

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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

Chairperson: Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Committee Members

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor J Tinnelly	Councillor H Young

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:** Councillor K Feehan Councillor A Quinn

**Non-Committee Members
In attendance via Teams:** Councillor J Jackson

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/022/2026 APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Galbraith and Ruane.

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/023/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**ERT/024/2026 ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 9 FEBRUARY 2026**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy,
Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 9 February
2026. **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/ 020/2026 - International Friendship Relations Agreement

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Hanlon, Councillor Lee-Surginor advised that the matter required discussion in closed session, as it had been considered in closed session at the previous meeting. He confirmed that Councillor Hanlon was content to wait until the meeting entered closed session.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on 9 February 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/025/2026

NMD LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP 2026/27

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding NMD Labour Market Partnership 2026/27.
(Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, noting that section 2.1 presented the 2026–27 Labour Market Partnership (LMP) action plan, agreed following strategic assessment and engagement, and continuing activity delivered since 2021/22 under full Department for Communities (DfC) funding. She advised that the Council was awaiting the 2026–27 letter of offer, reported ongoing engagement with DfC and confirmed that further information was expected in the coming days. She confirmed that the action plan and business case were presented for approval and sought Members’ agreement to accept the letter of offer, once received, and proceed with implementation.

Councillor Andrews welcomed the report, expressed full support for the LMP and proposed to accept the officers’ recommendations.

In response to a query from Councillor Young on the plans in place regarding the conclusions of the Ulster University analysis report and the type of job training available, Mrs Smyth confirmed that a suite of initiatives had been delivered through the LMP to promote the district as a place to work. She highlighted major jobs fairs in Newry and Downpatrick, delivered in partnership with DfC, and attracting over 300 jobseekers per event, as well as careers fairs with schools showcasing local employers, job opportunities and career pathways.

In response to a question from Councillor Hanna on assessing LMP performance, Mrs Smyth confirmed that, under the letter of offer, stringent monitoring arrangements were in place. She advised that the action plan included engagement targets, with follow-up evaluations, quarterly reporting to DfC and an annual overall evaluation. She confirmed that the 2025/26 report could be shared with Members at a future ERT Committee.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to approve the following, subject to funding,**

- **The business case for implementation of NMD Action Plan for 2026/2027 as outlined in appendix 1 of the officers’ report.**
- **Acceptance of a DfC letter of Offer for NMD LMP activities, including administration and operational budget.**

- **Progression of all required procurement and commissioning activity to secure delivery agents for the initiatives detailed in appendix 2 of the officers' report.**

ERT/026/2026

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 presented the report, noting that it set out two business cases: Strand 2.3, Sustaining Cross-community Relationships, and Strand 2.6, Intergenerational Programmes and Activities. She advised that both business cases were submitted for approval to enable progression of the associated actions and commencement of procurement.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the business cases and commencement of procurement for;**

- **2.3 Collaborative Interaction Programme – Sustaining Cross Community Relations.**
- **2.6 Social and Emotional Support Programme – Intergenerational programmes and activities “The Shared Bench; Men’s Sheds Across Generations”**

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 Hanna, 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 Young, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.**

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

ERT/027/2026

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 1/TRANCHE 1 REVENUE THEMES

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Call 1 – Tranche 1 –

Revenue Themes. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, to issue 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 are met prior to issue of full Letter of Offer and where conditions are not satisfied, the budget will be reallocated to score and rank list, if applicable.

ERT/028/2026

TOURISM EVENTS PROGRAMME 2026/27

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Tourism Events Programme 26/27. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the following;

- **The proposed Schedule of Giant Adventure Events for 2026-2027 as outlined in section 2.1 of the officers' report.**
- **The financial assistance awards associated with the delivery of Tourism events, Christmas events and Halloween events to named groups as outlined in section 2.2 of the officers' report.**
- **The necessary procurements and appointment of suppliers for the delivery of events and festivals in the annual tourism events programme.**

ERT/029/2026

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS FOR 2026/27

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Partnership Agreements for 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Hanna, to approve the list of Service Level Agreements, MOUs, Letters of Offer and Partnership Agreements for 2026/27 as detailed in the officers' report.

ERT/030/2026

THA HAIRTLAN FESTIVAL 2026

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, presented by Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy,

Regeneration & Tourism regarding Tha Hairtlan Festival 2026.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Lewis to support the new outreach and programmes proposed for Tha Hairtlan Festival in 2026 as set out in Section 2.1 of the officers' report.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Clarke, to defer the item to April ERT Committee, pending the outcome of the financial assistance call and further engagement with the organisation named in the officers' report.

The Chairperson confirmed that item ERT/020/2026 – International Friendship Relations Agreement was discussed in closed session, and the following was agreed

ERT/ 020/2026 -

INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP RELATIONS AGREEMENT

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Harte, to acknowledge the invitation from the Chinese consulate and recognise the importance of our sister city relationship with the city of Changchun. The Council respectfully decline their invite to visit this year but will engage with our partners such as Invest NI and The Executive Office on a visit to our sister city in the future.

FOR NOTING

ERT/031/2026

DTFF NI UPDATE

Read:

Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Digital Transformation Flexible Fund (DTFF).
(Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to note the DTF Steering Group's consensus position allowing call 7 to proceed without delay and the potential contingency revenue costs should the programme extend beyond March 2027.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.03pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 13 April 2026

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

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