

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 10 November 2025 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson: Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Committee Members

in attendance: Councillor T Andrews
Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor V Harte
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor M Ruane

Councillor K Feehan
Councillor G Hanna
Councillor G Kearns
Councillor S Murphy
Councillor H Young

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke
Councillor A Quinn

Councillor C Galbraith

Officials in attendance:

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance
via Teams:**

Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager

ERT/106/2025

APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Tinnelly.

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. He asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

ERT/107/2025

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

ERT/108/2025

ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 13 OCTOBER 2025

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 13 October 2025 (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews seconded by

Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 13 October 2025.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/109/2025

FRIENDS OF CASTLEWELLAN ARBORETUM AND ANNESLEY WALLED GARDEN

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Friends of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Walled Garden. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, which set out a proposal for the creation of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Council and Friends of Castlewellan Arboretum and Walled Gardens which would be a newly formed group. The establishment of this group was noted as a legacy of the capital project underway at Castlewellan Forest Park and was intended to be formed from members of the local community.

In proposing the recommendation, Councillor Andrews expressed appreciation for the considerable work that had been undertaken in the Arboretum and Walled Garden over many years.

In response to enquiries from Councillors Hanlon and Young, Mrs Smyth clarified that the proposed MOU was between the Council and the group, which had not yet been established. She explained that the formation of the group was a separate process, with community members responsible for developing the terms of reference, defining membership, and determining the scope of the group.

In response to a question from Councillor Lewis regarding Members' possible role within the group, Mrs Smyth stated that she understood a call for expressions of interest in joining the group would be issued by the community representatives who would lead the establishment of the group.

Councillor Clarke highlighted the significant improvements observed in the Arboretum following the involvement of a previous Friends of the Arboretum and enquired about the potential for social prescribing. Mrs Smyth confirmed that this would fall within the scope of the group and undertook to feed this back to those involved.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Feehan, it was agreed to approve the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Friends of Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Walled Garden for the purpose of working in partnership for the benefit of the Arboretum and Garden

ERT/110/2025

LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (LEP)

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Local Economic Partnership (LEP). **(Copy**

(circulated)

Mrs Smyth advised that a letter of offer had been received from the Department for the Economy (DfE) to support the delivery of the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) action plan. She outlined the three associated business cases and noted that the initiative was now entering the project mobilisation phase.

In proposing the recommendations, Councillor Harte expressed delight at the establishment of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) for Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency and Down Business Centre and emphasised that joined up and collaborative working was essential to transforming town centres and supporting local employers.

The proposal was seconded by Councillor Feehan, who enquired about timelines and next steps following the completion of the derelict and vacant commercial property mapping research. Mr Mallon confirmed that preliminary scoping had been undertaken and, following the selection of settlements by LEP, the process would move forward to the Grant Fund and associated support to address dereliction and vacancies across the district. He further explained that a fund had been included in the action plan to support this theme, with work commencing early in the new year to develop an application process for market release.

Councillor Galbraith welcomed the recommendations, commended the excellent work undertaken in bringing the initiative together, and expressed interest in seeing how the research would inform future actions to revitalise areas within the district.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Feehan, the following was agreed;

- **Accept the Letter of Offer for Local Economic Partnership**
- **Approve the business cases outlined in Appendix 1 for the following programmes:**
 - **Productivity Growth Programme**
 - **AI: Empowering Business Through Awareness**
 - **Derelict/Vacancy commercial property mapping research**
- **Approve the establishment of a Service Level Agreement with Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency and Down Business Centre for delivery of the project "Derelict/Vacancy commercial property mapping research".**

ERT/111/2025

MID YEAR REVIEW OF ERT BUSINESS PLANS 2025-26

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Mid Year Review of ERT Business Plans 2025-26. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon outlined the report, advising that it provided an assessment of progress in relation to the delivery of business plan targets.

Councillor Andrews requested that his appreciation for the Planning Team be formally recorded. He enquired whether the Planning Department had a dedicated section responsible for handling business-related applications to ensure they were processed efficiently, thereby supporting job creation and investment within the district.

Mr Mallon responded that, upon receipt of applications, their type, scale, and potential economic impacts were considered. He further advised that a dedicated section within the Planning Department was responsible for managing major applications, and such cases were referred to this team to ensure timely and appropriate processing.

Councillor Hanlon noted that she had recently received complaints regarding straightforward planning applications that had remained in the system for an extended period and wondered whether measures could be taken to expedite the processing of such applications.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Feehan, the Mid Year Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2025-26 was agreed.

ERT/112/2025

PEACEPLUS THEME 1.1

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding PEACEPLUS Theme 1.1. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, which set out the agreed actions of the PEACEPLUS partnership and the business cases requiring ratification, noting that the PEACEPLUS programme was 100% funded and incurred no cost to the Council.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the procurement and delivery of the below activities under Strand 1 and 2 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan:

- **Strand 1.2 Enhancement of Community facilities.**
- **Strand 1.2 Enhancement of Sporting Facilities.**
- **Strand 2.6 Social and Emotional Support programmes – intergenerational Arts and Crafts**
- **Strand 2.6 Social and Emotional Support Programmes – Intergenerational End Violence Against Women and Girls.**

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

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Ruane, 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 Lewis, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

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

ERT/113/2025

EAST BORDER REGION - SHOWCASING 50 YEARS OF GENUINE CROSS BORDER COLLABORATION

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding East Border Region – 50 years of cross border collaboration. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to award East Border Region a financial contribution towards their proposal for celebrating 50 years of cross border collaboration.

ERT/114/2025

DOWNPATRICK SPECIAL STAGE CAR RALLY 2026

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Downpatrick Special Stage Car Rally. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed that Council support the Ballynahinch & District Motor Club through an Service Level Agreement arrangement for the hosting of the Downpatrick Special Stage Car Rally in July 2026, subject to funding being agreed in the rates setting process with the value of the SLA detailed at section 4.1 of the officer's report.

ERT/115/2025

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE 2025/26 CALL 4

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance 2025/2026 Call 4: Community Facilities Capital works & Community Facilities Minor Capital Items. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the issuing of Letters of Offer to projects as per Council Policy to the groups recommended for the award of funding within the budget allocation for each theme. It was also agreed that pre-letter of offer conditions must be met prior to issue of full letter of offer.

ERT/116/2025

LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP - ACTION PLAN

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding NMD Labour Market Partnership 2025/2026.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the following was agreed;

- **To accept a revised Letter of Offer from Department for Communities for NMD Labour Market Partnership (LMP) for 2025/2026 and undertake associated management and implementation in line with the approved action plan, business case and associated procurement**
- **To approve the revised business case attached to the officer's report for the implementation of NMD Labour Market Partnership Action Plan for 2025/2026 based on the upper budget.**
- **To approve required procurement exercises in accordance with Council's procurement policy. Routes to market may include utilising Belfast City Council framework, issuing Service Level Agreements, Value for Money exercises, quotes and tenders.**
- **To accept a Letter of Offer from Department for Economy to deliver a Pre Apprenticeship Academy, a procurement route of the Belfast City Council framework.**

ERT/117/2025

PLAY PARK RESURFACING AT KILBRONEY FOREST PARK

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Play Park resurfacing at Kilbroney Forest Park.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor S Murphy, it was agreed to procure via the ESPO Framework a contractor to resurface the older children's play park at Kilbroney Park, Rostrevor.

FOR NOTING

ERT/118/2025

MUSEUMS QUARTERLY REPORT (JUL-SEPT)

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Quarterly Museums Report (Q2 25/26 July-Sept). **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Hanna regarding Ballykinlar Hut, Mr Mallon advised he

would revert to the member outside of the meeting.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to note the update provided on the activities, programming and achievements of NMD Museums.

ERT/119/2025

NEWRY BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICT (BID)

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Newry – Business Improvement District.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was noted that Council have received formal notification from Newry BID, of their intention to hold a renewal ballot for a Business Improvement District for Newry and a report will be tabled at a future committee meeting to consider the detail of the business plan.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.43pm.

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

Signed: **Councillor D Lee-Surginor**
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee

Signed: **Conor Mallon**
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
