

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMC/SC

Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 30 January 2023 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber and via Microsoft Teams

In the Chair: Councillor A Finnegan **18.00 PM – 18.09 PM**
Councillor M Savage **18.09 PM – 19.20 PM**

In attendance in Chamber: (Councillors)
Councillor T Andrews Councillor D Curran
Councillor L Devlin Councillor H Gallagher
Councillor D McAteer Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor G Stokes

In Attendance via Teams: Councillor C Bowsie Councillor R Burgess
Councillor P Byrne Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor O Hanlon Councillor R Howell
Councillor M Larkin Councillor A Lewis
Councillor K McKee Councillor K McKeivitt
Councillor A McMurray Councillor O Magennis
Councillor D Murphy Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice Councillor J Trainor

In attendance in Chamber: (Officials)
Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer

In Attendance via Teams: NIE Networks
Mr N Crawford, Connection Manager (Planning)
Mr A Cupples, Network Development Manager
Mr I Craig, Major Project Stakeholder Lead

Northern Ireland Water
Mr R Larkin, Director of Finance
Dr S Blockwell, Head of Investment Management

SC/001/2023 APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

As the Chairperson was running late the Vice-Chair assumed the Chair.

Apologies were received from Councillors Lee-Surginor, McEvoy, Tinnelly and Ward.

SC/002/2023 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation from Northern Ireland Electricity and invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Crawford thanked Council for the opportunity to meet representatives and proceeded to deliver the 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 all NIE staff and in particular call centre staff for their professionalism and quick response when contacted with any issues.
- Councillor Sharvin thanked Mr Crawford and his team for resolving an issue at Malone Way/Park Lane Downpatrick.
- Caravan sites had a future plan to install electric charging ports at each caravan for charging of electric vehicles, was there sufficient infrastructure in place to support the increase in power supply?
- Was there any government funding available to assist with planning for the future for caravan sites installing electrical charging points?
- What was the stance of NIE in relation to rolling out of enhancement of infrastructure for the future?
- Concerns raised that the power infrastructure in the Mourne area would not be sufficient to cope with new developments and initiative Kellys.
- How advanced were smart meters in Northern Ireland and when would they be available?
- Councillor McAteer thanked NIE for the extensive work that had been carried out on lines in the Burren area where birds had been congregating as it had made a real improvement to the area.
- Was the delay in commercial connections due to lack of manpower and when would this improve?
- Daisy Hill – How long would it take to put the infrastructure in place for the upgrade in power supply in particular for the Diagnostic Suite and MRI scanner as it was crucial in ensuring the future of the hospital?
- The Chairperson to forward on contact details of Daisy Hill Future Group to Nigel Crawford in order to set up a meeting to progress the matter urgently and see what support could be given at Assembly and ground level.
- Councillor Larkin paid thanks to the engineering staff of NIE and in particular Suzanne O’Kane and her predecessor Kelly in customer care, and welcomed the recent upgrade and investment in the network at Dromintee, which had originally commenced in 2019 but due to the pandemic had been delayed and completed at the end of 2022.

The delegation responded to queries as follows:

- There were parts of the grid which would not have capacity and would require future investment to be upgraded and improvements in order to meet the demand for an increase in power supply.
- It was important that Members and customers inform and engage with NIE regarding future plans, around both domestic and larger installations, so they are aware and can invest in the network going forward.
- There had previously been grants in the past for installing charging points, but not aware of any government funding available at present. This was something the Department for Economy would consider in future development.

- Future proofing the infrastructure was crucial, one of the areas being looked at were new housing developments and installation of new infrastructures, to ensure those assets were fit for the future growth that would occur and wouldn't need upgraded or replaced.
- Grids right across the network would require investment and reinforcement to facilitate electrification. Part of the model would identify the substations in the Mourne area which would need extra investment, in order to meet supply demand.
- Charging methods in Northern Ireland for commercial customers did differ slightly than Great Britain and South of Ireland. NIE welcomed the Utility Regulator committing to review those arrangements to spread the cost more evenly.
- A successful pilot study had commenced with 1000 smart meters installed across the country, giving good insights. Department for the Economy had recently been trialling a cost benefit analysis which would be rolled out wider once the green light had been given to commence to all customers.
- Daisy Hill was a longer-term project with estimated completion in 2028, however it could be done on a phased approach, depending on requirements and works involved, NIE to follow up to see what stage it was at and revert back to Members.
- Timescales for commercial applications were typically 8-12 weeks to get onto the ground to commence work once terms accepted, survey completed and then permissions of the third party landowner which can take some time.

The Chairperson thanked the delegation for their detailed presentation and stated he was grateful for work carried out and hoped to work in partnership for the planned works in the future.

Councillor Finnegan left at this point of the meeting – 18.45pm

SC/004/2023

**PRESENTATION FROM NORTHERN IRELAND
WATER**

The Chairperson welcomed the delegation from Northern Ireland Water and invited them to make their presentation.

Mr Larkin thanked Members for the opportunity to present the report and introduced his colleague, Dr Blockwell, he then proceeded to make his presentation. (copy appended to these minutes).

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

- There were continuing issues with capacity throughout the district in relation to new developments which needed future investment.
- Was there an update regarding the lack of water pressure at Downs Road, Ardglass?
- Could a site meeting be arranged with Slieve Croob Members regarding the Dundrum moratorium on all new developments to see what could be done to resolve the matter.
- There were areas of issue preventing future development within the Newry area and a walk-through meeting would be beneficial.
- Local Development Plan – How much engagement was planned between NI Water and Planners to be able to deliver the type of housing the area needs and develop a visionary approach in the coming years?
- Encouraging to see funding had increased.

The delegation responded to queries as follows:

- Would look specifically at Ardglass again and revert to Councillor Curran, other areas along the coast which had similar problems had now been resolved.
- Message to customers was if there appeared to be a leak on your ground or farmland, get it fixed and if unable to do so to contact NI Water to see what they could do. If there was a leak in the system it impacted on pressures in other areas.
- Site meeting in Dundrum with Slieve Croob Members - Environmental Agency and other stakeholders would be beneficial as extensive environmental modelling in that area had been done which had thrown new light on what the issues may be. - To be arranged by NIW.
- NIW continued to press for funding and getting it signed off, however funding needed to be secured right up until the end of PC27 so they could plan and work with developers. Members had a role to play by asking their Parties to continue to push the Assembly and ask how funding would be made available in future years.
- Future investment was not only good for infrastructure but also the economy and securing jobs for the future.
- In response to a request for an update from Councillor McKee regarding low pressure at caravan parks and surrounding areas in Kilkeel, the delegation confirmed that a pressure test had been completed May-September 2022 and it found that network pressure did not drop below the minimum level of service, however did find that one section of iron cast main had deteriorated and it was planned to be replaced in February 2023 with new piping which may help with an increase in pressure in the area.

Councillor Reilly left during the above discussions – 19.15pm

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.20pm.

For adoption at Meeting of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to be held on Monday 6 March 2023.

Signed:

Chairperson

Director Sustainability and Environment