

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 1 June 2026 at 6.30pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor G Hanna

**In attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor V Harte	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor T Howie	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor A King	Councillor C King
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor N Lawlor
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor J Truesdale	

**In attendance
via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor C Enright
Councillor M Gibbons	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor M Rice	Councillor H Young

Officials in attendance: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Health Communities
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

C/075/2026

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Howell, Jackson and Ruane.

The Chairperson advised that an emergency notice of motion had been received and would be dealt with at the appropriate time during the meeting.

C/076/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/077/2026 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 MAY 2026

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 5 May 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor S Murphy the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 5 May 2026 was agreed.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/078/2026 MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 5 MAY 2026

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 5 May 2026 **(copy circulated).**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Harte, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 5 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

C/079/2026 MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2026

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 28 April 2026 **(copy circulated).**

SC/004/2026: Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Councillor Reilly asked that it be put on record that he had asked if there was the possibility of investigating the return of Out of Hours Service for the Mournes area with the Chief Executive of the Trust indicating he was prepared to look at that.

Miss Taggart confirmed she would revert to him on the matter.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 28 April 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/080/2026 MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 7 MAY 2026

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 7 May 2026 (**copy circulated**).

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, the Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 7 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/081/2026 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 11 MAY 2026

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 May 2026 (**copy circulated**).

Councillor Bowsie took the opportunity to congratulate Councillor Hanna on his appointment as Chair of the Council, the first Unionist Chair for Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Councillor Bowsie spoke of the King’s recent visit stating that this had been a tremendous boost for the District with Council Chairperson and Chief Executive greeting the King and having a photograph of same appearing in the Mourne Observer. He went on to ask that given that it had been a considerable Council engagement why it had not been publicised on any of the Council social media channels, commenting that there had been a communication blackout.

The Chief Executive pointed out this was not a matter within the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Minutes however it would be picked up outside of the meeting and assured Members there had been no intention of a media blackout.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 11 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/082/2026 MINUTES OF STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 MAY 2026

Read: Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 May 2026 (**copy circulated**).

SPR/073/2026: Cullyhanna Community Centre

Councillor Magennis welcomed the roof replacement and internal works upgrade for Cullyhanna Community Centre stating it was great news for South Armagh and for Cullyhanna.

Councillor Reilly referred to the issue of the coastal infrastructure commenting on his disappointment that neither the Assembly nor the Minister had replied as yet. He went on to speak of his disappointment at the Greencastle Ferry being no longer operational and enquired if Officers could form a taskforce to examine every opportunity for that service to resume given its link with County Louth and the Kingdom of Mourne and it being a really good tourism facility.

The Chief Executive advised as the matter was not discussed within the Strategy, Policy and Resources Minutes it could be considered outside the meeting and referred to the relevant Committee.

SPR/079/2026: Planning – Professional Support

In response to a query from Councillor Hanlon regarding a timeline for the professional support for Planning, Mr Mallon confirmed that once ratified by Council, officers would be in the position to progress the appointment following the call-in period.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Reilly, the Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/083/2026 MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 MAY 2026

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 May 2026 **(copy circulated)**.

Councillor Mathers congratulated Newry Park Run on its first anniversary stating it was a great achievement for the area.

AHC/037/2026: Notice of Motion, Dog Exercise Area at Dunleath Park

In welcoming the progression of the dog exercise area for Downpatrick, Councillor Devlin said she had made a similar proposal for one in Newcastle in 2017 which unfortunately had been unable to progress. She referred to how a number of years later two dog parks had been approved in principle, one for Castlewellan Forest Park and one for Kilbroney Forest Park.

Councillor Devlin spoke of how, with the outstanding work being carried out in Castlewellan Forest Park, that a dog park would be an added benefit and requested an update or timeline for that previous decision.

Mr Mallon confirmed officers would report back with an update.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Lawlor, the Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 18 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.**

C/084/2026

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 MAY 2026**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 May 2026 (**copy circulated**).

Miss Taggart advised Councillor O'Hare's apologies for the meeting would be recorded.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Magennis, the Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 20 May 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to a minor amendment to the attendance sheet.

C/085/2026

PLANNING SECTION

There were no planning issues arising.

C/086/2026

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

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

Correspondence from Minister of Health re NOM - CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/049/2026)

Councillor Feehan voiced his disappointment at the response received from the Minister, particularly as he had brought the matter to Council to advocate on behalf of a local family that had lost a young mother fighting blood cancer and who had to receive her treatment in London.

He took the opportunity to once again highlight the significant issue whereby mothers were having to leave their children behind to go and fight for their lives someplace else which was totally unacceptable.

Councillor Feehan spoke at length about how Council had requested to meet with the Health Minister and then senior officials at the Department of Health with the answer to both requests being no. He stated that he was bewildered at how the Department of Health was stonewalling such requests from Council whilst Members were advocating on behalf of families advising that he would continue to fight on their behalf.

Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure re: NOM - Wastewater Infrastructure (C/055/2026)

Councillor Feehan stated he was very grateful to the Minister for Infrastructure for the comprehensive response received. He spoke of his concerns in relation to developer contributions, and how whilst intentions might be good behind them, the consequences were going to drive up the price of housing as ultimately such contributions would be passed on to consumers.

Councillor Feehan proposed Council write to NI Water to ask that they provide a breakdown of the level of support/investment required from the Executive in order to bring infrastructure within the District up to an appropriate standard across the board.

Councillor McAteer seconded Councillor Feehan's proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Council write to NI Water to ask that they provide a breakdown of the level of support/investment required from the Executive in order to bring infrastructure within the District up to an appropriate standard across the board.**

Correspondence from Minister of Finance and Department for Communities re: NOM – Basic Income for Artists (C/052/2026)

Councillor Finn voiced her disappointment that there was no space within the budget and that she hoped the Executive could agree a budget soon given that it had still not happened within the new financial year.

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

- **Correspondence from Minister of Health re: Notice of Motion – CAR-T Cell Therapy (C/049/2026)**
- **Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure re: NOM - Wastewater Infrastructure (C/055/2026)**
- **Correspondence from Minister of Finance and Department for Communities re: NOM – Basic Income for Artists (C/052/2026)**
- **Correspondence from Department for Communities re: NOM – Inadequacy £17m Fund for NI Households (C/057/2026)**

C/087/2026: NOTICE OF MOTION – HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

The following Motion had been received from Councillor Galbraith:

"This Council notes:

That many tenants living in Housing Association properties across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council are required or strongly encouraged to obtain contents insurance as a condition associated with protecting their belongings within rented accommodation;

That tenants are increasingly experiencing property damage and loss arising not from tenant negligence, but from delayed, inadequate, or unresolved repairs by Housing Associations, including but not limited to water ingress, damp, mould, roofing failures, plumbing leaks, and structural defects;

That in many such cases, tenants are left financially liable for replacing damaged personal belongings through their own contents insurance policies, despite the root cause being a failure or delay by the landlord to carry out timely repairs;

That this situation places an unfair financial burden on tenants, many of whom are already facing significant cost-of-living pressures;

That Housing Associations have statutory and contractual responsibilities to maintain properties to a safe and habitable standard and should be accountable where avoidable delays in repairs result in damage to tenants' possessions.

This Council therefore calls on:

All Housing Associations operating within the District to review and amend their policies so that tenants are not unfairly required to rely solely on personal contents insurance where damage arises directly from Housing Association repair delays, negligence, or failure to act within reasonable timescales;

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Department for Communities to introduce clear regional guidance requiring Housing Associations to accept liability and provide compensation where tenant belongings are damaged due to preventable delays in repairs;

Housing Associations to establish transparent compensation procedures for tenants affected by delayed maintenance issues, including accessible appeals mechanisms and clearly defined repair response times;

The Chief Executive of Council to write formally to all registered Housing Associations operating within the District, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, and the Department for Communities outlining Council's position and requesting urgent engagement on this matter.

This Council further agrees to support efforts to strengthen tenant protections and improve accountability standards across the social housing sector."

Agreed: The Motion was withdrawn.

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 29.1 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:	38
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	0

Miss Taggart confirmed a qualified majority had been reached.

The Chairperson advised that Standing Order 29.1 would be suspended by qualified majority vote to hear the emergency motion.

C/088/2026:

**EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION – FLEADH
CARPARKING**

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

"This Council recognises the enormous opportunity presented by the upcoming Fleadh in Downpatrick, which is expected to attract up to 2,000 competitors alongside their families, supporters and visitors from across Ireland and beyond.

Council further recognises the significant economic benefit this event will bring to Downpatrick and the wider district, particularly for local retailers, hospitality businesses and town centre traders who continue to face substantial economic pressures.

Council believes that providing free parking at all Council-owned car parks during the Fleadh would:

Encourage visitors to remain within the town centre for longer periods;

Increase footfall for local businesses, cafés, pubs and restaurants;

Improve accessibility and visitor experience during a major cultural event;

Demonstrate Council's commitment to supporting Downpatrick and the local economy; and help ensure the success and long-term legacy of hosting the Fleadh in our district.

Accordingly, this Council agrees to: Implement free parking at all Council-owned car parks in Downpatrick for the weekend of the Fleadh;

Instruct officers to bring forward the necessary operational arrangements as a matter of urgency;

Work collaboratively with local businesses, event organisers and community stakeholders to maximise the economic impact of the Fleadh; and

Promote Downpatrick as a welcoming and accessible destination throughout the event."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor A King.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Galbraith advised he had brought it forward as it was not simply another event coming to the District but was a once-in-a-generation opportunity for businesses and people of Downpatrick. There were expected to be up to 2,000 competitors, alongside families, supporters, musicians and visitors travelling from across Ireland and beyond which would mean thousands of people spending time, money and energy within the town.

Councillor Galbraith pointed out the motion was about sending out a very clear message, that Downpatrick was open, welcoming and ready to make the most of the opportunity.

Members were advised free parking during the Fleadh was not just for those visiting but to bring the people into the town to enjoy what the Fleadh had to offer and to encourage locals to stay in the town longer as an investment for local traders, cafés, restaurants, pubs, in local footfall and in the long-term reputation of Downpatrick as a destination town capable of hosting major events successfully.

Councillor Galbraith pointed out nobody travelling to the Fleadh should arrive in to the County town Of Down and feel they were being charged at every turn and that visitors should be encouraged to park easily, move around freely and spend their money in local businesses. He added it was about legacy and an opportunity to showcase Downpatrick on a regional and all-island stage.

In welcoming the Motion, Councillor Hanlon wished to put on record her thanks to Council officials who had worked closely with her in terms of securing car parking space for the competitors. She thanked SERC, the Leisure Centre and the local Scouts who had all been very accommodating in offering carparking space with Council officials also looking at utilising the Rathkeltair carpark. She added everyone working together had been very positive, especially the businesses who held a meeting and were very keen to make this a successful event for Downpatrick. She also thanked the PCSP for their support in providing Hi Vis vests stating it was good opportunity to put on record the Council's support for the Fleadh.

Councillor Hearty welcomed the Motion commenting that Councillor Galbraith had spoken eloquently about the opportunities the Fleadh would provide for Downpatrick, and how Crossmaglen had held one for the first time in over 50 years only that week which had brought a tremendous economic and social boost, not just to the town but to the entire area.

Councillor Truesdale thanked Councillor Galbraith for bringing the Motion for what was an enormous opportunity and how whatever could be done to assist the town with car parking and getting all those people there should be done.

Councillor Galbraith thanked Members for their support.

The Chairperson declared the Motion carried.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor A King that this Council recognises the enormous opportunity presented by the upcoming Fleadh in Downpatrick, which is expected to attract up to 2,000 competitors alongside their families, supporters and visitors from across Ireland and beyond. Council further recognises the significant economic benefit this event will bring to Downpatrick and the wider district, particularly for local retailers, hospitality businesses and town centre traders who continue to face substantial economic pressures. Council believes that providing free parking at all Council-owned car parks during the Fleadh would:**
Encourage visitors to remain within the town centre for longer periods;
Increase footfall for local businesses, cafés, pubs and restaurants;
Improve accessibility and visitor experience during a major cultural event;
Demonstrate Council's commitment to supporting Downpatrick and the local economy; and help ensure the success and long-term legacy of hosting the Fleadh in our district.
Accordingly, this Council agrees to: Implement free parking at all Council-owned car parks in Downpatrick for the weekend of the Fleadh;
Instruct officers to bring forward the necessary operational arrangements as a matter of urgency;

Work collaboratively with local businesses, event organisers and community stakeholders to maximise the economic impact of the Fleadh; and Promote Downpatrick as a welcoming and accessible destination throughout the event.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.57pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 6 July 2026.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 1st June 2026 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Qualified Majority Vote to hear Emergency Motion re: free carparking for Downpatrick Fleadh

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	1			
C Bowsie	2			
J Brennan	3			
P Byrne	4			
P Campbell	5			
W Clarke	6			
L Devlin	7			
C Enright	8			
K Feehan	9			
D Finn	10			
C Galbraith	11			
M Gibbons	12			
O Hanlon	13			
G Hanna	14			
V Harte	15			
M Hearty	16			
R Howell				1
T Howie	17			
J Jackson				2
G Kearns	18			
A King	19			
C King	20			
M Larkin	21			
N Lawlor	22			
D Lee-Surginor	23			
A Lewis	24			
O Magennis	25			
A Mathers	26			
D McAteer	27			
D Murphy	28			
K Murphy	29			
S Murphy	30			
S O'Hare	31			
A Quinn	32			
H Reilly	33			
M Rice	34			
M Ruane				3
D Taylor	35			
J Tinnelly	36			
J Truesdale	37			
H Young	38			
TOTALS	38	0	0	3