

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Thursday 11 June 2020 at 6.00pm via Skype**

In the Chair: Councillor G Sharvin

In Attendance: Councillor P Byrne Councillor S Doran
Councillor C Enright Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor R Howell Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis Councillor H McKee
Councillor A McMurray Councillor D Murphy
Councillor B Ó Muirí Councillor M Savage
Councillor W Walker

Also in attendance: Councillor T Andrews Councillor P Brown
Councillor D Curran Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor L McEvoy Councillor G O'Hare
Councillor G Stokes

Officials in Attendance: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services
Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr R Moore, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Mr C Mallon, Director or Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs C Miskelly, Assistant Director of Corporate Services (HR & S
Safeguarding)
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services (Administration)
Mrs R Mackin, Assistant of Director of Corporate Planning and
Policy
Mr K Montgomery, Assistant Director of Finance
Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects
Mrs L Moore, Head of Legal Administration
Mr F O'Connor, Legal Advisor
Mr A Mc Kay, Chief Planning Officer
Mr G Byrne, Audit Services Manager
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Ms L O'Hare, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs C McAteer, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs C Hanvey, Personal Assistant

SPR/52/2020: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Gallagher.

SPR/53/2020: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Mrs Carville declared an interest in Item 26 - Annual Leave (Chief Officers) on behalf of all Chief Officers.

SPR/54/2020

TO AGREE STARTING TIME FOR STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS

Read: Copy of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting Dates and Times (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed that the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meetings would commence monthly at 6.00pm.**

SPR/55/2020

STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES EMERGENCY BUSINESS PLANS

Read: Copy of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Emergency Business Plans (**Copy circulated**)

Mrs Carville advised Members that the report contained the Corporate Services and Chief Executive's Business Plans for April – September 2020 stating that due to the current situation, it had been agreed with Party Leaders to bring emergency business plans to Committee. She advised these plans were subject to change due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and would be revised on an ongoing basis.

Councillor Byrne queried when the delegated authority that had been passed at the Emergency Council Meeting in March would be ending given that the Committee structures were now back in operation.

Mrs Ward clarified that delegated authority had been needed during the period of major crisis, however now that the Committee structure was operational again, the delegated authority would be removed formally at the Council Meeting on 6 July 2020.

Councillor Savage took the opportunity to pay tribute to the senior management team and all staff for the manner in which they had navigated Council through these unprecedented times and thanked them for their hard work and diligence.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve Chief Executive's Department Emergency Business Plan April – September 2020 and the Corporate Services Emergency Business Plan April – September 2020.**

SPR/56/2020:

ACTION SHEET OF THE STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2020

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 12 March 2020. (**Copy circulated**)

Mrs Carville provided an update on three actions arising from the 12 March 2020 meeting that had not progressed as planned due to the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic, namely the Corporate Plan 2020 – 2023, the Performance Improvement Plan 2020- 2021, and the recruitment of a Director for Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed that the Action Sheet of 12 March 2020, be noted, and actions removed as marked.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed to write a letter to Department for Communities to reconsider the decision on the Regeneration Bill.

CORPORATE SERVICES

SPR/57/2020 REPLACEMENT OF COUNCILLOR HARTE ON ALBERT BASIN TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mr M Lipsett, Director of Actively and Healthy Communities, regarding replacement of Councillor Harte on the Albert Basin Task and Finish Working Group **(Copy circulated)**

Members discussed the issue at length with Councillor Savage proposing that the Albert Basin Task & Finish Group be retained in its current format until it would reach the project stage. This was seconded by Councillor Walker.

Councillor Brown proposed that Alliance take up the seat if it were to be relinquished by Sinn Féin as they were the original proposers of the motion. This was seconded by Councillor Enright.

Councillor O’Muirí advised that Councillor Harte, as a member of the Planning Committee said she had felt compromised on a number of occasions and that she would not want to have to step out of a Planning Meeting when discussions on the park would be taking place therefore felt it would be in her best interests to step aside from the Task & Finish Working Group. He advised he was content the membership stay within Newry DEA at present with further conversations to be held regarding members of the planning committee also sitting on this working group.

The Chairman put Councillor Savage’s proposal to a vote the results of which were as follows:

FOR: 11
AGAINST: 3
ABSTENTIONS: 1

The proposal was CARRIED

Councillor Brown asked why the Committee was not voting on his proposal. Officers advised that as there was no seat to be taken up, the proposal was no longer valid.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Walker, it was agreed to retain the membership of the Albert Basin Task and Finish Group in its current format.

SPR/58/2020 NOTICE OF MOTION – REFERRED FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2 MARCH 2020

The following Notice of Motion came forward for consideration in the name of Councillor Byrne:

“This Council believes that every employee, facing the trauma of a terminal illness diagnosis, should be treated with compassion and understanding in order to assist them at such a distressing time. This Council resolves to;

- 1. Support the TUC’s Dying to Work campaign and sign up to its Charter outlining the principles in which terminally ill employees should be treated if they wish to continue to work.**
- 2. Ensure as an employer that our employees will be given the freedom to make an informed decision for themselves as to the best course of action for them and their families**
- 3. Ensure that all financial details, including death in service benefits, are fully explained so that any decision taken is an informed decision.**
- 4. Write the principles of the Charter into our procedures and train our staff accordingly**
- 5. Encourage employers throughout our city/town/borough/district/county to sign up to the Charter.”**

Councillor Byrne, in presenting the above Notice of Motion, stated having his motion referred from Council to Committee was the correct process to follow as it allowed further information and discussion to take place. He advised following a meeting with officers to discuss the matter, he was satisfied that the Council’s Critical Illness Policy covered the elements in the Charter in all but one area, where the Council’s policy went over and above the provisions called for in the Charter. He raised a query about whether the Critical Illness Guide covered employees with terminal illness as there is a huge difference between critical and terminal illness.

Councillor Magennis stated she felt the Council’s procedures were possibly superior to those that were catered for within the Charter.

Mrs Miskelly confirmed there were special provisions within the guide for those where life expectancy was less than 12 months.

Councillor Byrne advised he was content that Council had suitable policy provision in place in this regard and stated the signing of the Charter was a visual thing and part of a movement to ensure Council could encourage others in the District to sign up to same. Councillor Byrne was content that the Council was following the provisions of the Charter and therefore did not need to sign up to it as such.

Noted: It was agreed to note the contents of the officer’s report.

CORPORATE PLANNING AND POLICY

SPR/59/2020

DAERA REPORT ON THE REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RURAL NEEDS ACT (NI) 2016

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding report on DAERA on the review of the implementation of the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016 **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Byrne welcomed this report by DAERA, noting the huge importance of the Rural Needs Act in this Council. He welcomed the input of the Council officers to the working group and welcomed clarification provided around the level of stakeholder engagement undertaken by Council.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Council actively progress the implementation of the recommendations detailed in the report for Public Authorities.

SPR/60/2020

SUSPENDED IRISH LANGUAGE BURSARY SCHEME

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Suspended Irish language Bursary Scheme **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Ó Muirí advised his understanding from the Irish Language Working Group meeting was to open the scheme each year in October, rather than April as parents felt this was too late to avail of the funding. With the opening of the scheme in October, this would allow children to apply for funding for the Gaeltacht for next year.

Councillor Ó Muirí proposed to proceed with option 2 with a slight amendment i.e. to reopen the Irish Language Bursary Scheme for period 2020/2021, and to include the option for children to apply for Gaeltacht for next year using the unused budget from this year before the end of the financial year.

Councillor Savage spoke in support of Councillor O'Muirí's amendment highlighting it was a good opportunity to secure places for young people at Gaeltacht on what has been a very successful and positive scheme.

Mrs Carville referred to the governance of the scheme, which stated that only those that had booked, paid and attended the scheme could be reimbursed. She requested that the matter be examined further particularly around the governance issues.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed to review the proposal and suggestion of payment in advance of attendance and that a report be brought back to the Irish language Working Group for consideration.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/61/2020

ALBERT BASIN ACTION SHEET 21 MAY 2020 & 29 MAY 2020

Read: Action Sheet from Albert Basin Task & Finish Working Group meeting held on 21 May 2020 & 29 May 2020 **(Copy circulated)**

Noted: **It was agreed to note the action sheet arising from the Albert Basin Task & Finish Working Group meeting held on 21 May 2020 & 29 May 2020.**

SPR/62/2020

MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2019

Read: Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 28 November 2019 **(Copy circulated)**

Noted: **It was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 28 November 2019.**

SPR/63/2020

**MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION
PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2020**

Read Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 15 January 2020 (**Copy circulated**)

Noted: It was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 15 January 2020.

SPR/64/2020

**MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION
PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD ON 21 APRIL 2020**

Read Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 21 April 2020 (**Copy circulated**)

Noted: It was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 21 April 2020.

SPR/65/2020

**SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY
REPORT FOR PERIOD JANUARY – MARCH 2020**

Read Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for Period January – March 2020 (**Copy circulated**)

Noted: It was agreed to note the quarterly report for period January – March 2020 on Section 75 Policy Screening minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 21 April 2020.

SPR/66/2020

**STATUTORY REPORTING – RURAL NEEDS ANNUAL MONITORING
REPORT FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL 2019 – 31 MARCH 2020**

Read Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Statutory Reporting – Rural Needs Annual Monitoring report for period 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020 (**Copy circulated**)

Noted: It was agreed to note the Rural Needs Annual Monitoring report period for 1 April 2019 – 31 March 2020.

Councillor Brown left the meeting at this point – 7.08pm

SPR/67/2020

FOI/EIR/DP MONITORING STATISTICS

Read Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services (Administration), regarding FOI/EIR/DP Monitoring Statistics (**Copy circulated**)

Noted: It was agreed to note report on FOI/EIR/DP Monitoring Statistics.

Councillor McKee left the meeting at this point – 7.12pm

SPR/68/2020

**NMDDC ANNUAL MONITORING RETURNS 2 JANUARY 2019 –
1 JANUARY 2020**

Read Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs C Miskelly, Assistant Director Corporate Services (HR & Safeguarding), regarding NMDDC Annual Monitoring Returns 2 January 2019 – 1 January 2020 **(Copy circulated)**

Noted: It was agreed to note report on NMDDC Annual Monitoring Returns 2 January 2019 – 1 January 2020.

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 Savage, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the next matters which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

FOR NOTING

SPR/69/2020

COUNCIL FINANCES

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Council Finances **(Copy circulated)**

Members discussed the report at length, welcoming the detailed analysis of Council's finances at such an uncertain time. Members welcomed the receipt of additional COVID 19 funding from the Department for Communities, and the actions taken by officers to date to maximise budget savings in year in light of the additional financial pressures of the pandemic.

Members agreed it was critically important that all Council financial expenditure, both revenue and capital, be reviewed going forward to assess the impact of COVID 19 pandemic on Council's future plans.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed to revisit the Capital Programme at the next Strategy Policy and Resources meeting in August.

SPR/70/2020

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – APRIL 2020

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Management Accounts **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Noted: It was agreed to note the contents of the report.

FOR DECISION

SPR/71/2020 FURLOUGH - WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Furlough – Workers and Employees **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed, from July 2020, for any employees furloughed, the top up to 100% of the employees' contracted pay and casual workers' average monthly earnings will cease and fall into line with the Government's provisions of the scheme as outlined at 2.1.

SPR/72/2020 NI PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mr A McKay, Chief Planner, regarding NI Public Services Ombudsman Complaint **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed that Members accept the recommendations at 1.1, namely the retrospective approval of the issue of an apology and £500 consolatory payment made in respect of maladministration by the Council.

SPR/73/2020 REPLACEMENT PLANNING IT SYSTEM

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mr C Mallon, Director Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Replacement Planning IT System **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed that Council support the preferred option, as set out in the Full Business Case & allow

a budget of up to £1.8m over 20 years towards the new IT system.

SPR/74/2020

IN HOUSE COST RECOVERY FOR LEGAL MATTERS

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs L Moore, Head of Legal Administration regarding In-House Cost Recovery for Legal Matters, **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Walker, it was agreed that Elected Member's agree to the introduction of an in-house process for legal cost recovery on the basis of £75 per hour for Legal Advisors and a fixed rate of £7.50 for telephone calls & correspondence.

SPR/75/2020

TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF CORPORATE GRAPHIC DESIGN AND PRINT MANAGEMENT SERVICES

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director of Corporate Planning & Policy, regarding Tender for the Provision of Corporate Graphic Design and Print Management Services **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to accept the officer's recommendation that a tender competition was held for the Provision of Corporate Graphic Design & Print Management Services.

SPR/76/2020

RENTAL AGREEMENTS

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mr M Lipsett, Director of Active & Healthy Communities and Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Rental Agreements **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to accept the officer's recommendation set out in 3.1 of the report, namely a two-month rent relief for the four commercial leases listed in the officer's report.

Mrs Carville, Mr Lipsett, Mr Moore, Mr Mallon, Mrs Robb, Mrs Mackin, Mr Montgomery, Mr Quinn, Mrs Moore, Mr O'Connor, Mr McKay and Mr Byrne left the meeting at this point – 8:19pm

SPR/77/2020

ANNUAL LEAVE (CHIEF OFFICERS)

Read: Report dated 11 June 2020 from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Annual Leave (Chief Officers) **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to accept the officer's recommendation that the recently negotiated and agreed changes to annual leave and public and statutory holiday entitlements is extended to Chief Officers and align to those noted in 2.2 & 2.4 of the officer's report.**

Mrs Carville re-joined the meeting at this stage – 8:26pm.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 8.32pm

Signed: **Councillor Gareth Sharvin**
Chairperson

Signed: **Dorinnia Carville**
Director of Corporate Services