

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 11 March 2024 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row,
and remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Chairperson: Councillor M Ruane

**Committee Members
in attendance:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor C King	Councillor A McMurray
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor J Truesdale

Members in attendance

Via teams: Councillor J Brennan

Officials in attendance: Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Ms M Boyle, Head of Tourism Development and Visitor Experience
Ms A McVeigh, Head of Regeneration and Business Development
Ms S Burns, Head of Programmes
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance

Via teams: Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

ERT/020/2024: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

The Chairperson noted that item 7 was to be deferred to next months Committee meeting to allow Members time to read thoroughly and understand the content.

Apologies were received from Councillors Galbraith, S Murphy and Tinnelly.

ERT/021/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillors Clarke, Hanna and Andrews declared an interest in Item 10 – Service Level Agreements / Letters of Offer 2024/25
Councillor Campbell declared an interest in Item 11 – Tourism Events Programme.

ERT/022/2024: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 12 FEBRUARY 2024

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 12 February 2024.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 12 February 2024.**

NOTICES OF MOTION

ERT/023/2024: NOTICE OF MOTION C/042/2024 - PEATLANDS

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism, regarding Peatlands. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon presented the report outlining the work that has been ongoing regarding peatland restoration, the use of peat within the Council alongside information regarding the trials of alternatives to peat. He outlined the recommendations within the report, and advised Council will continue to consider the options of alternatives to reduce the use of peat-based compost.

Councillor Truesdale thanked the Officers for the comprehensive report and noted that Council had ordered one pallet of peat based potting compost last year, compared to 4 in 2019. She commended the actions to date and called on Council to take the final step to being peat free. She called on Council to either plant according to the soil type and stop using peat-based compost or utilise the community gardens within the district and task them to design a peat alternative, utilising money that would have been spent on peat-based compost. She proposed that a report be brought back in 6 months, detailing what alternatives had been investigated and the outcome of this work.

In seconding Councillor Truesdale's proposal, Councillor McMurray advised that he was able to source peat-free compost for his needs, but advised he was aware that Council requirements were different.

Councillor Clarke advised that peatlands were important to the long-term storage of carbon and that he was aware of a number of organisations that were involved in restoring peatlands. He then proposed an amendment to the motion, as follows:

"That Council write to the DAERA Minister asking that his department conduct a review and publish a key issues paper on peat extraction and the use of peat and peat products in line with the Executive Peatlands strategy."

The Chairperson confirmed that Councillor's Truesdale and McMurray were content to accept the amendment.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed that:

- **this Council believes peatlands are a critical part of our ecosystems, regulating the water cycle, purifying water and supporting biodiversity; further recognises that peatlands store more carbon for long periods than any other ecosystem worldwide; and therefore, resolves to protect peatlands and to end its purchase and use of peat-based compost by the end of 2024.**
- **Council continues to advance projects and partnership working through AONB and Geopark team in respect of the protection of peatlands through both Peace+ and Shared Island Unit.**
- **Council continues to consider the use of alternatives to peat-based produce and works to reduce the use of peat-based compost.**
- **Council writes to the DAERA Minister asking that his department conduct a review and publish a key issues paper on peat extraction and the use of peat and peat products in line with the Executive Peatlands strategy.**

FOR DECISION

ERT/024/2024: ARTISAN MARKETS

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms A McVeigh, Head of Regeneration and Business Development, regarding Artisan Markets in Downpatrick, Newcastle, Newry and Warrenpoint.
(Copy circulated)

Councillor Kearns noted that her Party believed that the markets were yet to realise their full potential and stated that it required support and sustainable promotion to be able to contribute to the local economy.

In a response to Councillor Campbell, Ms McVeigh confirmed that weather was the reason for the drop in attendance for the market.

Councillor Bowsie proposed that Council support Ballynahinch Artisan Market alongside the 4 markets mentioned in the Officer's Report as this was an historic market established in the 17th Century. This was seconded by Councillor Hanna. Councillor Andrews also queried whether Crossgar could also be considered as a location.

Councillor Clarke paid tribute to the staff involved with the Artisan Markets and spoke highly of Newcastle Market having a great atmosphere. He queried if Newcastle Market could move to the open space behind Newcastle Leisure Centre.

Councillor Truesdale queried if a customer survey was carried out alongside the trader survey. She noted that traders informed her it was hard to get confirmation of a stall

within Newcastle Market.

Ms McVeigh advised there was only 17 pitches at the market and advised that Council try to limit the number of similar stalls to encourage a variety of traders, but stated she would take on board the Member's comments.

Following a query from Councillor Feehan, Ms McVeigh advised that one of the recommendations was to work with both traders and the Tourism, Culture and Events department to identify more opportunities to generate footfall into the town.

Following a concern raised by Councillor Hanna regarding the ownership of the gazebos for markets, Ms McVeigh confirmed that the gazebos were either owned by the Council or by the delivery agent. She recognised that some needed replaced, and it was an ongoing piece of work.

Mr Mallon advised Members that a recent Notice of Motion had been referred to the Sustainability and Environment regarding the revitalisation of Newry Market.

- AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Hanna, the following was agreed:**
- **To note the attendance figures at the artisan markets**
 - **That officers liaise with the Tourism, Culture and Events department to identify opportunities for Newry Artisan Markets, e.g. Halloween, Christmas, etc**
 - **To offer Artisan Market traders a pitch at Newry Variety market (trading Thursday and Saturday) as an alternative to the Sunday market.**
 - **To extend the trading hours of the markets in July and August to 4pm.**
 - **Council would look at expanding the Artisan Markets to other areas of the district.**

ERT/025/2024: PEACEPLUS THEME 1.1

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms S Burns, Head of Programmes, regarding PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Bowsie expressed his concerns regarding the location of the applications, with only one being from Rowallane. He noted that there were a small number of applications from the Rowallane area, but if none were successful then it needed to be addressed.

He proposed that Council work with applicants from Rowallane that narrowly missed out on the funding in order to assist them to improve their applications. This was seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Ms Burns noted the Member's comments however advised that there had been an open

process throughout which there were many workshops undertaken involving the DEA co-ordinators. She stated she understood the frustration of the Member however there seemed to be a capacity issue within the area and although at this stage Council would not re-open the process, a targeted approach to Rowallane could be taken going forward with regard to capacity building which would hopefully help with other funding applications.

Following a query from Councillor Campbell, Ms Burns advised that officers will provide a breakdown of DEA areas relating to the reserve list for each theme.

Councillor Bowsie's proposal was put to a show of hands vote, and voting was as follows:

For: 3
Against: 7
Abstention: 1

The proposal was declared lost.

Councillor Campbell proposed to accept the officer's recommendation. This was seconded by Councillor Andrews. The proposal was then put to the vote, and voting was as follows:

For: 9
Against: 2
Abstention: 0

The proposal was declared carried.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed that the Committee accept the recommendations of the Peace Partnership to proceed with the following:

- **Theme 1 – to include the 11 projects and 6 reserve projects in the Local Authority Co-designed PEACEPLUS resubmission.**
- **Theme 2 – to include the 14 projects and 3 reserve projects in the Local Authority Co-designed PEACEPLUS resubmission.**
- **Resubmission of the Co-design Local Authority Action Plan to SEUPB.**

ERT/026/2024: TOURISM STRATEGY 2024-2029 DRAFT

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms M Boyle, Head of Tourism, Product Development & Visitor Experience, regarding Tourism

Strategy 2024-2029. **(Copy circulated)**

This item was deferred until April Committee to allow time for Members to read through all the documents provided.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to defer this item to the next Committee Meeting in April.

RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION

EXEMPT INFORMATION

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Andrews, 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 Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed while in closed session.

ERT/027/2024: ARTIST IN RESIDENCE AND ARTS BURSARY SCHEMES 2024-25

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms M Boyle, Head of Tourism, Product Development and Visitor Experience, regarding Artist in Residence / Artist Bursaries and Grants. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve the following:

- To appoint an Artist in Residence and establish a Service Level Agreement as detailed in the Officer's Report for the delivery of an Artist in Residence Programme in the Down Arts Centre.
- To continue to award the Artist Bursaries and Individual Artist Grants through a selection process for 2024/2025.

It was also agreed that Officers would review the hours of opening within Down Arts Centre to potentially include Saturday opening hours.

ERT/028/2024: LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP (LMP) ACTION PLAN 2024/2025

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration and Tourism, regarding LMP Action Plan for 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the following was agreed:**

- **To note that Council have prepared and submitted a Strategic Assessment and Action Plan to DfC for implementation of a programme of Employability and Skills initiatives across the District for 2024/25.**
- **When received, to approve acceptance of DfC letter of offer for NMD LMP, Skills and Employability activities to include administration and operational costs as set out in section 2.2 of the Officer's Report.**
- **To approve the attached Business Case for the implementation of the LMP Action Plan for 2024/2025**
- **On acceptance of the Letter of Offer, Council will undertake procurement including SLAs to appoint delivery agents to implement the range of initiatives outlined in the attached business case.**

Having previously declared an interest, Councillors Clarke and Andrews left the meeting for this item of business – 6.45pm

ERT/029/2024: SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS / LETTERS OF OFFER 2024/2025

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms M Boyle, Assistant Director Tourism Culture & Events, and Ms A McVeigh, Head of Regeneration & Business Development, regarding Service Level Agreements / Letters of Offer 2024/2025 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to consider and approve the list of Service Level Agreements / Letters of Offer for 2024/2025 as detailed in section 2.1 of the Officer's Report.

Councillors Clarke and Andrews rejoined the meeting at this stage – 6.50pm

Having previously declared an interest, Councillor Campbell left the meeting for this item of business – 6.50pm

ERT/030/2024: TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms M Boyle, Head of Tourism, Product Development & Visitor Experience, regarding Tourism Events Programme 2024/2025 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanna, the following was agreed:

- To approve the Annual Tourism Events Programme as detailed in Appendix 1
- To approve the undertaking of the necessary procurements and appointment of suppliers for the delivery of major festivals in the Annual Tourism Events Programme.
- To approve to issue 4 Letters of Offer to named groups as detailed in the Officer's Report.
- To undertake a review of Event Programme options for 2025/2026 Financial Year

Councillor Campbell rejoined the meeting at this stage – 6.59pm

ERT/031/2024: TOURISM EVENTS PROCUREMENT

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Ms M Boyle, Assistant Director Tourism Culture & Events, and Ms A McVeigh, Head of Regeneration & Business Development, regarding Tourism Events Procurement **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the 2 STAs as outlined in section 2.1 of the Officer's Report.

ERT/032/2024: DOWN GAA SUPPORT FOR PEACE PLUS APPLICATION

Read: Report dated 11 March 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Down GAA Support for Peace Plus Application. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Campbell, the following was agreed:**

- **Officers continue to consider options for the future of the hut structure in advance of March 2025 and report back to Members.**
- **That the contents of the Ballykinlar hut will be retained by the Council for use in future exhibitions at suitable locations.**
- **Council notes the application for the Down county Board Multi-Sports Hub at the Ballykinlar site through Financial Assistance.**
- **Unfortunately, Council are not in a position to support Down County Board's Centre of Participation, Wellbeing and Shared Learning Hub as their application to Peace Plus is in direct competition with Council's Wellbeing Hub in Warrenpoint.**

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 07.28pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 8 April 2024.

Signed: Councillor M Ruane
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed: Mr C Mallon
Director Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
