

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 19 January 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall

Chairperson: Councillor O Hanlon

**Committee Members
in attendance:** Councillor T Andrews Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte Councillor G Kearns
Councillor S Murphy Councillor M Ruane
Councillor J Tinnelly Councillor H Young

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:** Councillor W Clarke Councillor K Feehan
Councillor G Galbraith Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis Councillor A Quinn

**Non-Committee Members
In attendance via Teams:** Councillor D Finn Councillor D McAteer

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 F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/001/2026

APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

As both the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson were unable to attend the Committee in person, Councillor Hanlon assumed the role of Chair for the meeting.

Councillor Hanlon offered condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of Mickey Brady, former MP for Newry and Armagh who died recently.

Condolences were also offered to Councillor Magennis on the recent passing of her father, and it was agreed to send a letter of condolence to her family.

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/002/2026

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tinnelly declared an interest in Item 9 – Warrenpoint Pontoon and Breakwater, and requested a dispensation to speak on the matter given its importance.

Councillor Hanlon and Mr Mallon advised that it was for the Member to declare any interest, and Councillor Hanlon read the relevant opening remarks regarding declarations of interest for clarity. Councillor Tinnelly confirmed his declaration of interest in item 9 on the agenda.

ERT/003/2026

**ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING OF MONDAY 8 DECEMBER 2025**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 8 December 2025 **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/124/2025 - Belfast City & Region Place Partnership

ERT/126/2025 - St Patrick's Day 2026 SLAs

ERT/127/2025 - Delamont Caravan Park & Touring in the Trees Kilbroney Park

In response to a query on the above items from Councillor Andrews, Mr Mallon advised that Belfast City & Region Place Partnership would take place in June and that an update regarding the other items would be brought back to committee in due course.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 8 December 2025.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/004/2026

**OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – FESTIVAL
FOR NEWRY CITY (C/173/2025)**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism on Notice of Motion: Festival for Newry City. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Finn welcomed the Council paper and thanked officers for their work. She stated that the motion had arisen from recognising Newry's untapped potential and noted that, while events such as Footsteps in the Forest and Eats and Beats were valuable locally, Newry's cultural offering compared poorly.

She expressed disappointment that the Fireside Stories event had replaced a standalone arts festival for Newry and, given the modest funding involved, considered it unacceptable that the event had been diluted across the district.

Councillor Finn emphasised that Newry was the District's city and should be treated accordingly. She highlighted the need for initiatives that supported local businesses and showcased the city, referencing potential venues including the Albert Basin site, the covered market space, and the canal. She welcomed engagement with the newly formed Canal Regeneration Group. She described Newry as a city rich in natural beauty and artistic talent and welcomed the referral of this work to the Arts Working Group, which she chaired, expressing her commitment to progressing efforts to regenerate and revitalise the city.

Councillor Finn proposed to accept the officers' report and recommendation, with an amendment requesting that a progress update be brought to the Committee within six months.

Councillor Hanlon clarified that Councillor Finn was not a member of the Committee and therefore could not make a proposal.

Councillor Feehan subsequently proposed to accept the officer's recommendation together with the amendment, seconded by Councillor Andrews.

Councillor Young welcomed the motion and, as a member of the Arts Working Group, expressed enthusiasm to begin work on a festival for Newry City.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed that the request for the establishment of a festival for Newry City be tabled for consideration by the Arts Working Group and that a paper is brought back to the Committee within six months to provide an update on progress made.

ERT/005/2026

DOWNPATRICK GROWING TOGETHER (GROVE)

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Downpatrick Growing Together (GROVE – Growing Relationships Over Vibrant Environments). **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth reported that, in partnership with the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group, funding had been secured for works at The Grove in Downpatrick. She advised that this had been a Council-led application and that funding had recently been confirmed, with project details outlined in Section 2 of the report. She noted that Appendix 1, a restricted item, contained further information on the funding secured.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the paper and noted that, since 2019, she and Downpatrick DEA colleagues had been meeting with officials to progress the rejuvenation of The Grove, which had become increasingly dilapidated. She stated that the project represented a positive step forward for the area and welcomed the opportunity for full community involvement, adding that she looked forward to its development.

Councillor Andrews described the project as excellent and noted that the programme of work would involve engagement with local groups and organisations.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to accept a Letter of Offer for Downpatrick Growing Together funded via PEACEPLUS 1.2 Empowering Communities, and to approve the implementation of the project including any necessary procurements was also agreed.

ERT/006/2026

MAKE IT LOCAL

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Make It Local. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth advised that the Make It Local campaign had been running for several years to promote the shop-local message to visitors across the district. She reported that 104 businesses had been profiled since 2021 and that a renewal exercise was now proposed, including an expression of interest to refresh the list and allow additional businesses to participate.

She further advised that approval was sought to procure a consultancy firm to manage the Make It Local campaign for 2026–27. She noted that the campaign was funded by the Council, with external funding pursued where possible.

Councillor Andrews welcomed the paper, describing Make It Local as a good campaign for supporting local shops and businesses.

In response to enquiries from Councillor Young regarding the communication of expressions of interest and assessment criteria, Mrs Smyth advised that expressions of interest had been advertised on all Council social media platforms and that eligibility applied to any business located within town centres across the district.

Councillor Hanna requested a list of all participating businesses, clarification on how businesses had been selected for the most recent campaign, whether representation had been evenly spread across the District, and whether the campaign was retail-focused or open to all sectors.

Mrs Smyth reported that businesses from all towns and villages across the district had participated and that significant effort had been made to recruit businesses to ensure representation from all areas. She noted that businesses were invited to put themselves forward.

Mr Mallon advised that he would gather information on the selection process for the most recent campaign and provide it to Councillor Hanna outside of the meeting.

Mrs Smyth further confirmed that rural businesses were eligible to participate, noting that businesses from rural areas were involved in the Make It Local campaign. She confirmed she would provide Councillor Hanna with a full list of participating businesses and clarified that the campaign was open to all businesses operating within commercial cores and town centres.

Councillor Hanlon encouraged all interested parties to utilise the expression-of-interest process, noting that businesses in Downpatrick and rural areas had benefitted from participation in the Make It Local campaign.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of a creative communications consultancy to engage and support Council with delivery of a Make It Local campaign throughout 2026/27.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane seconded by Councillor Young, 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 Ruane, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

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

ERT/007/2026

ERT FACILITY HIRE CHARGES

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding ERT Facility Hire Charges. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- To approve the updated hire charge fee structure for Caravan / Camping as set out in section 2 of the officer's report.
- To approve the updated hire charge fee structure for Circus fees for use of Council / ERT lands, as set out in section 2 of the officer's report.
- To approve the updated hire charge fee structure for Down County Museum, Bagenal's Castle, Down Arts Centre and Warrenpoint Town Hall as set out in section 2 and appendix 1 of the officer's report.

ERT/008/2026

NEWRY CITY MUSIC FESTIVAL

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Newry City Music Festival. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Andrews, the following was agreed;

- To approve the pilot 2-day music festival in Newry City at Albert Basin site and to enter in discussions on hire of the site for the event;

- To approve the financial support for the event as set out in section 4.1 of the officer's report, subject to approval in the 2026/27 budget.

ERT/009/2026

WARRENPOINT PONTOON AND BREAKWATER

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Warrenpoint Pontoon & Breakwater License. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to:

- Approve the removal of the Pontoon at Warrenpoint breakwater;
- Progress the provision of access to the water on Carlingford Lough through the Shared Island Project;
- Renew the license agreement for pedestrian access to the Breakwater promenade subject to WHA agreeing to carry out the necessary inspections, surveys and repairs to the sheet pile wall.
- Continue engagement between Council and all key stakeholders.

Having declared an interest, Councillor Tinnelly left during the above discussion (6.41pm) and rejoined the meeting at 7.08pm

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

ERT/010/2026

NEWRY BID REVOTE 2026

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Newry Business Improvement District (BID) – Revote Business Plan – 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

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

- To note the receipt of the Business Plan for the Newry BID renewal for period 2025-2031
- To note the issue of the ballot notice to Newry BID by the 29th January 2026.
- The appointment of the named organisation with the procurement and cost met by Newry BID.

FOR NOTING

ERT/011/2026

PLANNING FILE MANAGEMENT AND RETENTION

Read:

Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding Planning File Management and Retention Extension to Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to note the extension of the current contract, under the EPSO framework, with Iron Mountain UK Ltd for a further 12 months, from 16 January 2026 to 15 January 2027.

ERT/012/2026

RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT GRANT SCHEME

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Rural Business Development Grant Scheme. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Harte, the update on the 2025/26 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme was noted.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.14pm.

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

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

Signed: Conor Mallon
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
