

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 9 February 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall**

Chairperson: Councillor K Feehan

Committee Members

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor H Young	

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:**

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis

**Non-Committee Members
In attendance via Teams:**

Councillor D Finn	Councillor D McAteer
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Officials in attendance: 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/013/2026 APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor S Murphy and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism.

As the Chairperson was unable to attend the Committee in person, Deputy Chairperson Councillor K Feehan assumed the role of Chair for the meeting.

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/014/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**ERT/015/2026 ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING OF MONDAY 19 JANUARY 2026**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 19

January 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/005/2026 – Downpatrick Growing Together (GROVE)

In response to a query on above item from Councillor Andrews, Mrs Smyth advised that the matter had been presented to the previous ERT Committee and had been ratified at the Council meeting on 2 February. She confirmed that work would now commence with key agencies and stakeholders to progress it.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 19 January 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/016/2026 **OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION - WATER QUALITY C/190/2025**

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

Councillor Finn welcomed the Council paper and thanked officers for their work. She stated that the motion arose from the serious impacts caused by the neglect of watercourses such as Lough Neagh, emphasising the importance of protecting local bodies of water in an area of such natural beauty.

As a Newry councillor, she highlighted the significance of Newry Canal, noting its central role in the planned city park and stressing the need to safeguard this asset. She commended the work of the Canal Regeneration Task Force, which had been progressing efforts to restore the canal and realise its potential.

She added that, in working with DAERA and other external bodies, there were valuable opportunities to engage with organisations such as Northern Ireland Environment Link, whose initiatives, such as *Step Up for Clean Water* promoted nature-based solutions and supported those in agriculture and other sectors contributing to the long-term protection of water quality.

In response to a query from Councillor Young regarding testing of non-designated bathing water under Council ownership that was used for recreational purposes, Mrs Smyth confirmed that Camlough Lake and Castlewellan Lake were tested on a weekly basis during the period May-September, coinciding with the highest levels of recreational activity.

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Andrews, that Council acknowledges the economic potential of ensuring bodies of water such as Newry Canal and Camlough Lake are clean and fit for use and agrees to continue to work with DAERA and other external bodies to support improvements to water quality.**

ERT/017/2026

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 2 – CAPITAL SCHEMES

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Financial Assistance – Call 2 – Capital Themes. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, noting that the Council operated two financial calls each year, one revenue and one capital. She advised that the report set out proposals for managing the capital call, which was expected to open in March/April, with the exact date to be confirmed.

She confirmed that workshops associated with the capital call would be hosted in person and online, and that the Council also proposed to offer online evening workshops to encourage participation, particularly from the community and voluntary sector.

Councillor Andrews welcomed the report and proposed to accept the officer's recommendations. This was seconded by Councillor Ruane.

Councillor Hanlon asked what impact poor attendance had on groups' ability to qualify for funding. She queried whether attendance was mandatory and whether this was an issue that needed to be examined to ensure groups were properly equipped and able to apply for funding.

Mrs Smyth replied that attendance was not mandatory. The workshops were intended to provide information on the application process, criteria and guidance, and groups were encouraged to attend to strengthen their applications and better understand the assessment requirements.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to approve the Financial Assistance Call 2, Capital for 2026/2027 will open in March/April 2026, with the call being opened and managed subject to confirmation of budgets.

ERT/018/2026

PEACEPLUS

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

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, noting that section 2.1 provided a full update on the Partnership. She advised that the most recent meeting of the Partnership had taken place on 29 January and the notes of this meeting were included in Appendix 3.

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, to note the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership on 29 January 2026 and approve the procurement and delivery of the below activities under Strand 3 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan:

- **Full Business Case PEACEPLUS 3.2 Minority Community Support Programme**
- **Full Business Case PEACEPLUS 3.2 Cultural Language Schools.**

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns, 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 Hanlon, 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/019/2026

NEWRY BID

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, presented by Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Newry Business Improvement District (BID) Revote 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Harte, to vote in favour of the Newry Bid renewal for period 2026-2031 subject to:

- the review and update of the "Bid Levy Operating Agreement";
- the implementation of the recommendations included in the Audit report 2025;
- a quarterly report and an annual presentation by Newry BID to ERT committee on the delivery against the BID Strategic Priorities as set out in the proposals for 2026-2031.

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

ERT/020/2026

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS FRIENDSHIP AGREEMENT

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding International Relations Friendship Agreement with China. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns, to acknowledge the invitation for an outward visit to China from the Chinese Consulate General in Belfast, facilitated by the NI Bureau in China, and to bring further details of proposed dates, itinerary and cost to the March ERT Committee.

FOR NOTING

ERT/021/2026

QUARTERLY MUSEUM REPORT

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Quarterly Museums Update (Q3 25/26 Oct-Dec). **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

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

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.31pm.

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

**Signed: Councillor K Feehan
Deputy Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee**

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