

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 17 June 2021 at 6.00pm via Microsoft Teams (Hybrid)

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon

In Attendance:

Councillor P Brown	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor S Doran	Councillor R Howell
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor B Ó Muirí	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Savage	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor W Walker	

Also in attendance:

Councillor T Andrews
Councillor H McKee
Councillor G Stokes
Councillor K McKeivitt

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs C Miskelly, Assistant Director Corporates Services, HR & Safeguarding
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services
Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Enterprise, Employment & Regeneration
Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning & Policy
Mr K Montgomery, Assistant Director Finance
Mr F O'Connor, Legal Advisor
Mr G Byrne, Audit Services Manager
Mrs K Bingham, Head of Performance & Improvement
Mrs L Fitzsimons, Human Resources Manager
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms L O'Hare, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/84/2021: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Gallagher.

SPR/85/2021: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Savage declared an Interest in Item 25 – Communications and Marketing Activities in Response to Covid-19 (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021)

SPR/86/2021: TO AGREE START TIMES FOR SPR COMMITTEE MEETING FROM JUNE 2021 TO APRIL 2022

Read: Copy of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting Dates and Times (Copy circulated)

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded**

by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed that the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meetings would commence monthly at 6.00pm.

SPR/87/2021: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 13 MAY 2021

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 13 May 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Howell that the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 May 2021, be approved.

CORPORATE PLANNING AND POLICY

SPR/88/2021: SOCIAL MEDIA AND ACCEPTABLE USE POLICY AND PROCEDURE

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director, Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Brown stated that the report did not differentiate enough between employees and Elected Representatives. He stated that part of the role of Elected Representatives was their right to scrutinise and constructively criticise where necessary the functions of Council as part of the democratic process. He asked whether officers had consulted with the National Association of Councillors and whether the policy had been benchmarked with those of other Councils as the policy made no reference to elected members' freedom of speech and expression.

Councillor Sharvin queried who had access to the social media platforms and asked what would be foreseen as an emergency as outlined in 15.4 of the social media procedures.

Councillor Ó Muirí stated that he could not stress highly enough the need for a social media policy to protect and safeguard against bullying and it should not be used as a platform to criticise, as words can be misinterpreted. He highlighted the various ways that concerns could be raised without posting automatically on social media.

Mrs Mackin responded to the queries as follows:

- 9.2 contained within the procedures stated that everyone has right to freedom of speech which was balanced not only with legislation but also with what was generally acceptable. She stated that Council had a duty of care towards employees and Elected Members.
- Council had not consulted with National Association of Councillors, but had carried out considerable consultation and looked at best practise across a number of other Councils both large and small. She highlighted that under 8.6 of the report the guidance for Councillors, social media and code of conduct is available.
- The Communications and Marketing team were responsible for the day to day management of the Corporate social media channels with other Directorates being responsible for management of any social media channels specific to their own directorate, however guidelines were applicable to all.

- With regards to 15.4 of the social media procedures relating to purdah, an example would be a very major accident or fire, this would be deemed as a true emergency where the Chairperson would be permitted to issue a statement or a comment.

Councillor Brown proposed that Council consult with the National Association of Councillors before passing the policy, this was seconded by Councillor Tinnelly.

The Chairperson put Councillor Brown's proposal to a vote the results of which were as follow:

FOR: 2
AGAINST: 10

The proposal was LOST

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Doran, to approve the draft Social Media and Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure.

SPR/89/2021: DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Directorate Business Plans. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Savage welcomed the inclusion of the 'Housing Needs Conference' within quarter 3 of the plan and questioned whether the knock-on effect of Covid on delivery times of new builds and completion of much needed renovation and maintenance works would be added into the plan going forward. He highlighted it was very important to include the spiralling cost of building materials to ensure the Department of Communities and Housing Executive were taking steps to mitigate against this to ensure schemes were able to be delivered.

Councillor Sharvin acknowledged the IT team and the manner in which they adapted quickly throughout the pandemic to allow Council to continue as an organisation.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, to approve the Assessment of the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Emergency Business Plans (October 2020 – March 2021) and the Chief Executive's and Corporate Services Directorate Business Plans 2021-22.

SPR/90/2021 PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2021-22

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22 **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to approve the Performance Improvement Plan 2021-22 (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2021-22 and Objective Delivery Plans 2021-22.

SPR/91/2021: REPORT RE: THE CREATION OF A NORTHERN MUTUAL BANK

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding the creation of a Northern Mutual Bank **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Brown thanked the officers for all their hard work in liaising with the campaigners and bringing the motion back to committee.

Councillor Sharvin welcomed the clarity that was received around the investment of money.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, to agree to support the campaign for the implementation of a Northern Mutual Bank and for a Councillor to join the Advisory Committee.**

SPR/92/2021: CENTENARY COMMEMORATION OF THE OPENING OF THE ULSTER TOWER – 20 NOVEMBER 2021

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Centenary Commemoration of the opening of the Ulster Tower – 20 November 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Walker proposed an amendment to the recommendation to replace Councillor Owen with himself as she was no longer a member of the DUP, this was seconded by Councillor Taylor.

Councillor Byrne stated he could not support the amendment as it was unfair to remove a Councillor because political allegiance had changed.

Councillor Taylor asked Councillor Walker if contact had been made with Councillor Owen to see if she was content to be taken off the planned trip. Councillor Walker confirmed no contact had been made with Councillor Owen but at the initial AGM when it was discussed who would attend it was agreed that over the course of the term the representatives would be 3 DUP, 3 UUP and 2 SDLP to attend.

The Chairperson clarified with the Democratic Service Manager that it was a DUP position.

Councillor Walker stated that he would contact Councillor Owen after the meeting and confirm with Democratic Services if she still wished to attend and if so he would be happy to pay for himself to attend, in addition to the four named Councillors proposed in the paper.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Taylor, to approve 4 places be booked to attend the Ulster Tower Centenary Commemoration event 18-21 November 2021, with Councillor Walker to confirm if Councillor Owen will be attendance. If confirmed that Councillor Owen wished to attend, it was agreed that Councillor Walker could also attend, however, he would be paying the cost himself.**

SPR/93/2021: REQUEST FOR NAMES TO BE ADDED TO KILLYLEAGH WAR MEMORIAL

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services, regarding request for names to be added to Killyleagh War Memorial **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Walker, seconded by Councillor Taylor, to approve the request for 5 names as listed in 2.6 of the officer's report to be added to the Killyleagh War Memorial.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SPR/94/2021: **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF COUNCILLORS GENERAL MANAGEMENT MEETING**

Read: Correspondence received in relation to National Association of Councillors General Meeting. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Doran, to approve the request for Councillor Casey to attend as Vice-Chair of National Association of Councillors.

FOR NOTING

SPR/95/2021: **SICKNESS ABSENCE REPORT JUNE 2021**

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs L Fitzsimons, Human Resources Manager, regarding Sickness Absence Report June 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed to note the contents of the report.

SPR/96/2021: **FRIENDS OF THE SOMME – YEARLY SUBSCRIPTION 2021/2022**

Read: Correspondence received dated 26 May 2021 in relation to Friends of The Somme – Yearly Subscription 2021/2022 **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed to note the contents of the report.

SPR/97/2021: **NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD**

Read: Minutes of Newry City Regeneration Programme Board Meeting – 13.04.2021 and Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Workshop – 4 May 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Brown proposed that NCCR minutes were brought immediately to the next Strategy Policy and Resources Committee meeting. This was seconded by Councillor Tinnelly.

Mrs Carville confirmed that as soon as the minutes of the project board meeting were agreed they were brought to the next available SPR meeting and that was the practise happening

currently. She advised that Councillor Brown's comments could be brought back to the Project Board but there was a process to be followed to reach agreement before the minutes were tabled in front of a committee.

Councillor Brown confirmed it was his understanding that minutes were going to the next NCCR meeting before going to the next Committee meeting for ratification therefore causing a bottle neck.

Councillor Byrne clarified as joint chair of the Project Board that the minutes were tabled at the next available SPR meeting so long as they were ratified by members of the Project Board prior to the committee meeting.

The Chairperson asked whether Councillor Brown's proposal still stood in relation to clarity on how NCCR minutes were ratified.

Councillor Brown confirmed that he had received clarification on the minutes and his proposal no longer stood.

Mrs Carville confirmed in response to query raised by Councillor Sharvin that the public consultation had closed and a timeline for the outworking would be presented to the Project Board meeting next week.

Councillor Savage asked whether the Project Board and the SPR committee, on the back of the consultation report and other solution reports, would draw the conclusion that the civic centre hub element was potentially undeliverable or fraught with difficulty. He asked whether it would be prudent therefore to investigate other sites across the city as a plan B that had since become available.

Mrs Carville advised it would be wrong to speculate until the outworking of the public consultation were made known.

Councillor Walker left the meeting during the above discussions – 7.09pm

Councillor Doran left the meeting at this point – 7.16pm

Councillor Tinnelly proposed that Council agree only to proceed with the Civic Centre Hub element of this project when there was written confirmation received from Newry Cathedral parish that they support the proposals, and when confirmation was received that the majority of respondents to the public consultation were supportive of the proposals. This was seconded by Councillor Brown.

The Chief Executive reminded members that it was the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee that put in place the governance procedures around the management of one of the most strategic projects in the Council and the appropriate forum for discussion on this initially would be through the Programme Board and back into the SPR. She advised that the Public Consultation had just closed and members had not yet had sight of the outworking of this consultation, therefore any decision taken prior to any further works or information provided would probably be pre-emptive and would need to give consideration to the financial implications of such a decision.

The Chairperson put the matter to a recorded vote the results of which were as follows and are appended to these minutes:

FOR: 2
AGAINST: 7
ABSTAIN: 2

The proposal was LOST

Councillor Savage confirmed he would write to the Chief Executive to seek clarity as to why there appeared to be two different version of events and withdrew any previous proposal.

The Chief Executive stated she would be happy to discuss matters in relation to officers in a confidential manner as she would expect all Councillors to believe as appropriate.

Agreed: **It was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 13 April 2021 and Workshop held on 4 May 2021.**

Councillors Taylor and Savage left the meeting at 7.48pm

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Brown, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the next matter which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.**

SPR/98/2021: **FORKHILL FORMER BARRACK SITE – REPORT OF SLIEVE GULLION**

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr J McGilly Assistant Director Enterprise Employment and Regeneration, regarding Forkhill Former Barrack Site – Report of Slieve Gullion. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:**

- 1. Council reply to DFC acknowledging the correspondence following the completion of the public consultation process and reaffirm its continuing commitment to work with them and others to take forward the overall development of the site.**
- 2. Given the ongoing maintenance issues with the former play area/toilets Bog Road leased site (which is not in Council ownership), acquisition of the remaining green central acreage of the Forkhill Site presents an opportunity to work with the local community to develop**

a grassed/planted open space area under full Council maintenance and management.

3. Officials to approach funders to work with Council and the local community to help develop and fund green space proposals for future community use and enjoyment of the Forkhill Former Barracks Site.
4. Council to ensure that any transfer of lands from DFC to Council is at Nil Cost as previously discussed at the outset of the DI process.
5. Relevant Council Departments to be mindful of the site in regards future leisure/play/sports plans and strategies that they are developing.

SPR/99/2021: BANN ROAD CASTLEWELLAN – STORM ATTENUATION PROJECT

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director Estates and Project Management regarding, Bann Road Castlewellan – Storm Attenuation Project **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:

- 3.1 Members to note the content of the report and approve to add this project to the Capital Programme.
- 3.2 Based on the costs estimate provided by our consultant approval of a budget of £95,000 be assigned to the capital programme for this project.

SPR/100/2021: REQUEST FROM PHA FOR NATIONAL TESTING PARTNERSHIP VENUE IN DOWNPATRICK (WALK – IN TESTING FACILITY)

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director Estates and Project Management, regarding request from PHA for National Testing Partnership Venue in Downpatrick (Walk-In Testing Facility) **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:

- That members consider the content of the report.

- **Members confirmed their agreement to continue discussions with the PHA for the potential leasing of the all-weather play area at Down Leisure Centre, for the purposes of a ‘walk-in’ Covid-19 test centre for up to 6 months.**
- **A further report to be brought to this Committee prior to the end of the first 3 months to determine if Council wishes to exercise our rights to terminate the lease after the first 3 months.**

SPR/101/2021: REGULARISATION OF IDOX PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Regularisation of IDOX Procurement and Contractual arrangements **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Byrne it was agreed that Elected Members approve the following:**

To consider the attached business case and approve the regularisation of the procurement and contractual arrangements for a five-year term with the incumbent supplier, utilising Lot 2b of Crown Commercial Service Framework Agreement RM3821, as a compliant procurement vehicle to direct award existing service continuation.

SPR/102/2021: RATES SUPPORT GRANT 2021/2022

Read: Report dated 17 May 2021 from Mrs D Carvill, Director of Corporate Services regarding Rates Support Grant 2021/2022 **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members note the officer’s verbal update provided and the contents of the letter attached, and together with other affected Councils contact the Minister for Communities and the Minister for Finance to express this Councils concern at the reduction of Rates Support Grant to Councils and request its immediate reinstatement to previous level of support.**

SPR/103/2021: SITING OF BEE-HIVES ON FORMER COUNCIL LANDFILL SITE AUGHNAGUN

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration (Acting), regarding Siting of Bee-Hives on former Council landfill site at Aughnagun. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Tinnelly, seconded by Councillor Byrne, It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following:**

- i) A valuation is obtained to assess the licence fee payable for use of the Council Lands at Aughnagun by the bee-keeping group, following which approval is then Sought from the Department for Communities for the granting of the Licence agreement at a nominal sum.**

SPR/104/2021: LICENCE AGREEMENT WITH DRUMANESS SNOOKER CLUB

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Services (Acting), regarding Licence Agreement with Drumaness Snooker Club **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following:**

- i) That approval be given to a 10-year Licence agreement with Drumaness snooker club at an annual rate of £1,000 subject to Departmental approval being obtained of the lower rate payable in respect of the annual licence fee.**

SPR/105/2021: LICENCE OF STRIP OF LAND AT DOWN LEISURE CENTRE

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Services (Acting), regarding Licence of strip of land at Down Leisure Centre **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, It was agreed that Elected Members approve the following:

- i) That approval to be sought from the Department for Communities for the granting of the Licence agreement for the operation of a cycling hub at a nominal sum and a Licence agreement is then entered into with Cycling Ireland;

SPR/106/2021: **PROPOSED LEASE OF LANDS AT AMERCAM LANE, CRANFIELD, KILKEEL TO NI ELECTRICITY NEWTORKS**

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Services (Acting), regarding proposed lease of lands at Ameracam Lane, Cranfield, Killeel to NI Electricity Networks. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Reilly It was agreed that Elected Members approve to grant a Lease to NIEN of the lands outlined in red on the Map as per the officer's report, for the term of 99 years subject to a one-off premium of £1000.00.

FOR NOTING

SPR/107/2021: **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO MARCH 2021**

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Management Accounts to March 2021 **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: It was agreed to note the Management Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2021.

SPR/108/2021: **COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING ACTIVITIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 (1 APRIL 2021 – 31 MARCH 2021)**

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director of Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Communications and Marketing Activities in Responses to Covid-19 (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2021) **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: It was agreed to note the contents of the report.

SPR/109/2021: **DRUMEE ROAD, CASTLEWELLAN**

Read: Correspondence received dated 9 June 2021 from Department for Infrastructure, regarding Private Roads within Newry Mourne and Down District Council (**Copy circulated**)

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to note the contents of the report, and to write to the Divisional Manager and seek clarity in the correspondence received by Council.**

SPR/110/2021: **CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY: MATERIAL SHORTAGES AND PRICE INCREASED – POTENTIAL IMPACT TO COUNCIL'S CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Read: Report dated 17 June 2021 from Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates and Project Management (**Copy circulated**)

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **It was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

Mrs Carville, on behalf of the Chief Executive read the following statement:

“Due to the current legislative uncertainty around remote meetings and the restrictions on indoor gatherings, the Chief Executive also agrees to exercise her delegated authority under Standing Orders to implement the resolution of the Committee once ratified by Council subject to any conflict of interest or legal advice that the decision is unlawful.”

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 20.54pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 05 July 2021.

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**
Chairperson

Signed: **Dorinnia Carville**
Director of Corporate Services