

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

**Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 25 September 2023 at 6.00pm in
Downshire Chamber and via Microsoft Teams**

In the Chair:	Councillor G Sharvin	
In attendance in Chamber:	(Councillors)	
	Councillor T Andrews	Councillor A McMurray
	Councillor M Larkin	
In attendance via Teams:	Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor P Byrne
	Councillor L Devlin	Councillor O Hanlon
	Councillor R Howell	Councillor G Kearns
	Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor K Murphy
	Councillor L McEvoy	Councillor S O'Hare
In attendance in Chamber:	(Officials)	
	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive	
	Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)	
Also in attendance in Chamber:	Ms A Allen, Chief Executive, NILGA	
Also in attendance via Teams:	Councillor M Garrett, President, NILGA	

SC/017/2023 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Finn.

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

SC/018/2023 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SC/019/2023 PRESENTATION FROM NILGA

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation from NILGA and invited them to make their presentation.

Councillor Garrett and Ms Allen thanked the Deputy Chairperson for the invitation to present to Council and highlighted the work that NILGA does on behalf of the 11 Councils in Northern Ireland. (copy of presentation appended to these minutes).

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their presentation and invited questions and comments from Members.

Members asked the following questions:

- The NILGA Leadership Programme was very worthwhile along with the ongoing training provided by NILGA.
- What impact can NILGA have in supporting Councils to drive their vision and agenda forward?
- Agreement developed between Scottish government and their member Councils would be something that could be welcomed in Northern Ireland as there seemed to be a push to local government from central when there were financial difficulties. Mutual agreements could be established however given the Executive was not currently sitting, was there any way this could be advanced in order to get a framework in place?

Ms Allen responded to the queries as follows:

- Finance is a huge challenge to all Councils and financial stability should be top of NILGA's agenda for its members. NILGA wants to have conversations about innovation and transformation, creating more streamlined services that work best for residents and creating efficiencies that can then be reinvested into services or deal with potential funding gaps.
- Announced this financial year that NILGA had brought in financial investment to the sector equal to the value of Council's contribution. The investment had come in the form of 2 innovation projects. A partnership between the public sector and SMEs, bringing in SME knowledge to look at long-standing public-sector challenges with regard to waste and the use of assets. There is also a partnership around procurement with PWC bringing investment into the sector thereby becoming more streamlined and efficient. The product to be provided would be a procurement analysis for Council and opportunities at regional level to collaborate across the Councils.
- Meetings were planned with Permanent Secretary regarding operation of Partnership Panel and views for improvements around that. The Verity House Agreement had been signed and outlined the values and behaviours which allowed people to be held to account and has high level political backing. The new Burdens Doctrine was also being investigated which was a piece of legislation in place in England which is an agreement that the English Government would not transfer, either directly or indirectly, any powers to Councils without appropriate financial model to support the transfer. It was hoped to see progress on that matter over the next 4 years.
- NILGA was owned by the 11 Councils and their work was led by Members. NILGA put a lot of effort in both politically and through officer teams to properly reflect what Councils require and any changes or issues that Members or Councils had they can put them forward to NILGA to help. The relationships across the sector were particularly strong and focused on where Councils need to go in partnership with NILGA which would hopefully help with future challenges.

The Chief Executive, Marie Ward stated there was a very close relationship between officer levels in NILGA and SOLACE and there had been a lot of work done in building relationships across Permanent Secretaries Grouping also. She advised this relationship building was critical in the days and months ahead, particularly given the changes to the central government budget and the pressures being faced.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for attending and asked that a list of points of contact for specific people within NILGA was shared to Members.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.39pm.

For adoption at next Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive