NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 16 October 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

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In the Chair:	Councillor O Hanlon	
In Attendance in Chamber:	Councillor C Enright	Councillor T Howie
	Councillor A King	Councillor C King
	Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
	Councillor D McAteer	Councillor H Reilly
	Councillor M Rice	Councillor D Taylor
Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:	Councillor P Byrne	Councillor M Hearty
Non-Committee Members In Attendance:	Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Truesdale
Non-Committee Members In Attendance via teams:	Councillor J Jackson	

Officials in Attendance in Chamber:
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Ms S Andree, Head of Administration & Customer Service
Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in Attendance via Teams:
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance

SPR/161/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Howell, O'Hare, Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, and Mrs Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment.

SPR/162/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Byrne declared an interest in item 6 – SRA Allowances.

SPR/163/2025: **ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 11 SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 11 September 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 September 2025.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/164/2025: **ANNUAL COMPLAINT HANDLNG REPORT**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Annual Complaint Handling Report. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms McClean presented the Report, noting that the new complaints process was in accordance with NIPSO requirements and would be reported on annually.

In proposing the Report, Councillor Reilly highlighted the small number of complaints. He noted that, in his view, Councillors often received complaints relating to missed bin collections and stated that he did not encourage such complaints to be formally raised as he would regularly action them to Council himself.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to approve the Annual Complaint Handling Report for publication.**

SPR/165/2025: **COUNCILS APPROACH TO DEVELOPING ULSTER SCOTS**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Council's Approach to Developing Ulster Scots. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms McClean noted that the paper had been tabled following discussion at the Equality and Good Relations Forum held on 8 October, at which a unanimous recommendation had been agreed that Council proceed to establish an Ulster Scots Working Group.

Councillor Taylor proposed to accept the recommendation, noting the Unionist representation over the years and the desire to see greater recognition of the Ulster Scots contribution to the area. He stated that this was not the end of the journey, but an opportunity to explore the benefits that increased support for promoting the culture could bring.

Councillor McAteer seconded the proposal, echoing Councillor Taylor's sentiments.

Councillor Hanlon noted that this was the start of the journey, emphasising the importance of the working group in promoting Ulster Scots.

Councillor Reilly welcomed the report, noting the high number of respondents to the consultation. He stated that the new Commissioner for Ulster Scots had amended the title to "Commissioner for Ulster Scots and British Ulster Culture and Traditions." He welcomed that the Report included and reflected on the British Ulster identity and expressed his hope that the Group would be able to support a wide range of projects to promote Ulster Scots.

Councillor Howie also welcomed the Report and the potential to celebrate and promote Ulster Scots within the District.

Councillor Byrne welcomed the Report, noting that recommendations coming from the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group required unanimous agreement, and commented that it was positive to see such a recommendation brought forward with the full backing of all Parties.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the report, noting the District's Ulster Scots heritage as something to be proud of. He also noted the reference to the Ulster British identity within the report, stating that the desire for the Ulster British dimension to be reflected without it being explicitly requested was significant and should be considered in the naming of the working group.

Following a query from Councillor Reilly, a discussion took place regarding deferring the item for a month to discuss the title of the Working Group. Councillor Lewis proposed and Councillor Reilly seconded that the proposed title of the Working Group would be "Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group" which could then be ratified along with the Terms of Reference at the first meeting of the Group. It was agreed by the original proposer, Councillor Taylor and seconder, Councillor McAteer to amend the officer's recommendation.

Councillors Taylor, Bowsie, and Jackson noted that the naming convention was intended to align with the new Commissioner in Central Government, while Councillors Byrne, Hanlon, and McAteer noted that the naming of a Working Group should be decided by those who would be members of the Group, some of whom would likely not be present at the Committee meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to establish an Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group, the title of which, along with the Terms of Reference would, be agreed at the first meeting of the Working Group.**

SPR/166/2025: **<u>SRA ALLOWANCES</u>**

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding SRA Allowances. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Taggart outlined the Report, noting that there was one outstanding SRA following the reallocation of the DUP Party Representative position on 5 October 2025. She advised the Report recommended that, as in previous years, the outstanding SRA would be distributed among existing positions already in receipt of such allowances.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to retain the current position of allocating any outstanding**

SRAs among those positions that receive SRA positions.

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of 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).**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

SPR/167/2025: **RESERVES POLICY**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Reserves Policy regarding Reserves Policy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the Reserves Policy.**

SPR/168/2025: **PROPOSED UPGRADES OF EV CHARGEPOINTS AT COUNCIL CAR PARKS**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Proposed Upgrades of EV Charge-points at Council Car Parks **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the leasing of the areas outlined in red on the maps contained within Appendices 1, 2 and 3 of the Officer's Report for the purposes of upgrading the EV charge-points for the term outlined and the proposed rent as detailed within the report.**

SPR/169/2025: **HIGHER LEVEL APPRENTICESHIP - PLANNING**

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding Higher Level Apprenticeship – Planning. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed that this Council participate in the Planning Apprenticeship programme and seek to recruit an Apprentice as per the timeline outlined within the Officer's Report and that an update be brought to SP&R in due course.**

SPR/170/2025: **<u>NEWCASTLE CENTRE – INTEGRATED CONSULTANCY TEAM (ICT) APPOINTMENT</u>**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Newcastle Centre – Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) Appointment. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the appointment of the Integrated Consultancy Team to progress the delivery of a new leisure centre on the Newcastle Centre site following the recent procurement exercise.**

SPR/171/2025: **<u>DOWN LEISURE CENTRE CAPITAL WORKS</u>**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Down Leisure Centre Capital Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to procure and appoint a suitable supplier for delivery of the works at Down Leisure Centre as detailed within the Officer's Report, with the budget requirement added to Council's Capital Programme.**

SPR/172/2025: **<u>MEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE CAPITAL WORKS</u>**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Meigh Community Centre Capital Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to procure and appoint a suitable supplier for delivery of the works at Meigh Community Centre as detailed within the Officer's Report, with the budget**

requirement added to Council's Capital Programme.

SPR/173/2025: **LEASE OF ROPEWALK PITCH, WELLS LANE, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Lease of Ropewalk Pitch, Wells Lane. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to enter into a lease with the Group noted within the Officer's Report in respect of the lands for a term of 25 years at a peppercorn rent, subject to Departmental and NI Housing Executive Consent.**

SPR/174/2025: **PROPOSED LEASE AT LOUGH PARK, BALLYNAHINCH FOR NIEN SUBSTATION**

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Proposed Lease at Lough Park, Ballynahinch for NIEN Substation. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to enter into a lease with NI Electricity Networks in respect of the portion of lands outlined in red on the map attached to the officer's report for a term of 99 years, subject to the market value premium. It was also agreed to enter into the associated wayleaves required in respect of the substation, subject to NI Electricity Networks reimbursing Council for the valuation costs.**

SPR/175/2025: **PROPOSED LEASE OF PLAYING FIELDS, DUNDALK ROAD, NEWTOWNHAMILTON**

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Proposed Lease of Playing Fields, Dundalk Road, Newtownhamilton. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, the following was agreed:**

- **To enter into a lease with the club noted in the officer's report for a term of 25 years at a peppercorn rent, subject to Departmental Consent.**
- **To enter into such deeds as are required to rectify the title to the lands.**

SPR/176/2025: **<u>REQUEST TO PURCHASE LAND ADJACENT TO CANAL</u>**

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Request to Purchase Land Adjacent to Canal. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to sell the lands to the party identified within the Officer's Report for the market value.**

<u>FOR NOTING - ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014</u>

SPR/177/2025: **<u>NILGA SUBSCRIPTIONS 2025/26</u>**

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding NILGA Subscriptions 2025/26 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note the annual NILGA subscription fee for 2025/26.**

SPR/178/2025: **<u>SPECIFIC DELEGATED FUNCTION</u>**

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Specific Delegated Function. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note that delegation has been exercised by the Chief Executive regarding a HR matter in the best interests of the Council and is being reported in accordance with 3.1.11 of the Council's Scheme of Delegation for Officers.**

SPR/179/2025: **<u>SFWG ACTION SHEET OF MEETING HELD 7 OCTOBER 2025</u>**

Read: SFWG Action Sheet of Meeting Held 7 October 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note the action sheet.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/180/2025: **STATUTORY REPORTING: SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD JULY – SEPTEMBER 2025**

Read: Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Statutory Reporting: Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for Period July – September 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Reilly stated that his Party had expected a more rigorous investigation in relation to the Council of Sanctuary and expressed disappointment that the matter had not been subject to a full Equality Impact Assessment. He further noted concern regarding comments by an SDLP Member.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report**

SPR/181/2025: **WOMENS WORKING GROUP ACTION SHEET OF MEETING HELD 2 OCTOBER 2025**

Read: Women's Working Group Action Sheet of Meeting Held 2 October 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the action sheet.**

SPR/182/2025: **NILGA GUIDE TO DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY FOR COUNCILLORS IN NORTHERN IRELAND**

Read: NILGA Guide to Digital Connectivity for Councillors in Northern Ireland. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the documents.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.25pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 November 2025.

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**
Chairperson

Signed: **Josephine Kelly**
Director of Corporate Services