

## **NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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### **Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on Monday 23 May 2022 at 6.00pm in Downshire Chamber and via Teams**

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**Chairperson:** Councillor M Rice  
**Via Teams:**

**In attendance  
via Teams:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor H McKee	Councillor A McMurray
Councillor R Mulgrew	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor B Ó Muirí	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor J Trainor	

**In attendance  
In Chamber:** Councillor T Andrews Councillor D Curran

**Officials in attendance  
via Teams:** Mr C Mallon, Director, Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism

**Officials in attendance  
In Chamber:** Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer

**Also in attendance:  
Via Teams:** **Northern Ireland Water**  
Ronan Larkin – Director of Finance & Regulation  
Dr Stephen Blockwell - Head of Investment Management,  
Asset Delivery Directorate  
Valerie Crozier - Stakeholder Manager  
Michael Rainey

#### **SC/020/2022: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Clarke, Devlin, Howell, Harte, McEvoy, McKeivitt, Savage, Sharvin and Stokes.

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

#### **SC/021/2022: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **SC/022/2022: PRESENTATION FROM NI WATER**

Mr Larkin thanked Members for the opportunity to present the report and introduced

his colleagues, Dr Blockwell, Mrs Crozier and Mr Rainey, he then proceeded to make his presentation. (copy appended to these minutes).

Following the presentation there was a question and answer session and the following points were raised:

- Members took the opportunity to thank the staff in NI Water especially on the switchboard for the efficient work and communication updates they provided and for going above and beyond in some instances.
- What specifically was the 8.4 million in Downpatrick being used for?
- Wastewater structures were not in place and this was hampering development across the district.
- Were other sources of funding being investigated other than from the Executive?
- Local developers had indicated they had approached NI Water with a plan how they could help deliver a better wastewater structure in order to allow further development, was this being progressed?
- Members highlighted that the current cost of living crisis also impacted on NI Water and other service providers in terms of running costs.
- Heartening to see further investment planned for the Newry area, would this further investment be enough to future proof to allow more development to take place?
- What was NI Water doing to help eliminate costs and convert to hydrogen?
- Would the developer-led initiations have an impact and increase the of houses for the buyer?
- Servicing of sewers in Warrenpoint was an issue and causing problems with local business, was this being addressed?

The delegation responded to the queries as follows:

- On a strategic level, funding had been sought over the past 12 years, however since price control in 2015, a cap was put on the amount of investment that was allowed to be made.
- Capital funding could only be raised via the Northern Ireland Executive. The PC21 plan was now in year 2 and still had not had a full allocation of budget, therefore there was a real need to know the budget for the next 6 years in order that contracts could be put in place and work could begin in a structured manner to address some of the much needed upgrading across the district.
- Both the network and treatment capacity was under constraint and if NI Water pollute knowingly they would be prosecuted, this matter could only be addressed through further investment.
- NI Water were currently looking at some developer-led initiations on a weekly basis to help alleviate some of the pressure and allow development to commence.
- In Downpatrick 8.4 million being invested in upgrading the wastewater treatment works, also investment in the sewer network in the following areas:
  - Strangford Road pumping station - £140,000
  - Ardenlee pumping station - £240,000
  - Ardfern pumping station - £100,000
- Inflation had affected right across the board, as the largest energy user in NI,

NIW had locked in some prices for this year and currently had plans in place to be more carbon neutral to help offset some of those costs.

- Further investment planned would begin to address some of the backlog of under investment and begin to cure some of the shortages in the network. A sustained, continued investment of capital was required in NI to continue to close the gap.
- Would revert back to Members with further detail on Cranfield, Warrenpoint and Dundrum areas outside of the meeting.
- A small pilot programme unit was currently being progressed in Belfast with plans to expand to a bigger unit to run a scale pilot to produce oxygen and hydrogen which could then be off set against some of the costs. If the pilot was viable, would look at investing hydrogen plants across the Province, talks with Translink were already underway with the possibility of using the hydrogen to power vehicles as part of the future Climate Strategy.
- Developer-led initiation schemes would factor in the costs into their budgets which should not affect house prices, however the cost of materials and building supplies would be more likely to have an impact on an increase in house prices than anything else.

The meeting concluded at 19:14.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 06 June 2022.

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**Signed:**      **Councillor M Rice**

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**Signed:**      **Mr C Mallon**