

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 17 January 2022 at 6.00pm in the Mourne Room Downshire
Estate Downpatrick, and remotely via Microsoft Teams**

Deputy Chairperson: Councillor T Andrews (Chamber)

In attendance: **(Committee Members)**
Councillor R Burgess (via Teams)
Councillor W Clarke (via Teams)
Councillor D Curran (Chamber)
Councillor M Gibbons (via Teams)
Councillor G Hanna (via Teams)
Councillor V Harte (Chamber)
Councillor M Larkin (via Teams)
Councillor R Mulgrew (Chamber)
Councillor A McMurray (Teams)
Councillor H Reilly (via Teams)
Councillor M Ruane (via Teams)
Councillor M Savage (via Teams)
Councillor G Stokes (via Teams)

Non Members: Councillor P Brown (via Teams)
Councillor O Hanlon (via Teams)
Councillor G Malone (via Teams)
Councillor D McAteer (via Teams)
Councillor J Tinnelly (via Teams)

Officials in Attendance: Mr C Mallon Director Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Tourism, Culture & Events
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise, Employment Regeneration
Mr A McKay, Chief Planning Officer
Mr C Jackson, Assistant Director Building Control & Regulations
Mr A Hay Principal Planning Officer PPTO
Ms L Dillon Democratic Services Officer
Ms C McAteer Democratic Services Officer
Ms T McLaughlin PA Director ERT

Also in attendance: Ms Janice Gault Hotels Federation

ERT/001/2022: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Councillor R Howell

ERT/002/2022: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest.

PRESENTATIONS

**ERT/003/2022: PRESENTATION
JANICE GAULT: NI HOTELS FEDERATION**

Ms Janice Gault NI Hotels Federation was in attendance to deliver a presentation to Members on the challenges and opportunities in the hotel industry. She explained the NI Hotels Federation was a body who looked after the interests of the hotel sector in the north of Ireland whose membership covers hotels, guest accommodation and guest houses. She then proceeded with a power point presentation covering the following areas:

Tourism Spend 2019
Accommodation
Accommodation Product NMD Area
Covid 19
Opportunities/Challenges
Support
Skills/Staffing

She said Tourism Spend figures for 2019 would be used as benchmark for comparisons this was prior to the pandemic. She said all accommodation had grown over the last decade with many investments in the district. She said Newry Mourne and Down had a very good authentic hotel product which provided employment and investment and the market was performing very well.

She referred to the rising costs resulting from the Covid pandemic which with it brought uncertainty to the market and revenue reduction but provided growth in rural destinations with the increase in staycations with the diverse offering within the District.

She said skills and staffing within the sector was a big challenge with a major careers campaign planned and that the continuation of reduced VAT and rates holiday would help with the rise in inflation and costs.

Discussion followed during which Members raised the following issues:

- As a nation Ireland is known for its hospitality and offering in terms of food and hotels and – a lot of hotels had significant personal investment and it would be devastating if this sector suffered any further setbacks.
- The need to liaise with schools and colleges to address skills and staffing.
- Sustainability of different types of accommodation.
- Popularity of outdoor activities
- An All Ireland VAT model should be introduced.
- Development of Ireland's Ancient East brand.
- Planning permissions for new hotel developments.
- Hotel expansion along coastal routes and geopark potential.
- Impact of staffing and cross border workers
- Food quality and cost challenges.

Ms Gault responded with the following points:

- Many hotels have added self-catering to their offering as post Covid many people are seeking a more independent way to holiday.
- Many hotels have relationships with outdoor activity companies.
- A 12.5% VAT rate was implemented for Northern Ireland in July 2020, and VAT in the Republic of Ireland is 9% and will be reviewed in September 2022.
- The majority of cross border tourism products such as Irelands Ancient East; Wild Atlantic Way; Causeway Coastal Route etc , all come from different funding sources. Irelands Ancient East includes strong historical products of interest for which Ireland has built a reputation and many join together on a cross border basis albeit from different funding sources. The St Patrick's offering and new Game of Thrones experience are strong products for the District.
- The make-up of hotels has changed considerably due to customer demand for a different product and new hotel development is based on this. Hotel development over the past years has been concentrated in particular areas – a good product in the right location will be successful if this is well marketed.
- Hotels in Ireland have performed well as an industry, but staffing continues to be a major issue and its important to encourage people to join the industry. Immigration

policy issues continue to have an impact on cross border workforce.

- Ireland has excellent quality of food and ingredients with clean agriculture businesses and food promotion is very useful going forward. Food content has risen as it is more expensive to buy it, prepare it due to rising energy costs, and to serve it due to wage inflation. It is very unlikely that there will be an immediate change to this situation and it is a factor that impacts economies globally.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke seconded by Councillor Mulgrew it was agreed the Council write to the Chancellor calling for the VAT reduction to remain in place.

**ERT/004/2022: ACTION SHEET
MINUTES OF ENTERPRISE, REGENERATION &
TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING
MONDAY 13 DECEMBER 2021**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 13 December 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Curran seconded by Councillor Mulgrew it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 13 December 2021.

NOTICE OF MOTION

**ERT/005/2022: NOTICE OF MOTION
RE: FREE CAR PARKING FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES**

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

“In the interest of encouraging people to reduce their carbon footprint and incentivise the ownership of electric vehicles in the District, Council will introduce free car parking for electric vehicles in all Council owned car parks”

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr C Jackson Assistant Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism regarding free parking for electric vehicles in Council off-street car parks. **(Circulated)**

Councillor Brown presented the Notice of Motion. He said he took on board the points made in the Officers report and the challenges of the proposal to provide free parking for EV motorists. He extended his appreciation to officers in compiling the report adding that EV cars could be easily identified by providing parking attendants with a list of makes/models that are EV. He agreed Central Government must play a role in the encouraging EV take up and this should not be left to local government alone however he felt Councils should be doing more to improve the EV charging network across the District given that Council is the body responsible for most of car parking across the District.

Whilst he welcomed the report stating Councils should continue to work collaboratively on funding for EV charging points, he felt figures were needed in terms of how many EV charging points are presently available in Council car parks compared with how many there are in other Council areas of similar geography and bring this information back to a future Committee meeting.

Mr Jackson said the Council currently had 8 charge points in its car parks and a further 15 have been proposed throughout the District with locations yet to be agreed.

Members discussed the Motion and Mr Jackson responded to the issues raised by Members during discussions:

- EV charging is currently free but charges may be applied in the future as the infrastructure rolls out- these details are not yet available. Facilities may be managed by private operators and a tariff may be applied.
- Council currently apply a charge of 40 pence per hour across 11 car parks which is spent towards maintenance costs, ie, surfacing; lighting; white lines; electricity for street lighting; enforcement costs and cleaning.
- Members supported the need for greener energy but that this should be made affordable to the population with sustainable solutions to provide the required fuel and infrastructure and necessary input from the planning authority.
- Councillor Brown said officers had produced a well-balanced report however he felt Council should still encourage free charging for EV to encourage ownership of these vehicles. He welcomed the proposed 15 additional charging points but that more were needed and he requested Officers to obtain figures in terms of how many EV charging points are presently available in Council car parks compared with how many there are in other Council areas of similar geography and bring this information back to a future Committee meeting.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mulgrew seconded by Councillor Savage it was agreed to note the content of Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr C Jackson Assistant Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism regarding free parking for electric vehicles in Council off-street car parks, and that Officers continue the collaborative work in relation to both the Faster and On-Street Residential Charging Schemes in order to secure funding for increasing EV charging provision within the District.

ENTERPRISE EMPLOYMENT & REGENERATION

ERT/006/2022: ALL IRELAND SMART CITIES FORUM

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise Employment and Regeneration regarding the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Stokes seconded by Councillor Curran it was agreed:-

- To approve the cost of renewal of membership of €4,809 per annum. This cost includes facilitation support of Maynooth University Business School, the bi-monthly meetings and the Annual All-Ireland Smart Cities Conference.
- To note that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council continue to avail of the expertise from the All Ireland Smart Cities Forum. An ERT officer and representative from East Border Region will continue to attend the meetings and disseminate the information to relevant stakeholders.

ERT/007/2022: BRCD – RENEWED AMBITION PROGRAMME

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise Employment & Regeneration, regarding the BRCD – Renewed Ambition Programme. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mulgrew seconded by Councillor Stokes it was agreed to approve Council participation in the Renewed Ambition Programme at a cost

of £15,000 for 2022-23, subject to budget estimates Rate setting.

ERT/008/2022: SMALL SETTLEMENT REGENERATION PLAN

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly Assistant Director Enterprise Employment Regeneration regarding Covid Recovery Small Settlements Regeneration Programme. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Burgess seconded by Councillor Stokes it was agreed to approve the relevant business cases and commence the required procurement processes/framework appointments for scheme design consultants and contractors and proceed to tender/quotation/assessment and award if within budget. In advance of this all proposals will be presented to the relevant DEA for a by way of consultation.

EXEMPT INFORMATION

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Curran seconded by Councillor Mulgrew 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).

ERT/009/2022: CASTLEWELLAN FOREST PARK OPERATING MODEL PROCUREMENTS

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr A Patterson Assistant Director TCE, regarding Castlewellan Forest Park Operating Model Procurements. **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/010/2022: LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Tourism Culture & Events regarding Labour Market Partnership. **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/011/2022: NEWCASTLE HARBOUR – PROVISION OF SERVICES

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Tourism, Culture and Events, regarding Newcastle Harbour – provision of services. **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/012/2022: NEW NI PLANNING IT SYSTEM

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr A McKay, Chief Planner, regarding new Planning IT system. **(Copy circulated)**.

ERT/013/2022: SHARED ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES LDA SLA

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr A McKay, Chief Planning Officer regarding LDP: Draft Plan Strategy – options for undertaking a Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Strategic Environmental Assessment; revised Service Level Agreement with Mid and East Antrim Borough Council (Shared Environmental Service). **(Copy circulated)**

ERT/014/2022: TOURISM NI PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT FUND SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

Read: Report dated 13 December 2021 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Tourism Culture and Events regarding Tourism NI Product Development Fund – Service Level Agreements. **(Copy circulated)**.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Curran seconded by Councillor Stokes it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

When the Committee came out of closed session the Chairperson reported on the following decisions taken:

ERT/009/2022: Castlewellan Forest Park Operating Model Procurements

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Curran seconded by Councillor McMurray it was agreed as follows:

- a) To award 2 No. trading pitches at Castlewellan Forest Park under the terms detailed in the report.
- b) To appoint a co-sourced grass and hedge cutting services for a three-year period via public procurement.
- c) To appoint a suitably experienced and certified specialist maintenance contractor for a three year period via a public procurement.

ERT/010/2022: Labour Market Partnership

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Stokes seconded by Councillor Mulgrew it was agreed as follows:

- Council issue a Service Level Agreement to Southern Regional College (SRC) and also to South Eastern Regional College (SERC) to create an Apprenticeships Awareness Campaign across the District, delivering against the Labour Market Partnership Action Plan.
- Council issue a Service Level Agreement to Newry and Mourne Enterprise Agency and Down Business Centre to implement the LMP Action "Stimulate self-employment as an "employment" opportunity", offering follow-on support to their Go for It Clients.
- Council issue a Service Level Agreement to DFC (or an appropriate partner if DFC cannot fulfil within the timescales) to implement the delivery of a virtual jobs fair during 2021/2022.
- To note Council have received and accepted a Letter of Offer from DFC for implementation of LMP Actions between January 2022 and March 2022. The report above outlines the anticipated actions that can be implemented within this timescale.

- To note Council will commence engagement regarding the submission of a further action plan outlining LMP Actions for 2022/2023 and which is due to be submitted to DFC in February 2022.

ERT/011/2022: Newcastle Harbour – Provision of Services

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke seconded by Councillor Stokes it was agreed to approve a pilot programme for a sailing academy to operate from Newcastle Harbour from April – October 2022 subject to the conditions set out in the report.

ERT/012/2022: Planning IT System

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Stokes seconded by Councillor Mulgrew it was agreed to approve the Service Level Agreement and associated costs of the Shared Service for the new Planning system.

ERT/013/2022: Shared Environmental Services LDP SLA

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Curran seconded by Councillor Mulgrew it was agreed to note the content of report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr A McKay Chief Planning Officer, and approve the preferred option – i.e. agree the revised Service Level Agreement with Shared Environmental Services (SES), and allow Shared Environmental Services to continue their work through the draft Plan Strategy stage.

**ERT/014/2022: Tourism NI Product Development Fund
- Service Level Agreements**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Curran seconded by Councillor Stokes it was agreed Council enter into Service Level Agreements with Newry, Mourne and Down Tourism Businesses detailed in the report to deliver a programme of events/experiences as part of the Tourism NI Market Led Product Development Programme 2021/22.

FOR NOTING

ERT/015/2022: DOG EUTHANASIA UPDATE

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr C Jackson Assistant Director Building Control & Regulations regarding update on euthanasia of dogs. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the content of this report; welcome the reduction in dogs euthanised and continue to work with all the relevant agencies to limit the number of dogs euthanised within our district.

ERT/016/2022: REVIEW OF NMD ENTERPRISE WEEK 2021

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise, Employment and Regeneration, regarding review of NMD Enterprise Week 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the impact of NMD Enterprise Week 2021, led by Council in partnership with key business support providers within and outside the District with the aim of enhancing the entrepreneurial activity and partnership working across the District.

ERT/017/2022: ERT HISTORIC ACTION TRACKER

Read: Action Tracker Report for Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Committee. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the Historic Action Tracker Report for Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Committee.

ERT/018/2022: INVEST NI ECONOMIC RECOVERY ACTION PLAN

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly Assistant Director of Enterprise, Employment and Regeneration regarding Invest NI Economic Recovery Action Plan (ERAP) Sub Regional Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the funding secured through Invest NI Economic Recovery Action Plan for the completion of a number of research projects into the wider economic outlook.

ERT/019/2022: LOUTH/NMD STRATEGIC ALLIANCE REPORT

Read: Report of Louth/NMD Strategic Alliance Meeting held on 15 September 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the report.

ERT/020/2022: PLANNING PERFORMANCE FIGURES

Read: Report regarding Planning Performance Figures for December 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the Planning Performance Figures for December 2021.

**ERT/021/2022: ULSTER UNIVERSITY ECONOMIC POLICY CENTRE REPORT
WHAT NEXT FOR COMMUTING AND REMOTE WORKING**

Read: Report dated 17 January 2022 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise Employment & Regeneration regarding Ulster University Economic Policy Centre Report – what next for Commuting and Remote Working. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was unanimously agreed to note the content of the report and utilise the findings going forward to inform future programme development etc.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 7.45pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 February 2022.

Signed: Councillor T Andrews

**Deputy Chairperson
Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism Committee**

**Signed: Mr C Mallon
Director of Enterprise Regeneration & Tourism**
