

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 20 April 2026 at 6.00pm in Boardroom, Warrenpoint Town Hall**

Chairperson: Councillor D Lee-Surginor

Committee Members	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor K Feehan
	Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
	Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
	Councillor G Kearns	Councillor A Lewis
	Councillor S Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
	Councillor M Ruane	

**Committee Members
in attendance via Teams:** Councillor W Clarke Councillor H Young

**Non-Committee Members
In attendance:** Councillor C Bowsie

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/032/2026 APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

There were no apologies.

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/033/2026 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**ERT/034/2026 ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 9 MARCH 2026**

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

ERT/028/2026 – Tourism Events Programme 2026/27

Councillor Hanlon highlighted the local, national and international significance of St Patrick's Day and proposed the establishment of a dedicated Events Working Group, comprising representatives from the community, voluntary and business sectors to enhance and develop existing events, including St Patrick's Day celebrations across Newry, Mourne and Down District, with a view to increasing economic opportunities and strengthening the District's tourism offering.

Councillor Hanlon further proposed that Council write to the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons MLA, seeking support for St Patrick's Day events across the District in 2027. This proposal was seconded by Councillor Harte.

The Chairperson confirmed that all Members were in agreement with the proposal.

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

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Harte to establish a dedicated Events Working Group, comprising representatives from the community, voluntary and business sectors to enhance and develop existing events, including St Patrick's Day celebrations across the Newry, Mourne and Down district, with a view to increasing economic opportunities and strengthening the district's tourism offering.

It was further agreed that Council write to Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA, seeking support for St Patrick's Day events across the district in 2027.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/035/2026

OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION - NIGHT TIME ECONOMY IN DOWNPATRICK

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Night Time Economy in Downpatrick – C/039/2026. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Galbraith thanked officers for the work undertaken in preparing the report and acknowledged the significant consideration given to the issues and opportunities associated with Downpatrick's night-time economy. He stated that the motion sought to progress this work through the proposed appointment of a Night-Time Economy Champion to provide leadership, coordination and representation for the sector. He highlighted the importance of meaningful engagement with local businesses, including pubs, restaurants, cafés and venues, whose experience and insight were essential to future success.

Councillor Galbraith further indicated that Council should seek to meet with a delegation from Belfast City Council to learn from its experience in developing its night-time economy. He stated

that the overall aim was to develop a clear, realistic and deliverable action plan for Downpatrick. While acknowledging that regeneration of the night-time economy would present challenges and require sustained commitment, he stated that inaction was not an option. He welcomed the ongoing work towards Purple Flag accreditation and noted that the appointment of a Night-Time Economy Champion could play a key role in maintaining momentum and bringing stakeholders together.

Mrs Smyth outlined the report and advised that Section 3 set out the recommendations, namely to engage with the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group to host an engagement event with local businesses and relevant agencies, and to scope an action plan for the development of Downpatrick's night-time economy. She further advised that a second recommendation was for officers to engage with Belfast City Council to develop a proposal for a Purple Flag accreditation application.

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the sentiments of the motion but stated that her party believed it fell short of the vision and plans required for Downpatrick. She acknowledged the importance of the night-time economy but stated that a more holistic approach was required, including consideration of daytime footfall and overnight stays. She outlined the need to maximise opportunities to encourage visitors to visit Downpatrick, spend money locally and avail of the town's cultural, leisure and retail offer. She noted that while relevant frameworks were already in place, these initiatives required greater coordination rather than being addressed in isolation.

Councillor Hanlon proposed an amendment to include "consideration of all aspects of economic growth in Downpatrick, with a view to enhancing footfall and visitor experience and promoting Downpatrick as a positive place to visit, shop, dine and stay". This was seconded by Councillor Harte.

Councillor Galbraith did not accept the amendment, stating that while he supported the sentiments expressed, he believed that Downpatrick had been missing opportunities associated with the night-time economy for many years. Councillor Hanlon responded that her proposed amendment had enhanced the motion rather than detracted from it.

As there was dissent in the chamber, the Chairperson put the matter to a show of hands vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	7
AGAINST:	3
ABSTENTIONS:	2

The Chairperson declared the proposed amendment carried.

Councillor Feehan welcomed the motion and proposed an amendment "that Council host an engagement event with local businesses and relevant agencies in Newry to scope an action plan and pursue an application for Purple Flag accreditation for Newry".

The amendment was seconded by Councillor Andrews and was accepted by Councillor Galbraith.

Councillor Hanna proposed a further amendment that Council host an engagement event with local businesses and relevant agencies in Newcastle to scope an action plan and pursue an application for Purple Flag accreditation for Newcastle. This amendment was seconded by Councillor Lewis.

Councillor Galbraith did not accept the amendment.

As there was dissent in the chamber, the Chairperson put the matter to a show of hands vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: 11
AGAINST: 2
ABSTENTIONS: 1

The Chairperson declared the proposed amendment carried.

Councillor Bowsie requested that Members respect motions when they were brought before Council. He stated that the motion related specifically to the night-time economy rather than the daytime economy, and that its original focus was Downpatrick rather than the wider district. He encouraged Members who wished to advocate for their own areas to bring forward motions accordingly.

Councillor Hanlon responded that any Councillor was entitled to propose an amendment to a motion.

In summing up, Councillor Galbraith stated that, notwithstanding the amendments and additions made to the motion, he was not opposed to daytime activity in Downpatrick but believed that the town had been underserved during the night-time for a considerable period. He expressed support for the motion proceeding and stated that he looked forward to the next steps.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, the following was agreed;

- **To engage with Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group to host an engagement event with local businesses and relevant agencies to scope an action plan for the development of Downpatrick's nighttime economy, looking at all aspects of economic growth in Downpatrick to enhance foot flow and visitor experience and promote Downpatrick as a positive place to visit, shop, dine, and stay.**
- **Officers to engage with Belfast City Council to develop proposals for a Purple Flag accreditation application for Downpatrick, Newry and Newcastle.**
- **It was also agreed that the Council hosts an engagement event with local businesses and relevant agencies in Newry and Newcastle to scope an action plan for the development of their nighttime economy.**

ERT/036/2026

LOCAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

Read:

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

Mrs Smyth outlined the two recommendations contained within the report and confirmed that the business case had been approved through the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Business Plan and by the Department for the Economy (DfE), which had provided 100% funding.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the action reports as outlined in Appendix 1 and approve the business case outlined in Appendix 2 contained within the officer's report.**

ERT/037/2026

PAVEMENT CAFÉ POLICIES

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism regarding Pavement Café Designation and Enforcement Policies. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly advised that the report reviewed the details of the policy and noted the inclusion of guidance received from the Department, as set out in paragraph 6.9 of the draft. He confirmed that the officer recommendation was to approve the draft policy.

In response to a question from Councillor Andrews regarding complaints about the regulations and their application, Mr McGilly confirmed that complaints received related to cafés that had not been licensed. He advised that no issues had been raised by businesses where the policy had been applied and that no enforcement cases had been brought forward.

Councillor Ruane expressed concern that the policy could give rise to conflict between Council and local businesses, emphasising the importance of engagement with businesses and a common-sense approach.

In response to a question regarding enforcement, Mr McGilly stated that guidelines were in place to ensure a balanced consideration of the needs of all users and to provide a mechanism for reaching agreement.

Councillor Hanna concurred with the concerns raised by Councillor Ruane, questioned the level of flexibility officers would apply, and highlighted the potential for varying interpretations of the policy by different officers.

Councillor Feehan also concurred with Councillor Ruane and stated that he would not wish to see conflict between Council and local businesses. He commented that the policy was comprehensive and queried whether it could be condensed into a factsheet for circulation to businesses, outlining what was permitted, encouraged and required to remain compliant.

Councillor Feehan added that outdoor eating and drinking enhanced the town centre experience and expressed hope that Council and local businesses could work in partnership.

Councillor Young concurred with Members' comments and highlighted the potential impact of pavement furniture on individuals with sight or mobility issues where recommended guidance was not followed. She asked whether Council could confirm that, in light of Equality Act requirements, it had a comprehensive understanding of how its grant and pavement licensing policies did not detrimentally affect blind and partially sighted people. She further queried the processes for measuring the impact of pavement café clutter on disabled people and whether compliance visits would be unannounced or subject to prior notice.

Mr McGilly responded that the policy review had taken account of lessons learned from experience to date. He confirmed that the policy had been equality screened and provided the guidance used by officers when assessing applications and monitoring compliance through site visits and ongoing engagement with applicants.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to consider and approve the Pavement Café Policies and the additional item '6.9 (b)The minimum footway width may need to be greater than 2 m in areas with medium/high pedestrian footfall. The Pedestrian Comfort Guide for London can be used as guidance to determine the clear footway width for recorded high pedestrian flows.**

ERT/038/2026

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 noted that the report sought approval of a business case under the approved PEACEPLUS Action Plan and to note the minutes of the PEACEPLUS Partnership Board.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the minutes of PEACEPLUS Partnership on 26th March 2026 and approve the business case for procurement and delivery of the Social and Emotional Support Programme –intergenerational Music and Dance under Strand 2 of the Co-designed Local Action Plan.**

ERT/039/2026

NI REGIONAL PLANNING IT SYSTEM

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism regarding NI Regional Planning It System. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly outlined the report which recommends approval for the associated cost of the SLA Shared Service for the Planning System.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the associated costs of the Shared Service for the Planning system.**

ERT/040/2026

TEMPORARY ROAD CLOSURE POLICY

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy,

Regeneration & Tourism regarding Temporary Road Closures on a Public Road for the Purposes of Holding a Special Event Policy.
(Copy circulated)

Mr McGilly outlined the report and advised that the policy had been reviewed, with no changes recommended.

Councillor Andrews queried whether responsibility for placing advertisements in the local press could transfer from Council to applicants and whether an appeal process existed to overturn road closure decisions. Mr McGilly confirmed that the policy specified that Council was responsible for advertising road closure applications, that an appeal process was in place and that road closure decisions could be overturned.

In response to a query from Councillor Lewis regarding whether applicants for road closures could be advised to consider the potential impact on places of worship, noting that road closures had resulted in delays to services, Mr McGilly confirmed that this feedback would be shared with the relevant officers.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to consider and approve the Temporary Road Closures on a Public Road for the Purposes of Holding a Special Event Policy.**

In response to a suggestion from Councillor Hanna that Item ERT/042/2026 – Tha Hairtlan Festival 2026 be considered in open session, Mr Mallon advised that the item had previously been considered in closed session and that should remain the case as it contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person, including the Council.

Councillor Bowsie suggested that financial matters could be considered in closed session, with general discussion held in open session, as had occurred for other items. Mr Mallon responded that his advice remained unchanged that the item should be considered in closed session.

In response to a question from Councillor Bowsie regarding whether a vote could be taken to determine whether the item should be considered in open or closed session, Mr Mallon advised that Members of the Committee could make proposals in relation to this and highlighted that the agenda had been issued several days in advance and that no queries or concerns regarding the status of the item had been raised prior to the meeting.

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lewis, 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/041/2026

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 1 TRANCHE 2 2026/27

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Call 1 – Tranche 2 – Revenue Themes. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Ruane, 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. Letters of Offer to successful applicants and notification to unsuccessful applicants will be issued in mid May 2026.

It was also agreed that Pre-Letter of Offer conditions are to be met prior to issue of full Letter of Offer and where conditions are not satisfied, the budget will be re-allocated to score and rank list, if applicable.

It was further agreed to open a Financial Assistance Revenue Call (Call 2) mid-May 2026 for 4 weeks for the following themes: Good Relations, PCSP and Community Events & Festivals.

It was agreed to move two applications for assessment from summer scheme theme into Sports programme theme.

ERT/042/2026

THA HAIRTLAN FESTIVAL 2026

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & 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 officer's report.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Lewis, to allocate 20% of the total event cost towards delivery of the

event to include all the activities set out in appendix 2 of the officers' report.

ERT/043/2026

RURAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SCHEME 2026-27

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Rural Business Development Scheme 2026-27. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, to approve the delivery of the Rural Business Development Scheme for the 2026/2027 year, subject to DAERA Business Case approval.**

FOR NOTING

ERT/044/2026

BT STREETS HUB PROPOSAL

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Proposal for Replacement of Legacy BT Telephone Box with BT Street Hubs in NMDDC. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Andrews regarding timescales for rollout and whether there were plans to extend the hubs to other areas within the District, Mr Mallon confirmed that the hubs were being delivered by the private sector. He added that Council was supportive of the initiative and would encourage the private sector to engage with Council on rolling out the hubs in other areas.

Councillor Lewis commented that the hubs appeared to be quite large and queried whether there were plans for BT to consult on their design. Mr Mallon advised that this would be managed through the planning process, with public consultation providing opportunities for representations to be made in respect of submitted applications.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the proposal and current planning applications submitted by Global and BT and that all installations are subject to the appropriate planning approvals. It was also agreed to note the strategic benefits of the proposal, including enhancing digital infrastructure, promoting digital inclusion, and town centre regeneration across the district. It was further agreed to support continued engagement with Global and BT to explore opportunities for Council use, particularly in relation to civic messaging and data sharing insights.**

ERT/045/2026

CASTLEWELLAN SMART FOREST

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding SMART Forest Castlewellan. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to a query from Councillor Lewis, Mr Mallon advised that a Smart Forest referred to the use of technology to remotely record and monitor data, including air quality, water quality, visitor numbers and trends.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the update provided on the Castlewellan Smart Forest Project.**

ERT/046/2026

ERT SCHEME OF DELEGATION APR 25-MAR 26

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding ERT Scheme Of Delegation Apr 25-Mar 26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the document.**

ERT/047/2026

INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS NI (IOD NI) INFRASTRUCTURE REPORT LAUNCH

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Institute Of Directors NI (IOD NI) Infrastructure Report Launch **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the recent launch of a report and its recommendations, "Getting Infrastructure and Investment Back on Track".**

ERT/048/2026

BUILDING CONTROL 6 X MONTHLY REPORT

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism regarding 6 Monthly Building Control Report. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the report.**

ERT/049/2026

LICENSING 6 X MONTHLY REPORT

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism regarding Licensing 6 Monthly Report. . **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to note the report.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.23pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Tuesday 5 May 2026

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

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