

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 12 January 2026 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 P Byrne	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 N Lawlor
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young

In attendance via Teams: Councillor J Brennan Councillor C Enright
Councillor M Gibbons

Officials in attendance: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Health Communities
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

C/001/2026 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Clarke, Howell, Magennis, K Murphy and Tinnelly. An apology was also received from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment.

The Chairperson extended congratulations to Dromintee Minors on their Ulster Championship win on New Year's Day, on behalf of Councillor Larkin, and to St. Monica's Boxing Club on the occasion of its ten-year anniversary, on behalf of Councillor Kearns.

The Chairperson offered his sincere condolences to the family of Mr Bill Donnelly, a member of the Council's Leisure Facilities staff, who had sadly passed away shortly before Christmas.

The Chairperson advised that the Chairperson's Civic Awards had recently been announced and encouraged members of the public and Councillors alike to submit nominations, noting that the awards aimed to be inclusive and to recognise individuals within the community

who volunteered or contributed significantly but may not seek recognition, despite being deserving of it.

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Niall Lawlor to the Chamber on the occasion of his first meeting having replaced LeeAnne McEvoy.

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

C/002/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

C/003/2026 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2025

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025 was agreed.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/004/2026 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 DECEMBER 2025

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Kearns, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 1 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

C/005/2026 MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2025

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 24 November 2025 (copy circulated).

Councillor Reilly expressed his disappointment that the issues raised by Councillors at a previous Special Council meeting with DFI had not yet received a response, while noting that NI Water had already replied to all queries raised.

Mrs Ward confirmed that Democratic Services had requested a response to the outstanding issues and advised that this would be followed up again.

Councillor Devlin requested that the minutes be amended to refer to the "Marguerite area"

rather than “Marguerite Park,” to reflect that the issues affected the wider area. The Chairperson confirmed that the amendment would be made.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 24 November 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to the above amendment.**

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/006/2026 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 8 DECEMBER 2025

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

ERT/128/2025: Ulster Fleadh 2026

Councillor Hanna wished to raise a point regarding the above item in the minutes, noting that he would not address financial concerns directly.

The Chairperson advised that any discussion of financial matters would require the meeting to go into a closed session.

Councillor Hanna then advised that he would be discussing financial matters therefore the Chairperson called for a proposer and seconder to go into closed session.

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, 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 relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

The Chairperson advised that, while in closed session, a discussion had taken place regarding ERT/128/2025, during which Councillor Hanna proposed that the item be referred to the Equality and Good Relations Forum. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Taylor.

The proposal had been put to a show of hands vote, with the results as follows:

FOR	6
AGAINST	30
ABSTENTIONS	0

The Chairperson declared the proposal fallen and confirmed that the minutes, as presented, were agreed.

ERT/123/2025: Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Revitalisation Project

Councillor Byrne requested clarity on the Local Economic Partnership criteria for funding, noting that two businesses in the Crossmaglen area believed that they were ineligible.

Mr Mallon advised that the revitalisation grant did not have specific area-based eligibility and was available to all areas within the District. He noted that work was ongoing to audit vacant and derelict buildings in certain areas, but this did not affect geographical eligibility for the grant.

Councillor Byrne requested that communications regarding the revitalisation project be updated to ensure that no business missed out on funding due to misunderstanding.

Mr Mallon stated that funding was anticipated to be released by May 2026, and that Council was progressing an action plan with newly appointed personnel who would develop application forms and criteria. He advised that all communications would be updated once the new resources were in place.

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

C/007/2026

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

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

SPR/214/2025: Planning Update

Councillor Truesdale noted that a report had been requested on resource implications and queried when it would be tabled, highlighting that she had received numerous calls from applicants concerned about processing times.

Mr Mallon advised that the report related specifically to the Higher-Level Apprenticeship and confirmed that it would be tabled in due course. He noted that there had been three successful candidates, two of whom had accepted the posts and were due to commence prior to the course start date of 27 January 2026.

SPR/193/2025: Recruitment Director: Corporate Services:

Councillor Byrne queried when the role would be advertised, the composition of the assessment panel, and when Members would be advised of these details.

Mrs Ward confirmed that the role would be advertised around the end of January 2026 and that the assessment panel would be arranged through Party Leaders.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor McAteer, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 11 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/008/2026 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 DECEMBER 2025**

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Jackson, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 15 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/009/2026 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 December 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/141/2025: Christmas and New Year Arrangements – Refuse Collections and Household Recycling Centres

Councillor Lewis queried whether the information regarding alternate collection dates could be clarified for the Slieve Croob area, noting that the area fell outside of the legacy Newry and Down Council areas and was part of the old Ballyward DEA. He stated that some bins had not been presented on the appropriate alternate collection dates as there was confusion as to when the bins would be collected.

Councillor Reilly stated that he had received numerous complaints from residents regarding the provision of information on alternate collection dates and requested that this be addressed. He also raised concerns about motorised vehicles damaging fauna on beaches in Kilkeel, noting that Council was unable to provide deterrents at present and that coastal repairs were subject to weather erosion and funded by ratepayers.

The Chairperson advised that the motorised vehicle issue raised by Councillor Reilly was not on the agenda and therefore could not be discussed.

Mrs Ward advised Councillor Reilly to speak with the Sustainability & Environment Director, who could table the motorised vehicle issue for discussion at a future Committee meeting.

Councillor Reilly expressed his disappointment, stating that this was an opportunity for Council to secure funding for the issues he wished to raise but felt Council was not interested. Mrs Ward suggested that he could share the information with her after the meeting, but Councillor Reilly declined to do so.

Councillor Hanna noted that there had been a lack of bin stickers distributed within the Mourne area, resulting in unclear bin collection arrangements, with some housing estates only partially serviced. He also stated that the pier at Annalong Harbour had partially collapsed into the sea and needed to be addressed.

The Chairperson advised that the pier issue was not on the agenda and should be raised with the relevant officer. Councillor Hanna responded that he had raised his concerns with the relevant officer but that no action had been taken.

Councillor Reilly voiced his objection to not being able to raise concerns at full Council, to which Councillor Campbell reiterated that issues not on the agenda could not be discussed, as per Standing Orders.

Mrs Ward confirmed that a report would be tabled at a future Sustainability & Environment Committee meeting to enable formal discussion of the Christmas and New Year bin collection arrangements.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 December 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/010/2026 PLANNING SECTION

Councillor Hanna requested a report providing details of Judicial Reviews over the past number of years, noting his belief that a number had been conceded.

Mrs Ward advised that Council acted in accordance with legal advice regarding Judicial Reviews and confirmed that a report would be requested and tabled through the Planning Committee.

Agreed: **It was agreed that a report would be requested providing details on Judicial Reviews and presented at a future Planning Committee Meeting.**

C/011/2026 CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

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

Correspondence from Derry & Strabane District Council regarding their Notice of Motion

Councillor Hearty welcomed the correspondence from Derry and Strabane District Council regarding their motion, stating that the matter was urgent and important, and expressed the view that similar motions should be considered across Ireland, particularly given Ireland's history with hunger strikes. He emphasised that consideration of the motion should avoid polarisation around wider issues in Gaza and genocide, focusing instead on the specific demands of the hunger strikers.

Councillor Hearty noted that the hunger strikers were not seeking special treatment, release, or dropped charges, but were requesting the fair application of English law, highlighting that one demand was for immediate bail, consistent with existing English custody time limits, and that some individuals had been held on remand for over a year, with further delays expected. He added that another demand concerned the closure of Elbit Systems in England, which he stated was not an exceptional request.

Following an interruption from Councillor Reilly, the Chairperson asked Members to respect their fellow Councillors, the Chair, and the decisions made within the Chamber.

Councillor Hearty continued, stating that the British Government, as a signatory to the Genocide Convention, was legally obliged not to permit the production or supply of materials used in genocide. He reiterated that, in discussing the hunger strikers, the focus should remain on their request for the fair and consistent application of English law. He proposed that this Council echo the sentiments expressed in the correspondence and further proposed that the Council write to the British Government, specifically to the British Justice Secretary, David Lammy MP, to express the Council's deep concern regarding the condition and treatment of the hunger strikers and to urge the Justice Secretary to engage urgently with their legal representatives to find a resolution before any loss of life occurred. This was seconded by Councillor C King.

The Chairperson reminded Members to respect the rules of the Chamber and to make use of the microphone queueing system to ensure an opportunity to speak. He also advised that Members were personally responsible for any statements they made and should respect the views and opinions of others while speaking.

Councillor Byrne confirmed that the SDLP Party would support both the correspondence received and the proposals outlined by Councillor Hearty, noting that Council had consistently demonstrated solidarity with the Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank and stressed that the matter should be considered a human rights issue rather than a political one. He emphasised that the focus should be on protecting life, safeguarding human rights, and ensuring that individuals in state custody had access to appropriate medical care and that their rights were not infringed.

Councillor Byrne welcomed the decision of Derry City and Strabane District Council to write to Councils across the North, encouraging them to contact the Justice Minister and the UK Government. He further proposed that correspondence also be sent to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, noting that pressure should be applied collectively at both local and central government levels. He stated that it was the responsibility of the UK Justice Minister to protect the lives of those in custody, ensure access to medical care, and safeguard their wellbeing.

Councillor Taylor stated that he would not be supporting the proposal and questioned the basis for treating the matter as an emergency motion when it had been tabled on the agenda under the correspondence, expressing his concern that Council would only revisit discussions and restate positions on matters where views were unlikely to change. He commented that the issue under discussion related to events outside the district, while local representatives were experiencing difficulty in having local matters raised and debated, such as Annalong Harbour pier.

Councillor Taylor stated that Council had no authority over the UK Justice Minister and expressed his doubt that any correspondence from the Council would influence decisions at

that level. While acknowledging the right of Councillors to bring forward motions, he reiterated his concern regarding the focus on international issues rather than matters directly affecting the District and concluded by seeking clarification on the procedural basis for the emergency motion.

The Chairperson reiterated that there should be no cross talk within the Chamber and asked Members to be respectful of everyone within the Chamber.

The Chairperson reminded Councillors Hanna and Reilly that the minutes from Committee Meetings were tabled for confirmation and any matters arising from the content within those minutes could be discussed, but that was not as an opportunity to raise new issues that would fall under the remit of a particular Committee. He reminded Members that there was a process should they wish to bring any issues to the attention of Council, to ensure the issue was tabled on the relevant agenda for discussion.

Councillor Reilly stated that he believed that the Chairperson was displaying political bias.

The Chairperson stated that, following Councillor Taylor's request for clarity, it would be at Councillor Hearty's discretion whether to proceed with the Emergency Notice of Motion, which would be considered following a show of hands vote on Councillor Hearty's proposal.

As there was dissent within the Chamber, Councillor Hearty's proposal was put to a show of hands vote, with the results as follows:

FOR	26
AGAINST	6
ABSTENTION	4

The Chairperson declared the proposal passed.

Councillor Hearty stated that he believed the substantive detail within his emergency motion had been agreed and he was therefore content to withdraw his emergency motion.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor C King, that Council write to the British Government and, in particular, to the British Justice Secretary, David Lammy MP, to express Council's deep concern regarding the condition and treatment of the hunger strikers and to urge the Justice Secretary to engage urgently with their legal representatives to find a resolution before any loss of life occurred. It was also agreed also to write to First and deputy first minister**

Correspondence from Irish Health Minister regarding NOM CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025)

Councillor Feehan noted that the correspondence did not address the key point he had hoped to raise, namely facilitating access to treatment from the Irish Department of Health for blood cancer patients in the North. He proposed to write to the Irish Minister for Health to seek clarity regarding capacity for treatment of blood cancer patients from the North and to also write to the Minister for Health within the Executive to request an update on the

progress of facilitating treatment in Belfast for these patients, as referenced in his prior correspondence on the issue.

This was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, to write to the Irish Minister for Health to seek clarity regarding the capacity for the treatment of blood cancer patients from the North and to also write to the Minister for Health within the Executive to request an update on the progress of facilitating treatment in Belfast for these patients, as referenced in his prior correspondence.**

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

Councillor Devlin expressed her thanks to officials within DFI with whom she was regularly in contact, commending them for their hard work. She stated, however, that she believed the issue warranted a meeting with the Minister rather than officials, and proposed to respond to the invitation by declining a meeting with officials and requesting a meeting with the Minister. She noted that Members could contact officials at any stage, but emphasised that that this issue was particularly important, as this was a unique road where, in the event of an accident or extreme weather, residents in the Mourne area could be effectively cut off. This was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Councillor Rice requested that any potential meeting be scheduled for the afternoon if possible.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to decline the meeting with officials and request a meeting with the Infrastructure Minister.**

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

- **Correspondence from Derry & Strabane District Council regarding their Notice of Motion.**
- **Correspondence from Irish Health Minister re NOM CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/123/2025)**
- **Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM Resurfacing of Main A Route (C/137/2025)**

This Council recognises the ongoing issue of illegal dumping across our district and the associated environmental, health, and financial costs. We note the recent steps taken by Louth County Council to introduce solar-powered CCTV cameras as part of their anti-dumping strategy and believe similar measures should be explored locally. Therefore, this Council will investigate the feasibility of deploying solar-powered CCTV at known dumping hotspots within Newry, Mourne Down and South Armagh, engage with Louth County Council to learn from their approach, and bring forward a report detailing potential locations, costs, funding options, and legal considerations, with a view to implementing this as part of a wider anti-dumping initiative. Furthermore, this Council will write to the DAERA Minister requesting information on all available support and funding for such measures to tackle illegal dumping effectively across the district.

The motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.08pm

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 February 2026.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive