

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on Monday 31 January 2022 at 2.00pm remotely via Microsoft Teams

Chairperson:	Councillor C Mason	
In attendance via Teams:	Councillor T Andrews Councillor P Byrne Councillor D Curran Councillor O Hanlon Councillor M Larkin Councillor O Magennis Councillor L McEvoy Councillor A McMurray Councillor D Murphy Councillor G Sharvin Councillor J Trainor	Councillor R Burgess Councillor C Casey Councillor C Enright Councillor R Howell Councillor A Lewis Councillor D McAteer Councillor H McKee Councillor R Mulgrew Councillor H Reilly Councillor D Taylor
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor D Curran
Officials in attendance via Teams:	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer	
Officials in attendance in Chamber	Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)	
Also in attendance: via Teams:	NIE Networks Edel Creery - Head of Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Nigel Crawford – Connections Manager Andrew Cupples – Network Development Manager	

SC/001/2022: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

The Chairperson expressed her condolences to the family of Marc Quinn who tragically passed away at the weekend due to a road traffic accident outside Castlewellan. She stated her thoughts and prayers were with Marc's mother Jenny, father Gary and brothers Ruairi and Ryan as they come to terms with their loss and heartbreak. The Chairperson advised that Marc was an extremely talented and committed player for Auglisnafin GAC and passed her thoughts onto the entire GAC community who were completely shocked and saddened by the tragedy.

Apologies were received from Councillors Brown, Devlin, Gallagher, Rice, Savage,

Stokes and Tinnelly.

SC/002/2022: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**SC/003/2022: PRESENTATION FROM NORTHERN IRELAND
ELECTRICITY NETWORKS**

The Chairperson welcomed Ms Edel Creery, Mr Nigel Crawford and Andrew Cupples from Northern Ireland Electricity Networks.

Ms Creery thanked Council for the opportunity to meet representatives and proceeded to deliver her presentation (copy of which is attached to these minutes).

Following the presentation, the Chairperson invited questions and comments from Members as follows:

- Members paid thanks to NIE staff at call centres for their professionalism and quick response when contacted with any issues.
- Investment of 100 million pound was welcomed however expressed concerns that this was not a huge amount of money.
- Were there any plans to help mitigate against global warming and weather changes leading to storm damage etc?
- Would undergrounding high tension cables be an option and was there ever a costing done for this?
- NIE heat map of the area shows capacity problems right across the Council area, what could be done to resolve this especially with electrification of transport and the planned electrification of heating in the future?
- When would NIE start giving the same local investment in the area that had been given to other Councils, most of whom were already getting millions of pounds a year in rates from renewable energy products?
- Could a contact be provided regarding problems with HD wires and birds roosting on them above residential properties?
- Was there an update for a timeline for an upgrade in the electricity supply to Daisyhill Hospital, Newry in order that a business case for the installation of 2 new scanners could be put together. This would assist in the relief of added pressure on the Ambulance Service having to transport patients to Craigavon and Dungannon hospitals to have these scans done?
- Grove Park area, Killyleagh, Crossgar Road, Killyleagh and Ballynahinch Road, Crossgar – A lot of poles had been replaced in previous years, some poles had not been replaced and these were causing an obstruction. Were there any plans in place in order that these could be moved?

- Pole at the traffic lights, Shimna Road, Newcastle needed replaced.
- Why was electricity at caravan sites billed as commercial and therefore almost twice the price of domestic use, when it was paid for by caravan owners?
- Had NIE any plans or mechanisms in place to provide essential help and support to those people struggling with the substantive increase in energy costs?
- Was there any update on a reinforcement scheme for Ardglass?

The delegation responded to the queries as follows:

- There was a lot of work ongoing in terms of energy strategy in engagement with stakeholders and Department for the Economy. NIE were seen as major facilitators and they were investigating what needs to be done with the network to enable this and this in turn needed to be agreed by the regulator.
- With regard to underground cables there was a two third, one third mix, technological reasons and huge cost involved in installing underground cables, therefore it was completed using the best business case possible with the least cost solution for customers.
- Safety clearance was also considered with properties, however the underground cable solution could be between six and eight times more expensive to install than overhead and as a regulated business NIE need to ensure any work completed obtains best value for money.
- In terms of capacity problems, transport and heating, the placement of EV hubs was not within the gift of NIE Networks to carry out. Transmission capacity was worked out by the system operator in Northern Ireland. Capacity had improved in the last number of years.
- Rates generation for Council was very much developer driven as planning permission was granted, NIE Networks would then look at how they could provide the supply for that developer.
- Officials were content to pick up the issue of bird fouling outside of meeting and discuss further, however it was something they were very aware of and were currently running trials for alternative options.
- Daisy Hill Hospital – again officials were content to pick up outside of meeting with Councillor McAteer and see if there is anything that could be done to overcome the issue.
- In relation to caravan sites, NIE Networks were the distribution network operator and supply the electricity distribution to a meter point, from that point the caravan operator would distribute this through the five or six different suppliers across Northern Ireland.
- Refurbishment work of poles and overhead lines was assessed by a patrol in advance of any work, if at the time of the patrol the asset was in good enough condition until the next patrol it would not be replaced at that point.
- NIE Networks were responsible for approx. 20-21% of the overall cost of an individual's bill and had a licence from the utility regulator to be mindful to provide the best service they could at the cost.
- NIE Networks had recently contributed to a number of fuel poverty funds to try to help the most vulnerable in society. There was a huge opportunity to be

had as about a billion pounds of fuel was imported from foreign soils every year, if they could move to a situation where customers were using home grown energy, there was less impact of world political events on the energy prices in Northern Ireland and therefore could potentially see a huge opportunity in the electrification of heat and transport to drive down household bills. Officials encouraged members to help support this opportunity and move that agenda forward.

- Reinforcement Scheme Ardglass – a scheme had recently been successfully completed where voltage regulators had been installed on two of the lines due to high demand from large industrial users to help maintain within the appropriate standards.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their very informative presentation and answering any additional queries raised.

The meeting concluded at 18.49pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 07 March 2022.

Signed: Councillor C Mason

Signed: Mrs M Ward