

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 November 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 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 D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice	Councillor M Ruane
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor H Young	

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor R Howell	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor J Tinnelly

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

C/158/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor McEvoy.

The Chairperson delivered the following remarks:

- He extended his congratulations to Kilcoo on winning the Senior Football Championship, marking their 13th title in the last 14 years and their 23rd

championship title overall. He stated that this achievement was a testament to their consistency, commitment, and dedication to the sport.

- He highlighted the Junior Football Championship final, where Kilclief and Ardglass met in what he described as a true local derby. While expressing his disappointment at Kilclief's loss, he commended Ardglass on their victory. He praised Kilclief for their remarkable achievements this season, having reached three finals, including the Senior Camogie and Hurling finals, and acknowledged their dedication and commitment despite the outcomes.
- He wished Downpatrick Football Club every success in their new home on St Dillon's Avenue, noting their continued efforts to grow the game at the grassroots level in the county.
- He thanked everyone involved in the successful cross-country event at Dunleath Playing Field, particularly commending Pat Power for his hard work.
- He welcomed the appointments of the first-ever Irish Language Commissioner and Ulster Scots Commissioner, emphasising their role in representing and collaborating with those who celebrate these languages. He noted that, for many in the District, the appointment of the Irish Language Commissioner was a monumental step for enhancing and protecting the language.
- He reaffirmed his commitment to supporting young people across the District and expressed delight at welcoming pupils from 11 schools to participate in his Dragons' Den initiative as part of Local Democracy Week. He explained that the initiative offered students the opportunity to present motions and issues that mattered to them, and thanked all involved in organising the event, including members of Youth Voice who sat on the panel along with Councillors Bowsie, A King and Quinn. He offered congratulations to St Louis Grammar School, Kilkeel, for their winning motion, stating that seeing young people passionately engaged in local democracy filled him with great hope for the future and the potential of youth to positively shape communities.
- He expressed his privilege at attending the 50th anniversary of St. Paul's Primary School in Downpatrick, praising the dedication of the teaching staff and wishing them well for the next 50 years.

C/159/2025 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/160/2025 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2025

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 6 October 2025.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Brennan, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 September 2025 was agreed.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/161/2025 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 OCTOBER 2025

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Clarke, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6 October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

C/162/2025 **MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 29 September 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 29 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/163/2025 **MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 25 September 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Byrne, the Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 25 September 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

C/164/2025 **MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 13 October 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Ruane, the Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 13 October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

C/165/2025 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 16 October 2025 (copy circulated).

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the Ulster Scots Working Group and thanked all Parties for their support with regard to the naming of the working group.

Councillor McAteer advised that he attended the meeting and requested that this be recorded.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Hearty, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 16 October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted subject to the above amendment.**

C/166/2025 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 OCTOBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 20 October 2025 (copy circulated).

Councillors Andrews, Bowsie, Campbell and Lee-Surginor wished the Rowallane DEA Coordinator, Ellen Brennan, all the best on her upcoming retirement and thanked her for her continuous hard work over the years.

AHC/088/2025: Downpatrick DEA Multi-Sports HUB Review

Councillor Devlin welcomed the review and queried the progress of the previously discussed proposal for a running track in County Down, noting that her Party colleague had previously requested a timescale for the consultation. She also sought clarification on the next steps should no suitable land be available.

Mr Patterson advised that the results of the consultation would be tabled at a Downpatrick DEA forum meeting, with proposals to follow in due course.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 20 October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/167/2025 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 22 October 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/116/2025: Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Climate Change Act

Councillor Reilly expressed his disappointment that, in his view, no Party had given his motion serious consideration. He noted his concern that the targets set out within the Climate Change Act would cause irreparable damage to the farming industry.

SE/117/2025: DAERA Public Consultation on Northern Ireland's Draft Climate Action Plan 2023 – 2027

Councillor Reilly stated that the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) had recently passed a vote of

no confidence in DAERA in relation to the Nitrogen Action Plan, as it was believed the Plan would cause detrimental harm to the agricultural industry. He proposed that the Council declare its support for the UFU's vote of no confidence and write to the Minister to advise him of this decision. This was seconded by Councillor Taylor.

Councillor Campbell requested a recess to allow Members to discuss the proposal. This was proposed by Councillor Finn and seconded by Councillor Byrne.

The meeting did then recess – 6.23pm
The meeting did then resume – 6.30pm

Cllr Devlin left the meeting at this stage – 6.24pm.

Councillor Campbell noted that as there was dissent within the Chamber the proposal would be put to a vote. Councillor Reilly requested a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows: (copy attached)

FOR	6
AGAINST	30
ABSTENTION	0

Councillors Andrews and McAteer were not present in the chamber during the vote.

The motion was declared lost.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 22 October 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/168/2025 PLANNING SECTION

There were no issues arising.

C/169/2025 CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

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

Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure re NOM – Resurfacing of main A Route between Kilkeel and Newcastle (C/137/2025)

Councillor Hanna expressed his disappointment with the response, noting that the road required substantial improvement works. He stated that widening at Ballagh Road was critical, as large vehicles could not pass each other at the same time, resulting in undue congestion. He further highlighted that there were well-known accident-prone areas and that relying solely on PSNI data was inaccurate, as some incidents were not reported. He also noted that the PSNI often did not attend minor incidents, which contributed to incomplete data.

Councillor Reilly expressed his disappointment with the response, stating that six deaths was not an inconsequential number, and that disregarding a request for improvements in light of these fatalities was disappointing to the families affected.

Councillor Clarke echoed the sentiments previously expressed, stating that for a main A-road not to receive the requested improvements would hinder the Council's Tourism Strategy. He further noted that the number of deaths on a road was not an accurate measure of the need for improvements. He proposed that the Council respond to the correspondence and request a meeting between the Minister for Infrastructure and the Mournes DEA Councillors. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Councillor Campbell confirmed that everyone was in agreement with the proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanna, to request a meeting between the Minister for Infrastructure and the Mournes DEA Councillors.**

Correspondence from SEHSCT re NOM – Enhancement of Services at Downe Hospital (C/058/2025)

Councillor Hanlon emphasised that Elected Representatives did not choose the issues and concerns raised by constituents in the Council Chamber, noting her disappointment with the tone of the letter. She acknowledged that the Downpatrick Urgent Care facility was an excellent service but stated that this did not diminish the ongoing campaign to reinstate an A&E at the Downe, which could not be overlooked.

Correspondence from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re NOM – Voting Age Reduction

Councillor Quinn welcomed the attention given to lowering the voting age but expressed her disappointment at what she perceived as a lack of enthusiasm from the UK Government to take action. She referenced the recent Local Democracy Week, noting that it had been well attended by 16- and 17-year-olds, who would have to wait another year or two before being able to exercise their right to vote.

National Association of Councillors AGM & Conference

Councillor Harte queried whether there was an AGM within the province.

Councillor Andrews stated that all Councillors had received emails and newsletters that outlined the dates of all NAC meetings.

Mrs Ward advised that the item was on the agenda for Members to decide whether to send a representative to the AGM.

Councillor Hanna queried the relevance of the meeting to Elected Members and what the benefits of attending would be for Council.

Councillor Byrne noted that the process of consulting Party Leaders was intended to ensure cross-Party support and that the content of a meeting would be of benefit to the Council. He

stated that education was not directly related to a Councillor's role and proposed that no one attend this conference. He caveated this by acknowledging that Elected Members were nominated NAC Members and should be eligible to attend conferences but stressed that attendance needed to be relevant given the associated costs to the ratepayer.

Mrs Ward advised that a paper could be brought back to the Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee regarding upcoming NAC meetings and any potential benefits to the Council. She stressed, however, that NAC Members would be invited to all NAC events, and it was for Members to decide whether to attend.

Councillor Andrews expressed his disappointment at not being able to attend and argued that there should be a consistent approach across all Councils regarding attendance at conferences. He stated that, while mindful of the cost to ratepayers, he felt proud to represent both his Party and the Council at such events.

Councillor Hanlon queried the content of the conference, stating that the title of "Councillors Role in Shaping Education" was not relevant for this Council and queried the benefit that Council would gain from sending a representative.

Councillor Andrews advised that he had been asked to prepare a presentation for the conference on fuel poverty and the cost-of-living crisis in Northern Ireland. He stressed that learning was a two-way process and that this would provide a benefit to the Council.

Councillor Byrne reiterated his proposal not to send a representative to the AGM and requested that all relevant information regarding future events be provided to Party Leaders when a request for attendance at a conference was received. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Harte.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Harte, not to send a representative to the NAC AGM & Conference and that all relevant information regarding future events be provided to Party Leaders when a request for attendance at a conference was received.**

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

- **Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure re NOM – Resurfacing of main A-Route between Kilkeel and Newcastle (C/137/2025)**
- **Correspondence from Mid-Ulster Council regarding their motion on CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025)**
- **Correspondence from NI Office regarding NOM – Voting Age Reduction (C/120/2025)**
- **Correspondence from Office of the Secretary General to the President regarding NOM – President of Ireland (C/136/2025)**

- **Correspondence from SEHSCT re NOM – Enhancement of Services at Downe Hospital (C/058/2025)**
- **Correspondence from Health Minister re NOM – Ladies with Letters (C/153/2025)**
- **NAC AGM & Conference**
- **Correspondence from Taoiseach Office re NOM – Freedom Flotilla (C/157/2025)**

Cllr Larkin joined the meeting during the above discussions – 6.38pm

C/170/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – REPORTING OF CRIMINAL DAMAGE

The following Motion was received from Councillor Hanna:

"This Council should report all incidents of criminal damage to council property to PSNI, promptly, asap after damage has been discovered. This is to assist police building a picture of criminal damage in an area, so resources can be secured by local police to address the problem."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

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

C/171/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – CLOSURE OF LOCAL PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The following Motion was received from Councillor A King:

"That this Council notes with deep concern the proposal by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) to close both St. Malachy's Primary School Kildief and Killowen Primary School by August 2027. Whilst recognising that the final decision is subject to a public consultation it is the position of this council that any subsequent closure of these schools will be significantly detrimental to the children of these areas, their families and the wider communities.

In relation to St Malachy's Kilclief, it recognises the deep roots and longstanding contribution of the school to community life, and acknowledges the strong opposition to closure from parents, staff, pupils and residents. Council further believes that all efforts should be made to explore viable alternatives to closure, including the potential expansion of special educational needs (SEN) provision on the existing site, to serve families across the wider district.

In relation to Killowen, were the proposed closure to be confirmed this council is concerned at the potential negative impact that the decision may have on the main catholic primary school within Kilbroney Parish, namely St. Bronagh's PS in Rostrevor.

This council will formally write to the CCMS to express our opposition to these proposed closures and request that they be withdrawn forthwith. Furthermore, we request that

engagement between CCMS and the Board of Governors recommence at the earliest opportunity to ensure the children of both schools can continue to be educated on the site that best suits their needs and just as importantly where generations of their family, friends and neighbours were previously taught. We also ask that the CCMS explore opportunities to invest in and expand SEN provision at the St. Malachy's site to meet growing regional demand."

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Tinnelly.

Councillor A King urged Members to support her motion opposing the proposed closures of St Malachy's Primary School, Kilclief, and Killowen Primary School. She stated that these schools were more than just buildings, describing them as the heart of their rural communities that provided generations of children with education, belonging, and connection. She warned that closure would remove local provision and undermine community life.

Councillor A King highlighted that St Malachy's had strong roots and significant parental backing, arguing that the proposal to close it ignored evidence of continued local need and contradicted key principles of the *Policy for Sustainable Schools*, the *Bain Report*, and the *Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016*. She stressed that school sustainability involved not only numbers but also accessibility, quality, and community contribution. She called on the Department of Education and the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) to genuinely apply rural proofing rather than a "one-size-fits-all" approach. Instead of closure, she proposed exploring alternative options, such as expanding Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision at St Malachy's, which could meet regional demand, safeguard local jobs, and enhance inclusive education. Regarding Killowen, she warned that its closure could increase pressure on St Bronagh's in Rostrevor, which was already facing enrolment challenges, and stated that the wider educational impact had not been properly assessed.

Councillor Tinnelly expressed concern about the increasing number of rural primary school closures in recent years, noting that despite widespread opposition from affected local communities, their views and objections were routinely ignored. He warned that such closures should never become normalised or go unchallenged, emphasising that while each rural school faced its own challenges, their true value could not be measured purely in financial terms. He stated that this ongoing threat often became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as parents, fearing closure, moved their children elsewhere, reducing enrolment and inadvertently providing CCMS with justification for what he described as a "scorched earth" policy.

Councillor Rice stated that the potential closure of Killowen Primary School had come as a shock to the parents, staff, and children of the village, noting the opposition expressed at the public consultation event. He stressed the negative impact such a closure would have on the local community and emphasised the importance of children continuing to access education close to home in a nurturing, community-based setting. He encouraged the CCMS and the Department of Education to give serious consideration to the responses received during the public consultation.

Councillor Hanna offered his Party's support for the motion, stating that the issue was ultimately for the CCMS to make a recommendation to the Education Authority for a final decision, but emphasised the importance of allowing local stakeholders to voice their opinions.

Councillor Lee-Surginer spoke in support of the motion on behalf of the Alliance Party, noting that he had witnessed firsthand the warm and nurturing environment within the school. He stressed that a school was central to rural community life, providing not only education but also connection and stability for families across generations.

Councillor Taylor stated that little regard appeared to be given to the impact of a local school closure on a rural community and stressed the need to explore all other options prior to closure, such as increasing SEN provision.

Councillor McAteer described proposed school closures as an assault on the rural community. He highlighted the Council's potential role within the Local Development Plan (LDP) to build around rural schools, enhancing communities and helping schools remain open, but stressed that a holistic approach, rather than a school-by-school approach, was needed.

The Chairperson noted the rural nature of the District and stated that the Council had a responsibility to oppose school closures. He emphasised that schools often provided extracurricular activities for the whole community, including seasonal events, which helped to bring rural communities together.

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded that Councillor Tinnelly, that this Council notes with deep concern the proposal by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) to close both St. Malachy's Primary School Kilclief and Killowen Primary School by August 2027. Whilst recognising that the final decision is subject to a public consultation it is the position of this council that any subsequent closure of these schools will be significantly detrimental to the children of these areas, their families and the wider communities.

In relation to St Malachy's Kilclief, it recognises the deep roots and longstanding contribution of the school to community life, and acknowledges the strong opposition to closure from parents, staff, pupils and residents. Council further believes that all efforts should be made to explore viable alternatives to closure, including the potential expansion of special educational needs (SEN) provision on the existing site, to serve families across the wider district.

In relation to Killowen, were the proposed closure to be confirmed this council is concerned at the potential negative impact that the decision may have on the main catholic primary school within Kilbroney Parish, namely St. Bronagh's PS in Rostrevor.

This council will formally write to the CCMS to express our opposition to these proposed closures and request that they be withdrawn forthwith. Furthermore, we

request that engagement between CCMS and the Board of Governors recommence at the earliest opportunity to ensure the children of both schools can continue to be educated on the site that best suits their needs and just as importantly where generations of their family, friends and neighbours were previously taught. We also ask that the CCMS explore opportunities to invest in and expand SEN provision at the St. Malachy's site to meet growing regional demand.

C/172/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – REVITALISATION PROJECT

The following Motion was received from Councillor Feehan:

"This Council acknowledges the ongoing issue of dereliction and dilapidation in town and city centres across the District. Council recognises that the revitalisation of these derelict and dilapidated buildings is crucial, not only for the aesthetic renewal of our towns but also for unlocking the potential of underutilised spaces, creating new opportunities for business, and enhancing both civic pride and quality of life for residents.

Accordingly, this Council calls for the establishment of a pilot programme aimed at incentivising the restoration and redevelopment of vacant and derelict properties in Newry and Downpatrick. This pilot programme should focus on providing financial incentives, such as grants, low-interest loans, or other forms of support, to property owners who are committed to refurbishing these buildings to bring them back into productive use.

This Council also requests that a report be brought to the relevant committee within 3 months outlining the steps to develop the pilot programme, including potential eligibility criteria, financial incentives, available funding sources from existing government initiatives, and timelines for implementation. Additionally, Council is requested to explore collaboration with government agencies, including the Department for Communities, the Department for Infrastructure, and other relevant bodies, to co-opt existing funding mechanisms such as the Urban Regeneration and Community Development (URCD) schemes or Neighbourhood Renewal funding to support this initiative."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Galbraith.

AGREED:

The Motion was referred to the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

C/173/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – FESTIVAL FOR NEWRY CITY

The following Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

"Newry, Mourne and Down District Council commends the work and success of Eats and Beats, Footsteps in the Forest and Wake the Giant and agree to commencing work towards a festival for Newry City."

The motion was seconded by Councilor Feehan

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.11pm.

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

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 03/11/2025 **VENUE:** Downshire Civic Centre **MEETING:** Council Meeting
SUBJECT OF VOTE: Proposal by Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Taylor to support UFUs vote of no confidence in DAERA

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				2
C Enright		5		
K Feehan		6		
D Finn		7		
C Galbraith		8		
M Gibbons		9		
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				3
D Lee-Surginor		18		
A Lewis	4			
O Magennis		19		
A Mathers		20		
D McAteer				4
L McEvoy				5
D Murphy		21		
K Murphy		22		
S Murphy		23		
S O'Hare		24		
A Quinn		25		
H Reilly	5			
M Rice		26		
M Ruane		27		
D Taylor	6			
J Tinnelly		28		
J Truesdale		29		

H Young		30		
TOTALS	6	30	0	5