

October 12th, 2026

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Thursday, 17th September 2026 at 6:00 pm** in **Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre**.

Committee Membership 2026-27

Councillor C Bowsie **Chairperson**

Councillor O Hanlon **Deputy Chairperson**

Councillor Pete Byrne

Councillor Martin Hearty

Councillor Roisin Howell

Councillor Tierna Howie

Councillor Aurla King

Councillor Cathal King

Councillor Aidan Mathers

Councillor Declan McAteer

Councillor Siobhan O'Hare

Councillor Henry Reilly

Councillor Michael Rice

Councillor David Taylor

Councillor Jill Truesdale

Agenda

1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

2.0 Declarations of Interest

3.0 Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meetings held 13 and 27 August 2026

Attachment: SPR-Action Sheet arising from 2026 08 13.pdf

Page 1

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

4.0 Downpatrick Church Street Public Realm Scheme

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR Report - Downpatrick Public Realm.pdf

Not included

5.0 Kilkeel Lower Square & River Walk EI Scheme

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR Report - Kilkeel Lower Square & River Walk EIS.pdf

Not included

6.0 Facility Refurbishment Project

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

7.0 HR Structure

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 4 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - Information relating to any consultations or negotiations, or contemplated consultations or negotiations, in connection with any labour relations matter arising between the Council or a government department and employees of, or office holders under, the Council and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 2026.09.17 SPRC Report HR and OD Structural Review.pdf

Not included

Attachment: 2026.09.17 Appendix 1 - Proposed HR Structure.ppt

Not included

Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

8.0 Licence re Hydrometric Units at Victoria Locks, Newry and Canal Bank 1 Car Par, Mill Street, Newry

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR 17 sept 2026 Licence for Hydrometric Units.pdf

Not included

Attachment: SPR Report - Map 1 and 2.pdf

Not included

9.0 Public right of way between Ringhaddy Road and Quarterland Road

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SPR report 17 September 2026.pdf

Not included

Attachment: Appendix 1 -map landowners, PROW and concept route.pdf

Not included

Attachment: Appendix 2 - Assertion Statement.pdf

Not included

Attachment: Appendix 3 -Council minute 23 Feb 2015.pdf

Not included

10.0 Corporate Website Hosting and Web Services Contract

For Decision

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: 17092026 SPRC Corporate Website Contract.pdf

Not included

FOR NOTING Items deemed to be exempt under Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

11.0 Minutes of Strategic Finance Working Group meeting of 4th August 2026

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: SFWG Minutes - 04.08.26.pdf

Not included

12.0 Management Accounts Update - Quarter 1 2026/27

For Information

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

Attachment: Management Accounts Q1 2026-27.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: Appendix 1 - Management Accounts by Directorate for period ending 30 June 2026.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: Appendix 2- Management Accounts by Assistant Directorate for period 30 June 2026.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: Appendix 3 - Management Accounts by Expense code for period ending 30 June 2026.pdf *Not included*

Attachment: Appendix 4 - Payroll Report as at 30.06.2026.pdf *Not included*

For Noting

13.0 Minister's memo and Co-Chairs' letter

For Information

Attachment: SUB-0480-2026 - Memo to Executive Colleagues - CentralLocal Government Collaboration and Delivery Agreement Update.pdf *Page 8*

Attachment: Letter to Alison Allen (NILGA) - CentralLocal Government Collaboration and Delivery Agreement.pdf *Page 10*

14.0 Planning Update Report

For Information

Attachment: Planning Department Update Sept 2026.pdf *Page 13*

15.0 Annual Registration Services Report 2025/26

For Information

Attachment: SPRC Annual Registration Services Report 2025-26.pdf *Page 19*

16.0 Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board 30 June 2026

For Information

Attachment: Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Mtg 30.06.2026.pdf *Page 26*

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken / progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet? Y/N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 14 August 2025					
SPR/135/2025	Business Case – Residual Waste Contract	It was agreed that the requested rates per tonnage be brought back before Members as discussed.	S Murphy	New rates not available until Procurement Process completed Update tabled at March 26 meeting.	N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 20 April 2026					
SPR/058/2026	Castlewellan Forest Park NLHF Project	It was also agreed that a paper be brought to the next SPR Committee outlining the compensation events and the reporting structures for the project.	C Boyd	Ongoing	N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 14 May 2026					
SPR/071/2026	LDP Revised Timetable	It was also agreed that the Council would write to the Planning Performance Improvement Forum requesting that it consider LDP development across the North and examine what legislative changes could be introduced to improve and shorten the LDP timeline.	J McGilly	Ongoing	N
ACTION SHEET – STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING (SPR) – Thursday 13 August 2026					
SPR/110/2026	Action sheet of meeting held 11/06/26	It was agreed to note the action sheet	A Jones	Agreed	Y
SPR/111/2026	Officer Report on NOM – All Island Citizens Assembly	It was agreed that this Council notes the growing public discussion on the constitutional future of this island and recognises the provision within the Good Friday Agreement for the people of Ireland to decide that future through referendums. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Office of An Taoiseach, urging the Irish	E Kirk	Agreed	Y

		Government to plan and prepare for Irish unity through the following actions: • Establish an all-island Citizens' Assembly and a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish Unity; • Produce and publish a plan towards Irish unity in conjunction with civic society and key stakeholders, including local government; • Work to secure a date for a referendum on unity, as provided for in the Good Friday Agreement. • Write to the Irish Government to request that they establish a Ministry for a New Ireland, with a dedicated Minister to lead and advance discussions on the island's future This Council further commits to ensuring that the voices of people across Newry, Mourne and Down are heard as part of this important conversation about the future of our island."			
SPR/112/2026	BRCD Tourism Event	The following was agreed: • To note the ongoing work in relation to the development of the BRCD Outline Business Case (OBC) and project timeline. • To agree the establishment of a Project Board for the management of the BRCD Tourism Project with 7 Councillors and membership to be formed as follows – 2 Sinn Féin, 2 SDLP, 1 DUP, 1 Alliance, 1 UUP / Independent.	M Ward	Agreed	Y
SPR/113/2026	Assessment of Performance 2025/26	The following was agreed: • The Assessment of Performance 2025-26, including the summary document @Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward'. • That the finalised planning statistics 2025-26 be included in the final report to be published on the website and that any changes from the unvalidated data reported be sent to all members for information.	M Ward	Agreed	Y

SPR/114/2026	Aids to Navigation Repairs on Strangford Lough	It was agreed to approve the business case and associated budget to enable Council to implement the key findings of the Review of Navigational Aids to improve navigational safety and ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as the Local Lighthouse Authority for its area of Strangford Lough.	A Smyth C Sage	Agreed	Y
SPR/115/2026	Business Case – IDOX IT Systems	It was agreed to approve the business case and associated budget to enable Council to implement the key findings of the Review of Navigational Aids to improve navigational safety and ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as the Local Lighthouse Authority for its area of Strangford Lough.	V Keegan	Agreed	Y
SPR/116/2026	Health Cash Plan and Employee Assistance Programme	It was agreed to support the continuation of the scheme and the outline business case for the scheme as outlined at appendix 1 of the officer's report.	M Hughes	Agreed	Y
SPR/117/2026	FMA / SLA Proposals	The following was agreed: • A one-year extension of the current FMAs and SLAs relating to community centres to facilitate a comprehensive review of contract specifications and service delivery. • The uplift in funding allocation to community groups who currently run community facilities under an FMA or SLA based on all relevant groups fully claiming the uplifted amount. • The incorporation of the Community Development Strategy public consultation findings into the future re-procurement strategy for the facilities.	A Robb	Ongoing	N
SPR/118/2026	Annalong Harbour	It was agreed to approve the preferred option of the business case for the appointment of the Civil Engineering Framework Contractor to complete the recommended remedial works at the South Pier and the further investigations as outlined in section 2.6 of the officer's report.	C Sage	Agreed	Y

SPR/119/2026	Tyrella Winter Grazing and Kilbroney Conacre	It was agreed that Council's agent seek to make an appointment for the following by conacre agreements: - The conservation winter grazing of the dunes at Tyrella for 2 years. - The area detailed at Kilbroney Park, which is approved for 2 years but only let annually.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/120/2026	Charged Parking Automation at Forest Parks	It was agreed to approve the updated capital budget for charged parking as detailed at section 2 and 4 of the officer's report.	A Smyth	Agreed	Y
		It was also agreed that a workshop would be held with Members in advance of the implementation of the new charged parking automation.	A Smyth	Agreed	Y
SPR/121/2026	Funding Repayment	It was agreed that the organisation named in the report are permitted to apply for financial assistance on the condition that they continue their repayments.	A Smyth	Agreed	Y
SPR/122/2026	Industrial Relations Update	The following was agreed: - To note the agreed IR Framework documents to date and the proposed approach to reach agreement to progress the Trade Union Co-ordinator job description. - To note the finance and resources associated with the establishment of 2 permanent Trade Union Co-ordinator posts and approve the temporary HR and payroll posts to support the workplan activities, as set out in section 2.4 of the officer's report for a period of up to 3 years.	M Hughes	Agreed	Y
SPR/123/2026	Lease of Library Space at Crossmaglen Community Centre	It was agreed to grant a lease of that portion of Crossmaglen Community Centre as outlined in red on the map attached to the officers report for a term of 99 years subject to the yearly market rent as set out in this report and the continued contribution towards running costs of Crossmaglen Community Centre.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y

		It was also agreed that officers would bring further information back on third party users.			
SPR/124/2026	Lease of Land adjacent to Meigh Community Centre	It was agreed to enter into a lease with the group noted in the report in respect of that portion of the lands adjacent to Meigh Community Centre as outlined in red on the map attached to the officer's report for a term of 25 years at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/125/2026	Request for Easement at Lighthouse Car Park Castlewellan	It was agreed to grant an easement for electricity cables under that portion of the Council facility known as The Lighthouse Road Car Park, Castlewellan as shown by a green line on the map attached to the officer's report to the adjoining Landowner for market value consideration, subject to payment of Council's legal and valuation costs.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/126/2026	Licence for Portion of Burren Village Green	It was agreed to grant a licence of Burren Village Green as shown outlined in yellow on the map attached, to the group named in the officer's report for a term of 5 years at a peppercorn licence fee, subject to Departmental Consent.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/127/2026	Surrender of Lease at Burrenbridge Road, Castlewellan	It was agreed to permit the group named within the report to surrender the lease in respect of the lands at Burrenbridge Road, Castlewellan back to Council.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/128/2026	Boundary Rectification at Ameracam Lane, Cranfield	It was agreed to rectify the registered title boundary between the dwelling known detailed on the attached map and Council's private road known as Ameracam Lane, Cranfield, subject to the owner agreeing to pay Council's legal costs.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/129/2026	NILGA Annual Subscription	It was agreed to note the annual NILGA Subscription fee for 26/27	M Ward	Agreed	Y
SPR/130/2026	Local Authority Deeds	It was agreed to note the report.	S Murphy	Agreed	Y
		It was also agreed that information would be brought back to Members on the number of former landfill sites that are no longer used by Council	S Murphy	Agreed	Y

SPR/131/2026	Section 75 Policy Screening Quarterly Report For Period April – June 2026 and NMD Council and Public Authority Statutory, Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-26	The following was agreed: - To note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026 - To note NMD District Council's Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report for the period 2025 – 2026 for submission to the Equality Commission for NI by 31 August 2026.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/132/2026	Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026	It was agreed to note the rural needs impact assessments undertaken during 2025-26 reporting period (Appendix 1) details of which will be submitted to DAERA through the new online portal to meet their requested deadline of 2 October 2026.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/133/2026	Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on Requests Related to Naming Council Facilities, Planting Trees and to Locate Artworks/Sculptures on Council Property	It was agreed to note the Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on Requests Related to Naming Council Facilities, Planting Trees and to Locate Artworks/Sculptures on Council Property.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
SPR/134/2026	Assessment Of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures – Directorate Business Plans 2025-2026	It was agreed to note Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures as detailed at Appendix 1.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y

SPR/135/2026	2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM Monitoring Statistics	It was agreed to note the monitoring statistics.	E Kirk	Agreed	Y
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e-mail: private.office@communities-ni.gov.uk
Our ref: SUB-0480-2026

8

FROM: GORDON LYONS MLA
MINISTER FOR COMMUNITIES

DATE: 7 JULY 2026

TO: EXECUTIVE COLLEAGUES

CENTRAL–LOCAL GOVERNMENT COLLABORATION AND DELIVERY AGREEMENT – UPDATE

I am writing to provide a brief update on the work that my department is taking forward to develop a Central–Local Government Collaboration and Delivery Agreement (CDA).

The Permanent Secretaries Group/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (PSG/SOLACE) Forum identified the need for a more joined up, consistent approach to how central and local government work together. In response, a Task & Finish Group has been established, jointly led by my officials and council officers, to design a clearer framework that strengthens alignment, supports shared outcomes and improves delivery across Northern Ireland.

In line with the agreed Terms of Reference, the CDA will be developed around two key components:

• Part 1 – Partnership & Relationships

A shared framework of principles, behaviours and expectations that supports trust, mutual respect and joint leadership between central and local government.

• Part 2 – Finance & Governance

A streamlined and coherent funding and assurance model, potentially including a single Service Level Agreement. This aims to simplify governance, reduce administrative burden and support more efficient delivery.

The Task & Finish Group has completed an initial data-capture exercise to identify current central government programmes delivered by way of grant funding to local government. This has provided an evidence base for the next phase of work. The Task and Finish Group will now work with departmental business areas and council fund managers to refine the analysis, confirm suitable funding streams and develop the first phase of the model. A Service Level Agreement model with proportionate reporting and clearer shared outcomes which reduces duplication and administrative burden will be developed.

I will provide further updates as this work progresses. Any proposals requiring changes to existing arrangements, or which raise cross-cutting or Executive-level issues, will be brought forward for appropriate consideration and agreement.

Thank you for your continued support as we work collectively to strengthen central–local collaboration and improve outcomes for communities across Northern Ireland.

Yours sincerely



Gordon Lyons MLA
Minister for Communities

Alison Allen
NILGA
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Date: 7 July 2026

Dear Alison

Central–Local Government Collaboration and Delivery Agreement

We are writing to provide an update on the work that has been initiated to develop a Central-Local Government Collaboration and Delivery Agreement (CDA), which will streamline existing grant funding arrangements, simplify governance, reduce duplication and administrative burden, and support more efficient delivery of shared outcomes.

The Permanent Secretaries Group/Society of Local Authority Chief Executives (PSG/SOLACE) Forum has identified the need for a more joined-up, consistent and leadership-driven approach to how central and local government work together to deliver outcomes. While extensive collaboration already exists, arrangements have developed incrementally and would benefit from clearer direction, greater coherence and reduced complexity.

In response, a Task & Finish Group has been established to design and oversee delivery of a clearer framework that strengthens leadership, improves alignment, supports shared outcomes and improves delivery across Northern Ireland.

In line with the agreed Terms of Reference, the CDA will be developed around two key components:

• Part 1 – Partnership & Relationships

A shared framework of principles, behaviours and expectations that supports trust, mutual respect and joint leadership between central and local government, and to provide

greater clarity on how partners work together, escalate issues and take collective ownership of outcomes.

• Part 2 – Finance & Governance

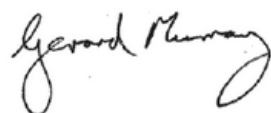
A streamlined funding and assurance model, recognising existing Chief Financial Officer (CFO) accountability frameworks, including a single Service Level Agreement, a lean cross-departmental sponsor team and strengthened senior-level assurance. This will simplify governance, reduce duplication and administrative burden and support more efficient delivery.

A data-capture exercise is underway to build a comprehensive picture of existing central-local government grant funding relationships. Departmental officials are contributing the necessary policy, operational and financial information to support this work. This evidence, alongside consideration of relevant approaches used elsewhere, will inform development of the CDA and ensure it is grounded in a clear understanding of existing arrangements.

Subject to Executive agreement at the appropriate time, the intention is to publish and begin implementation of the CDA by 31 March 2027, which will provide a clear end point for development and transition to simpler, more coherent and more effective arrangements. We will provide further updates as this work progresses and would be happy to provide an update in person to answer any questions that NILGA members may have.

Yours sincerely,

Co-Chairs of the CDA Task & Finish Group



Gerard Murray

Director - Local Government and Housing Regulation Division (DfC)

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "David Jackson", with a horizontal line underneath.

David Jackson

Chief Executive - Causeway, Coast and Glens Borough Council

Report to:	SPR Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 September 2026
Subject:	Planning Department Update
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Jonathan McGilly Assistant Director Regeneration
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Jonathan McGilly Assistant Director Regeneration

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	☐	For noting only	☒
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1.0	Purpose and Background																																												
1.1	This report updates members on Planning Departments activity since the last report tabled in January 2026 and reflecting NISRA stats up to 31 March 2026. The report also reflects internal stats and updates.																																												
2.0	Key issues																																												
2.1	NISRA Statistics (Excludes those not validated and PADs, PAN, Certificates of lawfulness, discharge of Conditions) Live Planning application 31 December 2024 1529 Live Planning applications 31 March 2025 1526 Live planning applications 30 June 2025 1527 Live Planning applications 30 September 2025 1537 Live Planning applications 31 December 2025 1542 Live Planning applications 31 March 2026 1496 Major applications <table><tr><th>Period</th><th>Av processing time</th><th>Nr Applications received</th><th>Nr Applications withdrawn</th><th>Nr Applications decided</th></tr><tr><td>QE Sept 2024</td><td>34 wks</td><td>4</td><td>0</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>QE Dec 2024</td><td>21.7 wks</td><td>0</td><td>0</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>QE March 2025</td><td>19.6 wks</td><td>3</td><td>1</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>QE June 2025</td><td>54.4 wks</td><td>4</td><td>0</td><td>2</td></tr><tr><td>QE Sept 2025</td><td>84 wks</td><td>1</td><td>0</td><td>4</td></tr><tr><td>QE Dec 2025</td><td>156 wks</td><td>13</td><td>0</td><td>1</td></tr><tr><td>QE March 2026</td><td>0</td><td>7</td><td>0</td><td>0</td></tr></table>					Period	Av processing time	Nr Applications received	Nr Applications withdrawn	Nr Applications decided	QE Sept 2024	34 wks	4	0	2	QE Dec 2024	21.7 wks	0	0	2	QE March 2025	19.6 wks	3	1	4	QE June 2025	54.4 wks	4	0	2	QE Sept 2025	84 wks	1	0	4	QE Dec 2025	156 wks	13	0	1	QE March 2026	0	7	0	0
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Processing times for major applications for year 25/26 was 58.8 weeks

LOCAL APPLICATIONS

Period	Av processing time	Nr Applications received	Nr Applications Withdrawn	Nr Applications decided
QE Dec 2024	50.1 wks	295	34	202
QE March 2025	45 wks	271	19	236
QE June 2025	46 wks	271	8	252
QE Sept 2025	43.4 wks	304	11	269
QE Dec 2025	50.8 wks	276	12	262
QE March 2026	44.5 wks	261	12	294

Average for year 45.8 weeks

Processing times for local applications remains above target and NI Average.

During this period NMD received the second highest number of applications in NI equating to approximately 12% of NI total and determined the second highest number of applications again equating to 12% of NI total.

CURRENT ANALYSIS OF ALL APPLICATIONS

Based on latest **available data as of 8/9/26:**

1650 live applications – (This includes ALL applications that are not captured and reflected in NISRA stats)

Made up as follows:

1150 applications are allocated and processing, approx.

500 awaiting allocation.

1 new application to be validated.

For period 1 April 2026 – 31 August 2026 -589 applications have been determined.

LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Draft Plan strategy was presented and agreed by Council on 31 March 2025 and was formally launched on 27 June and was followed by 12-week consultation period with a series of consultation sessions facilitated across the district during this period. Representations were received and reviewed and further formal consultation on representations and counter representations was completed in Q1 2026.

LDP team are now considering focussed changes based on representations and following legal review there will be further consultation ahead of Draft Plan Strategy submission to DfI by end of 2026.

At that stage DfI will carry out the independent examination, however the timeline for this will not be known until after submission. DfI have appointed a panel of Independent Examiners which will hopefully result in a more streamlined process.

ENFORCEMENT

The NI target for the Enforcement is that 70% of enforcement cases are concluded within 39 weeks of receipt.

For 25/26

294 cases were opened

181 cases closed

231 cases were concluded

58% cases were concluded within target. (24/25 47.6%)

Challenges

Challenges remain with respect to performance against statutory targets and the number of applications live in the system is also well above manageable levels.

A number of ongoing challenges continue to impact on service delivery, in summary these are:

Statutory consultation

This remains a challenge across ALL consultees and has been discussed with DfI at a strategic level.

At March 2026 of 1053 Consultations issued by NMDDC, 66% were replied to within target of 21 days. In a comparable Council this figure is 86%.

Via engagement with Statutory Consultee Forum set up under the Planning Improvement Programme, these matters are discussed and in recent months NIEA have undertaken a review and implemented changes on a pilot bases to help address backlog issues that they face. Ongoing prioritisation pilot with NIEA remains in place along with a NIW pilot to reduce Consultations on some single house rural applications.

Validation checklists

Validation check lists have now been implemented in a pilot phase where we are seeking feedback form applicants and addressing issues that arise where possible. This initiative will hopefully help address challenges of incomplete applications and the challenges posed by seasonal surveys.

Recruitment Actions:

Staff retention and recruitment continues to be an industry wide challenge in both Local Councils and the private sector.

There is currently one vacancy at Planning Assistant level and recruitment is underway however back fill for medium to long term absences has proved challenging and does create issues for live caseloads that have to be redistributed.

Reserve lists are in place now for Senior Officers, Planning Officers and Planning Assistants.

2 No HLA students are now in post from January 2026 and this has proven to be a successful intervention.

Absence has been a particular challenge since the last update, and this is being managed as per procedures but does have an impact on outputs.

Performance Management –

Current performance improvement actions

- Majors and Legacy applications are being reviewed monthly with an agreed actions to determine / close applications.
- Ongoing performance meetings with Senior Planning staff to review performance and agree actions to address challenges.
- Ongoing engagement with statutory consultees around response times.
- Senior Planners have developed workplans with all team members to be reviewed weekly/fortnightly to plan for weekly determination figures.

Additional performance improvement actions

- Dedicated training/mentoring programme to build capacity of new Planning Assistants, this is being delivered by part time Principal Planning Officer.
- A small team of external consultants have commenced work in June 2026 to work with DM teams to support staff to deal with challenges of caseload management and mentor to improve timely decision making
- A training plan for the Department is currently being developed that will review induction training and ensure professional development training is offered across all levels of the Planning team to address the ever-changing demand on planning around climate change and Environmental matters etc.
- Ongoing review of applications district wide. Allocation of caseloads based on application complexity to ensure caseloads are reflective of experience of each individual, eg
 - Allocation of applications out of sequence ie not based on the date received
 - Allocation of projects with Economic development impact, grant funding, medical considerations etc.

	• Stringent application of how many times applicants are given opportunities to resubmit information to address application shortcomings and missing information. If outstanding or revised information is not provided within specified timeframe, then will move the application to a decision. • Introduction of individual team performance management with individual performance targets to ensure output is managed at an individual level as well at a department level – Ongoing • Reviewing consultations to ensure we only consult with statutory partners where necessary. – This is ongoing, led by Seniors. • Continue to review staff complement and react to emerging resource challenges.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Note the content of the report
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	NA
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒
5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐

5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☒ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
	NA
8.0	Background Documents
	NA

Report to:	Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	17 September 2026
Subject:	Annual Registration Services Report 2025/26
Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):	Elaine Kirk, Assistant Director, Legal and People
Contact Officer (Including Job Title):	Michael Livingstone, District Registrar Sally Andrée, Head of Administration and Customer Services

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

For decision	For noting only	X
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1.0	Purpose and Background
1.1	The purpose of this report is to present the Council's first Annual Registration Services Report for the period 2025/26.
1.2	The report provides an overview of Registration Services activity during the year, including the registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships.
2.0	Key Issues
2.1	The 2025/26 Annual Registration Report has been prepared to provide Members with an overview of service performance, key statistics, operational developments and areas of notable activity during the reporting period.
2.2	As this is the first Annual Registration Services Report produced by the Council, some additional performance and management information is being considered for inclusion in future reports. This will include income generated through the hire of Council ceremony rooms, following the introduction of local recording arrangements which will enable accurate annual reporting.
3.0	Recommendations
3.1	Councillors are asked to note the annual report.
4.0	Resource implications
4.1	None
5.0	Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)
5.1	<i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i> It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations ☒

5.2	<i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i> Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened ☐ The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation ☐
5.3	<i>Proposal initiating consultation</i> Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves ☐ Consultation period will be 12 weeks ☐ Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) ☐ <i>Rationale:</i>
6.0	Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)
6.1	Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service Yes ☐ No ☐ If yes, please complete the following: Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed ☐
7.0	Appendices
7.1	Annual Registration Services Report 2025/26
8.0	Background Documents
8.1	None

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Annual Registration Services Report 2025/26

Registrations of Births, Deaths, Marriages and Civil Partnerships in Newry, Mourne and Down District Council Area

Introduction

This is the first Annual Registration Services Report produced by Newry, Mourne and Down District Council and establishes a baseline for future annual reporting.

The report provides an overview of Birth, Death, Marriage and Civil Partnership registrations within the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council area for the period April 2025 to March 2026.

Background

The Registration Service is responsible for the statutory registration of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships within the district. Registration activity varies throughout the year and reflects seasonal trends, demographic patterns and customer demand.

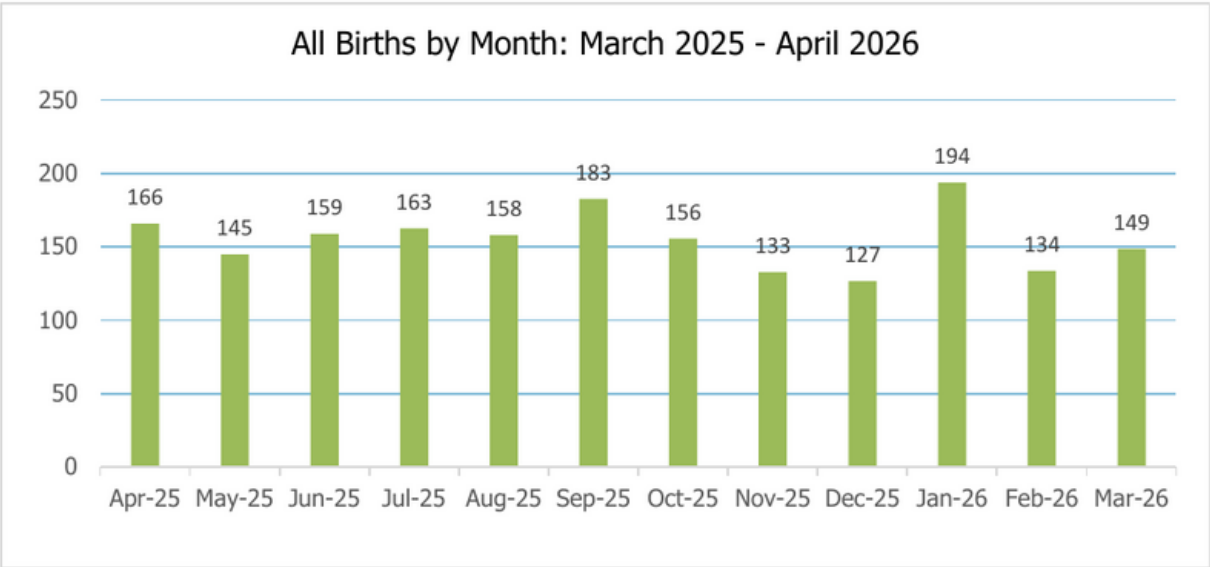
The figures presented in this report are based on registration data supplied by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA) together with figures recorded within the service.

Registration Activity

During the period April 2025 to March 2026, the following registrations were completed in the Newry Mourne and Down District:

Registration Type	Total
Births	1,867
Deaths	1,613
Marriages	799
Civil Marriages	216
Religious Marriages	583
Civil Partnerships	3

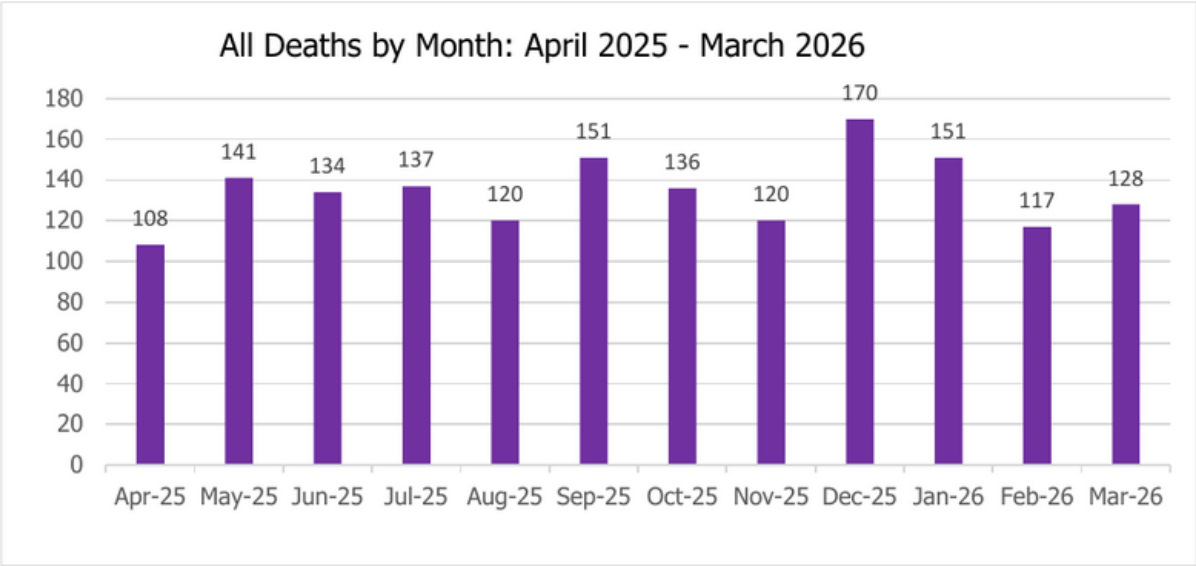
Birth Registrations



A total of 1,867 births were registered during the reporting period, averaging approximately 156 births per month.

The highest number of births was recorded in January 2026 (194), while the lowest number was recorded in December 2025 (127). Birth registrations remained relatively consistent throughout the year, with moderate monthly variation.

Death Registrations

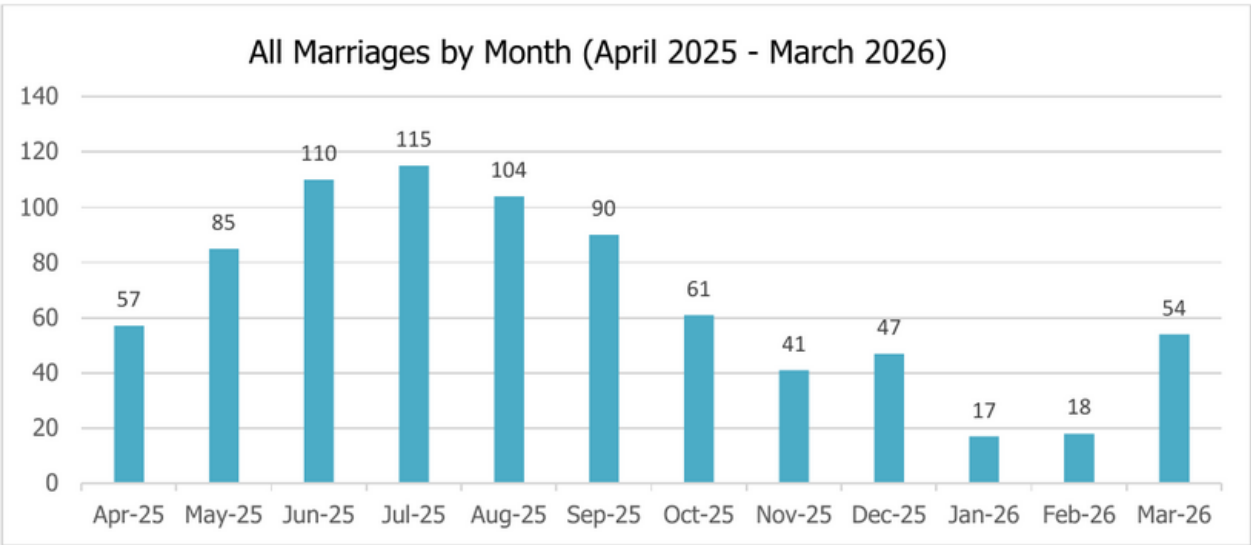


A total of 1,613 deaths were registered, averaging approximately 134 deaths per month.

The highest number of registrations occurred in December 2025 (170), with the lowest recorded in April 2025 (108).

Overall, births exceeded deaths by 254 during the reporting period.

Marriage Registrations



A total of 799 marriages were registered during the year.

Of these:

- 583 (73.0%) were religious marriage ceremonies.
- 216 (27.0%) were civil marriage held in Newry and Downpatrick offices. ceremonies.

Marriage activity followed the expected seasonal pattern with the busiest period occurring during the summer months.

Marriage registration activity was highest during the summer months, peaking in July 2025 with 115 marriages. June and August also experienced high levels of activity, recording 110 and 104 marriages respectively. The lowest level of activity was recorded in January 2026, with 17 marriages.

Summer weddings (June to August) accounted for 329 marriages, representing 41% of all marriages registered during the year.

Civil Partnership Registrations

Three civil partnerships were registered during the reporting period, with registrations taking place in May, July and August 2025.

Civil Ceremonies by Registration Office

From April 2025 to March 2026 a total of 219 civil ceremonies were conducted across the two registration offices. Registration Office ceremonies were held in the Binnian Suite in Downpatrick and the Boardroom in Newry Town Hall.

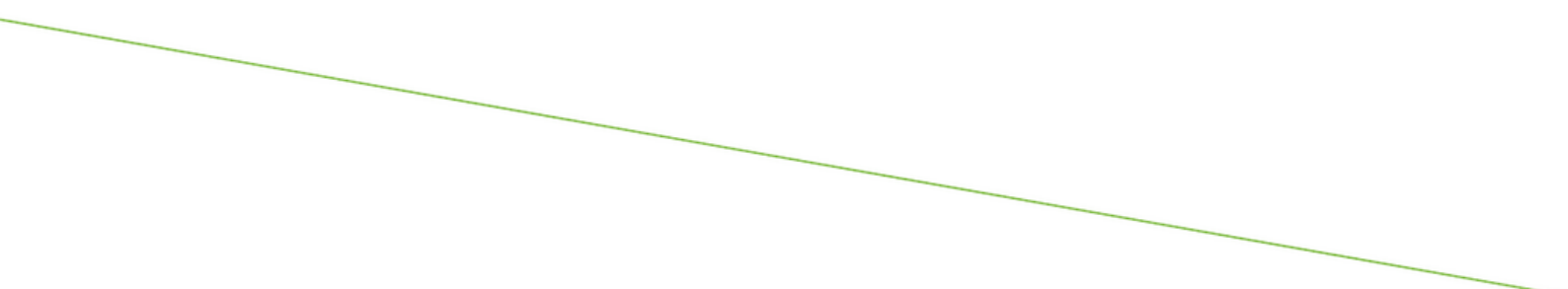
Across the District there are 24 hotels and venues approved for the holding of Civil Marriages and Civil Partnerships. Of the venues and hotels in the district, 8 are in the Newry area and 16 are in the Downpatrick area.

	Registration Office	Hotels and Venues	Total
Newry	117	13	130
Downpatrick	45	44	89
Total	162	57	219

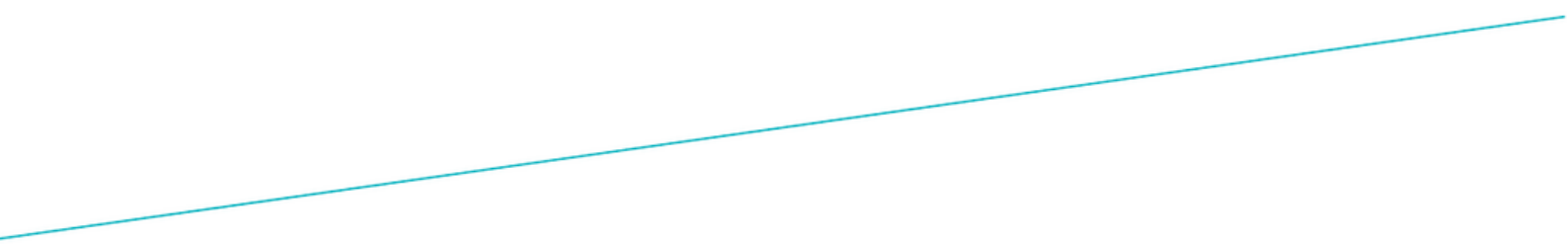
A total of 219 ceremonies were conducted during the reporting period. Newry accounted for almost 60% of all ceremonies and recorded the highest level of activity within Registration Office facilities. In contrast, activity in Downpatrick was almost evenly divided between ceremonies held within the Registration Office and those conducted at approved hotels and venues. Overall, most ceremonies across the district took place within Council Registration Office facilities.

Summary

Overall, registration activity during 2025/26 remained stable and in line with expected seasonal trends. Birth registrations continued to exceed death registrations, while marriage activity remained strong, with religious ceremonies accounting for almost three-quarters (73%) of all marriages registered. Demand for marriage services peaked during the summer months, particularly in July, and a higher number of civil ceremonies were conducted in Newry than in Downpatrick. This reflects differing patterns of service use across the district and highlights the continued demand for accessible registration and ceremony services.



Ag freastal ar an Dún agus Ard Mhacha Theas Serving Down and South Armagh



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Monaghan Row
Newry BT35 8DJ

Oifig Dhún Pádraig
Downpatrick Office
Downshire Civic Centre
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting
held on Tuesday 30th June 2026, 10am
Warrenpoint Town Hall / MS Teams**

In Attendance:**Programme Board Members***By Teams:***Councillor Doire Finn (Chair)****Councillor Aidan Mathers****Councillor Killian Feehan****Councillor Helena Young****NMDDC Officials****Conor Mallon, Director - Economy, Regeneration & Tourism****Amanda Smyth, Assistant Director – Economy, Growth & Tourism****Caolain Boyd, Assistant Director – Capital & Procurement****Conor Haughey, Assistant Director – Healthy Living****Jonathan McGilly, Assistant Director – Regeneration****Conor McGeown, Strategic Capital Projects Manager****Tracie McLoughlin, Corporate Relationship Officer****NCCR/251: Welcome and Apologies**

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies from:

Cllr D Murphy, Cllr D Taylor, Cllr H Reilly and Mr A Patterson.

NCCR/252: Comms & Engagement Report

Mrs A Smyth provided an update on communications and marketing.

Theatre/Conference Centre:

- Hoarding is currently being erected at Newry Town Hall and Sean Hollywood Arts Centre and images are shared within the agenda pack;
- Woodvale Construction held engagement events for community, businesses, supply chain and employment opportunities;
- Correspondence received a request in respect of the name of the new facility.

Newry Regeneration Working Group:

- Meeting of the NRWG took place on 23rd June with good attendance by the Stakeholders. Attendees were provided with an update on the theatre conference facility and operating model, Newry City Park, Civic Hub and city centre office accommodation

In relation to the request to the naming of the new theatre/conference facility, Cllr Young said it was important that Council gives this consideration. Cllr Finn advised Members that she had also made a formal request to Good Relations and awaits a reply. Mrs Smyth advised the request would be considered in line with Council Policy and an update will be provided to the Programme Board in due course.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor D Finn, seconded by Councillor H Young, it was agreed to note the report as circulated in Item 2.0 of the Agenda.

NCCR/253: Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 14th May 2026

Mr Mallon requested a proposer to approve minutes of the previous meeting and asked that Members agree to approve minutes of today's meeting by email to enable final report to be considered at August SPR.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor D Finn, seconded by Councillor K Feehan it was agreed to approve the report as circulated in Item 3.0 of the Agenda as a true and accurate account and these minutes along with the approved minutes of today's meeting be taken to August Strategic, Policy & Resources Committee in August for noting.

NCCR/254: Reports of Previous Meetings:

- NCCR/BRCD Project Board held 25th March 2026
- NCCR/BRCD Project Board held 22nd April 2026
- Newry City Park Project Board held 29th April 2026
- NCCR/BRCD Project Board held 20th May 2026

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor D Finn, seconded by Councillor K Feehan, it was agreed to note the reports as circulated in Item 4.0 of the Agenda.

NCCR/255: Project Manager Updates:**Newry City Park**

- Planning – Final Scheduled Monument Consent received with 26 conditions. Awaiting Planning Approval.
- Participation Stage Documents (PSD) – Scoring Matrix and Letters currently being drafted for sharing with CPD, NMDDC Procurement and Trowers & Hamlin.
- Global Cost Plan – Cost Plan 8 agreed and approved by CPD.
- FBC – Capaxo currently updating and await updates from Council and ICT.
- Programme – Expected dates: ITT doc to be issued Sept 2026 / Contractor Appointment Oct 2026 / Works on Site Autumn 2026 / Completion Sept 2028
- Budget – Capital Claim 2 submitted to DfC.
- CEs & EWs – 12 CEs / 15 EWs
- BREEAM – 79% Complete
- Buysocial – Point target is 211. Points delivered is 344.

Theatre/Conference

- Programme – Pre construction period remains in progress. Hoarding to be erected w/e 27th June. On site prep works to commence 6th July. Expected completion Jan 2028.
- Planning – discharge of planning conditions noted:
 - Archaeological programme of works accepted;
 - Meeting with HED scheduled to propose brick finish;
 - NIW Dye and CCTV survey undertaken – await sign off to enable stage 2 design to take place;
 - Bat survey undertaken and await report. Early warning indicates derogation licence will be required from NIEA. Works in other areas can continue whilst we await report.
- Budget – CEs for ICT & IST accepted and implemented. Current totals approved at March 2026 SPR. Unallocated budget and spend to date noted.
- Risk Overview – 3 accepted CEs and X1 Inflation have been allocated and Risk Register updated to reflect.

Mr Mallon notified members Council are in receipt of a Letter of Offer from the Shared Island fund towards the Theatre / Conference facility and advised further detail will be shared in due course.

Mr Mallon also notified members the preferred model, previously agreed by the Programme Board and the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee (SPR), had been challenged by the Trade Unions (TUs). They have advised they do not agree with the preferred Operating Model and will not engage with Officers on this matter. They had advised they will liaise with stakeholders and political parties going forward.

Mr Mallon said the feedback from the arts sector and user groups are in favour of a model that is not managed by Council.

Cllr Finn welcomed the news of Shared Island funding and asked:

1. Can the news of the Letter of Offer be publicised?;
2. Can derogation licence for the bats be applied for now to reduce delays?;
3. What are the concerns from the TUs in relation to the proposed operating model?

Mr Mallon responded:

1. An agreed statement will be drafted and released in conjunction with the Taoiseach office;
2. Yes, the bat surveys have been carried out and we await the completed report however, early indications are a derogation licence will be required so we can apply for this now;
3. TUs have advised it is their understanding that this type of operating model has not worked in similar facilities in NI. Mr Mallon confirmed that no decision has been made, the next step is to explore a preferred model and how it may or may not meet requirements for the new facility.

In relation to the bat survey, Mr McGeown advised an early warning meeting with the contractor will take place when the completed report has been received.

Cllr Mathers said it was important that officers and the Programme Board consider the TUs concerns and allow them to engage with Party Reps.

Cllr Finn asked what conversations have been had with the TUs or have they been given a presentation/report on the proposed Operating Model? Mr Mallon said the TUs were presented with information on the options explored, and the rationale for selecting a preferred option for further investigation; this is the same information that had been presented to the Programme Board and SPR.

Cllr Young queried who are the stakeholders the TUs are referring to.

Both Cllr Mathers and Cllr Finn advised that members would discuss this with their respective Party

Cllr Mathers asked if the visuals for Newry City Park are ready for release? Mr Mallon said the visuals were ready, Cllr Mathers said it would be best to share the visuals now rather than wait until August. Members agreed.

Cllr Feehan asked for an update on the civic centre.

Mr Mallon confirmed we await a date for the JR hearing which is expected to be late October, early November and that he will inform all Councillors when information has

been received. He said out of the 7 grounds for challenge, only 1 was accepted, the one relating to the climate Act.

Cllr Feehan asked that an update on the Civic Hub is included in the agenda as a standing item going forward.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor A Mathers, seconded by Councillor K Feehan it was agreed:

- a) To note the Programme Manager's Update Reports as circulated in Item 5.0 of the Agenda;
- b) Officers to liaise with the Taoiseach's office on an agreed statement regarding the Shared Island Funding;
- c) Officers to apply for a derogation licence in relation to bats at the Sean Hollywood Arts Centre;
- d) Programme Board Members consult with their respective Party Leaders regarding the Trade Unions decision to liaise directly with political parties on the Theatre Operating Model and report back to Mr Mallon next week.
- e) Visuals for Newry City Park be released.
- f) Newry Civic Centre be included as an item in future Agendas of Programme Board meetings.

NCCR/257: Date for Next Meeting

Members noted the date for the next meeting of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board is Thursday 27th August 2026, 11am.

Meeting ended: 10:50am

**For Approval by Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board
For Noting at Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee**