

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 August 2026 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor G Hanna

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor V Harte	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 O Magennis
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor J Truesdale
Councillor H Young	

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor J Brennan	Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor M Rice	

Officials in attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/105/2026: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Campbell, Hearty, Howell, Howie, Mathers and Ruane and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism.

The Chairperson advised it had been another busy period with him attending many events including the Lecale Rallye. He took the opportunity to advise he had been in Portaferry that day and was delighted to confirm a large amount of money had been secured from the Lottery Fund in partnership with Ards and North Borough Council.

C/106/2026: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/107/2026: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 6 JULY 2026**

Read: Action sheet from Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, the Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 was agreed.

Councillor Larkin joined the meeting at this point – 6.12pm.

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/108/2026: MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 6 JULY 2026

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 (copy circulated).

C/097/2026 – Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 17 June 2026

In referring to his previous references to revenue being brought through from recycling, Councillor Reilly took the opportunity to highlight concerns regarding problems associated with brown bin collections in the Mourne area, with the Chairperson also expressing concern.

Mrs Murphy advised she would investigate the matter and report back to Councillors Reilly and Hanna directly.

C/093/2026 – Minutes of Council Meeting held on 1 June 2026/6 July 2026

Councillor Tinnelly referred to the personal statement he had made at the previous Council meeting stating his remarks were specific to an individual officer, not the corporate body of Council. He added he wanted Members to know he had received no correspondence from the officer since and he was happy to allow the matter to play out via a formal investigation.

Councillor Lewis advised his Party would support a formal investigation as some serious issues had been raised and it would be good to get them resolved.

Ms Kirk pointed out there was no motion before Council for a decision and the commentary was not in relation to the accuracy of the minutes.

Councillor Byrne stated it was a sensitive issue and it was important that Members protect and be fair to everybody involved while understanding what had happened. As group leader he felt there was a need to know in terms of governance what was the right thing to do in these circumstances going forward. He made reference to how information not being given because it was commercially sensitive and at other times information was brought forward, therefore there was a need to protect Councillors either through an internal investigation with the Audit Committee or whatever way was best to get clarity going forward.

Ms Kirk took the opportunity to confirm that in relation to any governance or discussions on the matter, it was an ongoing legal issue which she had advised group party leaders about earlier that day via e-mail. Members were advised the matter would have to be brought to the attention of the High Court judge in relation to the representations that were made through the case and as it was ongoing, it was inappropriate to discuss it any further.

She added there had been a number of emails advising what the position was by the applicant in those proceedings and therefore could not go into any detail in open session, but it was proceeding by way of affidavit evidence to the High Court to deal with. Members were advised that was the most appropriate forum for the matter to be dealt with and any statements from any relevant elected members that would assist that would be welcomed.

Councillor Byrne reiterated that as a political party, sides were not being taken but that he wanted to make sure that there was protection going forward and the right information given. He added when it was a legal matter it could not be discussed as it was commercially sensitive but that was not the case if somebody's name was put out there and questioned why that line was not given for that. Councillor Byrne said it was confusing and whilst he understood the legal manner that was separate from what was being discussed now, asked was it being said that Members could not discuss anything around somebody's name being used as there was an ongoing Judicial Review.

Councillor Byrne said there were two separate issues and asked if it was expected going forward that colleagues on working groups, programme boards etc when asked for information that they get, the line that it was commercially sensitive or there was a Judicial Review and that information could not be given. He said that should be consistent right throughout the process yet it had not been consistent in this case and was it because as group leaders they got information they should not have.

Ms Kirk stated they were not two separate matters as they were both interlinked and related to the same ongoing application. She went on to read out what had been advised and what was in the press.

"In relation to the Civic Centre Judicial Review, the Council's legal representatives were

advised on the 23rd of April in relation to the Councillor that they were to lodge an affidavit in support of the applicant's case but was unable to do so. The Council agreed that the case could be moved to a later date. I regret that the information was sent and it was incorrect and that the information had caused further upset and distress to the Councillor”.

Ms Kirk stated Council legal representatives sought an urgent explanation from the applicant's solicitors about the contents of the letter and she had advised Members as to what their response was. The response had confirmed their position in relation to that and the most appropriate forum to discuss that in detail would be before the High Court because it was not just an issue before the Council. It was also an ongoing high court action for which there had to be answers. There was no issue in relation to providing Councillors with an update in relation to ongoing cases as that had been done and would continue to be done. If there needed to be further discussion in a closed setting there was no issue with that as well, however in relation to this particular point it could not be discussed in any detail in this setting until the High Court had considered it.

Councillor Taylor expressed concern that there had been updates provided in terms of the Judicial Review and investigations also and how some Councillors including himself and independent Councillors that sat outside the Party Group Leaders Forum were not being provided with important information on significant issues of concern to Council. He asked that it be put on record that all Councillors should be provided with such information and irrespective of whether you had group leadership or not, should be kept informed on significant issues of concern to Council.

Ms Kirk confirmed she had no issue setting up a meeting with any members that did not have any conflict with a detailed update in a closed setting.

Councillor Tinnelly stated he had witnessed a lot of gaslighting at the meeting and wished to make it clear that the Judicial Review along with the contents of the legal correspondence were nothing to do with his complaint and that it was solely on what the officer had done with that information. He therefore proposed a formal investigation be launched into the matter through the appropriate avenue, seconded by Councillor Lewis. This was agreed by all Members.

Ms Kirk advised the appropriate method would be to contact the Head of Human Resources in relation to any complaints that he wished to progress.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Tinnelly, seconded by Councillor Lewis for a formal investigation be launched into the matter through the appropriate avenue.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, the Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 6 July 2026 were agreed as an**

accurate record and adopted.

C/109/2026: MINUTES OF SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 29 JUNE 2026

Read: Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 29 June 2026 (copy circulated).

Ms Taggart asked Members to note an amendment to include Councillor O'Hare as being in attendance at the Council meeting.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Magennis, the Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 29 June 2026 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, subject to an amendment to the attendance list.

C/110/2026: PLANNING SECTION

Read: Extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 1 July 2026 in relation to the Local Development Plan (Copy circulated).

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly regarding how advanced the local development plan was progressing the Chairperson advised many Councils still had a lot of work to do.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to note the extract from Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held on 1 July 2026 in relation to the Local Development Plan.

C/111/2026: LETTER FROM DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE REGARDING APPOINTMENT TO WARRENPOINT HARBOUR AUTHORITY BOARD

Read: Letter dated 1 June 2026 from the Department for Infrastructure seeking Council nominees for the appointment to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority.

The Chief Executive advised Members Council were being afforded the opportunity to put forward up to 8 nominations to the Warrenpoint Harbour Authority Board and asked that those nominations be forwarded to Ms Taggart, Democratic Services Manager by email no later than 5pm on Wednesday 5 August 2026. She added that should there be more than 8

nominations they would be taken by timing of receipt with notifications confirmed thereafter.

The Chief Executive pointed out the application process would be the responsibility of Members themselves.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor O'Hare that the names of the six nominees be submitted for the appointment to the Board of Warrenpoint Harbour Authority to the Democratic Services Manager by 5pm on Wednesday 5 August 2026.**

C/112/2026: **CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

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

Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM – Portaferry Bridge C/053/2026

Councillor Bowsie commented the Minister had not given any commitment for the study into the viability of a bridge over Strangford Lough and voiced disappointment that the Minister was refusing to meet with the DUP on the matter making reference to meetings held with Sinn Fein MP and Councillor who did not represent the area. He went on to outline the benefits the bridge would bring with connectivity that reflected the 21st century.

Councillor Young stated that if there was to be a feasibility study three areas would need be covered including road upgrades on either side of the Lough, viability of a more sustainable ferry and to be mindful that Strangford Lough was the largest sea inlet in the British Isles and Northern Ireland's first Marine Conservation Zone within a renowned Special Area of Conservation and Special Protection Area.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the Minister's response stating it was important to look strategically at it in terms of the Newry Mourne Down Local Transport Plan 2035. She responded to Councillor Bowsie's comments about arranged meetings stating Councillors were not privy to requests into the private office and it was unfair to be calling it out in public that meetings had been declined when individuals were not there to defend their position.

Correspondence from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re NOM – Independent Environment Protection Agency (C/050/2026)

Councillor Clarke stated the response from the former Secretary of State was accurate in that the Executive and the democratic institutions should work and how it was a devolved

matter. He added there had been support for an Independent Environment Protection Agency for many decades which had been blocked and stopped from being discussed at the Executive and that democracy must allow for that to happen. He added it was fair enough for a political party not to like it but that the democratic process had to be allowed to happen.

Agreed:

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

- **Correspondence from Infrastructure Minister re NOM – Portaferry Bridge C/053/2026**
- **Correspondence from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland re NOM – Independent Environment Protection Agency (C/050/2026)**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.38pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed:

Councillor G Hanna
Chairperson

Marie Ward
Chief Executive