of compassion and deserved recognition. She emphasised the need for unity around the principles of humanity, justice, and peace, and concluded by quoting Palestinian writer Jean Zaru.

Councillor Hanna stated that it was incorrect to describe the interception as abduction, noting the vessels had entered Israeli sovereign territory. He described the mission as a publicity stunt and affirmed the DUP's support for increased humanitarian aid, however he also stated that any peace proposal should recognise Israel's right to exist and cautioned against motions that failed to consider the impact on local Jewish communities.

Councillor Taylor described the flotilla as a political stunt and noted that those involved were now in Slovakia. He referenced the current peace plan and expressed hope for resolution in the region.

Councillor Howie supported the Motion and expressed disappointment at Councillor Taylor's characterisation of the flotilla. She stated that its aim was to deliver humanitarian aid and had been blocked by Israel.

Councillor Reilly described the situation in Gaza as terrible and expressed hope for peace. While acknowledging Councillor Hearty's concerns, he proposed an amendment: "That this Council recognises the State of Israel and its right to exist."

Councillor Hanna seconded the amendment proposed by Councillor Reilly.

Councillor Hearty declined to accept the proposed amendment.

The Chairperson put Councillor Reilly's proposed amendment to the Motion to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows (copy attached):

FOR:	7
AGAINST:	16
ABSTENTIONS:	11

The Chairperson declared Councillor Reilly's proposal lost.

The Chairperson requested a show of hands for Councillor Hearty's Motion, seconded by Councillor C King and the results were as follows:

FOR	28
AGAINST	6
ABSTENTIONS	0

The Motion was carried.

Agreed:	It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor C King that this Council condemns, in the strongest possible terms, the illegal Israeli interception and boarding of boats in the Freedom Flotilla and the abduction of those on board, including at least 22 Irish citizens; Calls for the immediate release of all those abducted by Israel; Urges the Irish and British governments to begin legal proceedings against Israel for this latest breach of international law; Demands an end to the genocide in Palestine and an end to the Israeli blockade of humanitarian aid; And expresses solidarity and support with all those aboard the flotilla as well as the besieged people of Gaza.
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There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.46pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 November 2025.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 06/10/2025

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Cllr Hanna's proposal to remove AHC/074/2025 - Council of Sanctuary minute from AHC Minutes of 15 September 2025

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		6		
K Feehan		7		
D Finn		8		
C Galbraith		9		
M Gibbons				2
O Hanlon		10		
G Hanna	2			
V Harte		11		
M Hearty		12		
R Howell		13		
T Howie		14		
J Jackson	3			
G Kearns		15		
A King		16		
C King		17		
M Larkin		18		
D Lee-Surginor		19		
A Lewis	4			
O Magennis		20		
A Mathers		21		
D McAteer		22		
L McEvoy				3
D Murphy		23		
K Murphy		24		
S Murphy		25		
S O'Hare				4
A Quinn		26		
H Reilly	5			
M Rice		27		
M Ruane		28		
D Taylor	6			
J Tinnelly		29		
J Truesdale		30		
H Young		31		
TOTALS	6	31	0	4

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 06/10/2025

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Cllr Mathers amendment to Cllr Lewis' Motion – Murder of Charlie Kirk

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	6			
D Finn	7			
C Galbraith	8			
M Gibbons				3
O Hanlon	9			
G Hanna		2		
V Harte	10			
M Hearty	11			
R Howell	12			
T Howie	13			
J Jackson		3		
G Kearns	14			
A King	15			
C King	16			
M Larkin	17			
D Lee-Surginor	18			
A Lewis		4		
O Magennis	19			
A Mathers	20			
D McAteer	21			
L McEvoy				4
D Murphy	22			
K Murphy	23			
S Murphy	24			
S O'Hare				5
A Quinn	25			
H Reilly		5		
M Rice				6
M Ruane	26			
D Taylor		6		
J Tinnelly				7
J Truesdale	27			
H Young	28			
TOTALS	28	6	0	7

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 06/10/2025

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Suspension of Standing Orders requiring Qualified Majority Vote

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	6			
D Finn	7			
C Galbraith	8			
M Gibbons				3
O Hanlon	9			
G Hanna		2		
V Harte	10			
M Hearty	11			
R Howell	12			
T Howie	13			
J Jackson		3		
G Kearns	14			
A King	15			
C King	16			
M Larkin	17			
D Lee-Surginor	18			
A Lewis		4		
O Magennis	19			
A Mathers	20			
D McAteer	21			
L McEvoy				4
D Murphy	22			
K Murphy	23			
S Murphy	24			
S O'Hare				5
A Quinn	25			
H Reilly		5		
M Rice				6
M Ruane	26			
D Taylor		6		
J Tinnelly				7
J Truesdale	27			
H Young	28			
TOTALS	28	6	0	7

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 06/10/2025

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Cllr Reilly's amendment to Cllr Hearty's motion – Freedom Flotilla

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