

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/SC/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Wednesday 26 August 2015 at 6pm in the Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor N Bailie

In attendance:

(Councillors)

Councillor C Casey	Councillor D Curran
Councillor G Donnelly	Councillor S Doran
Councillor S Ennis	Councillor G Fitzpatrick
Councillor H Harvey	Councillor T Hearty
Councillor D Hyland	Councillor L Kimmins
Councillor K Loughran	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor H McKee	Councillor R Mulgrew
Councillor M Murnin	Councillor B Ó'Muirí
Councillor B Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor G Stokes
Councillor B Walker	

(Officials)

Mr L Hannaway, Chief Executive
Mr J McBride, Change Manager
Mrs E McParland, Democratic Services Manager
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs C McAteer, Democratic Services Officer

Also in attendance: Mr S Richardson, Divisional Manager, TransportNI
Mr S Duffy, Section Engineer, TransportNI

SC/05/2015 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, Carr, Clarke, Craig, Devlin, Harte, Larkin, McGrath, Sharvin and Taylor

The Chairperson extended Council's sympathy to the families of the young men, all from the District, who were tragically killed on the A1 recently and advised letters of condolence were being sent to the families.

SC/06/2015 PRESENTATION FROM REPRESENTATIVES OF TRANSPORTNI – SPRING REPORT 2015

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Richardson and Mr Duffy from TransportNI and invited them to make their presentation to Council.

Mr Richardson thanked the Chairperson for the invitation and for the provision of the DEA Clinics, which he hoped the Councillors had found useful.

Mr Richardson stated there were huge financial and budgetary pressures on TransportNI which were affecting their ability to carry out the extent of work required on the District's roads. He advised the Department was facing £60m of cuts, more than half of which would fall to TransportNI and there was no funding available for external contractors to carry out routine maintenance, however the Department's internal workforce will provide a skeleton service.

Mr Richardson went on to say only the highest priority potholes would be repaired and gully emptying and grass cutting services would be provided on a reduced scale. There would be limited weed control and only a quarter of the required resource available to repair street lighting outages. He stated the Minister was aware of the concern of the Council and he had been actively bidding for additional funding.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Richardson for his presentation and invited questions from the floor.

Member asked the following questions:

- Hedges at dangerous junctions in South Armagh have not been cut and this is putting people's lives at risk. Have TransportNI abandoned rural Ireland?
- Are there any plans to involve local farmers during winter periods to assist in the gritting of rural roads?
- Was there an update on the Ballynahinch By-Pass, especially given the recent fatality in the town centre?
- Members of the public are feeling that they do not receive the service they used to receive, should TransportNI consult with the community and reflect their wishes on where the funding that does exist should be spent?
- Would it be possible to utilise community groups to complete some of the work that cannot be completed at present due to budgetary constraints?
- Have TransportNI consulted with DARD regarding the cutting of hedges due to EU regulations on when this can be completed?
- What were the 500 industrial staff doing if they were not able to carry out the work they traditionally undertook?
- Does TransportNI have a duty of care to cut overgrown foliage blocking speed limit signage?
- Can the issue at Bulls Hill beside Raymond Kelly Park in Newry be investigated?
- Have engineers looked at the Warrenpoint to Newcastle Road and when was the scheme likely be carried out?
- Can an update on the A7 Downpatrick to Belfast road be provided?
- The street lighting scheme at Rooney Park in Kilkeel needs to be looked at due to broken materials being returned rather than replaced.

Mr Richardson responded to the queries as follows:

- 1 grass cut has been commissioned across the District however some areas may not have been cut as yet. If there are any junctions that have not been cut as yet

Members were encouraged to ring into the office to highlight these. Rural Ireland has not been abandoned, however the Department is in financial difficulty which has impacted heavily upon their ability to carry out the range of duties they would like to.

- Farmers can be used in some instances and this was something that the Department officials would be investigating further.
- A public consultation had been held on the Ballynahinch By-Pass with comments being received. These comments were now being investigated and it is likely that a Public Inquiry will be convened to determine if the scheme should go ahead as planned.
- Priority lists are in place for schemes to begin when funding becomes available. Councillors have the opportunity to input into schemes however there needs to be a level of trust that TransportNI are carrying out schemes where they need to be undertaken.
- Officials have been in contact with the Chief Executives of the local Councils to look at opportunities for community self-help.
- Officers will consult with all necessary departments in terms of hedgecutting at the appropriate times.
- The industrial staff were still carrying outwork. They were undertaking skeleton duties and there were restrictions on what can be done. However, without these staff, the Department would be in a much worse position.
- TransportNI will take appropriate action with regard to clearing signage etc. if health and safety issues exist.
- Officers will respond to the Councillor on this issue at Bulls Hill beside Raymond Kelly Park in Newry.
- There are no works planned on the Warrenpoint to Newcastle Road, however officers will investigate the position of the road and report back to the Member.
- The A7 scheme is progressing well and it is hoped to have the design completed by November 2015.
- There is no funding in place however, schemes are being taken as far as possible so that they will be ready to commence when funding does become available.
- Officers will investigate the case of the usage of broken materials at Rooney Park, Kilkeel and will respond to the Member.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance at the meeting and expressed Council's appreciation for the diligence, planning and effort shown by TransportNI during the Irish Open in Newcastle.

SC/07/2015

SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD – UPDATE

Mr Richardson advised work had commenced in relation to the Southern Relief Road, with traffic surveys undertaken in May 2015. Unfortunately a bid for funding which had been submitted for the design costs and development of the project was unsuccessful, however budget is in place to continue the work until the end of the year.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.10pm.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive