

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 13 November 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor A King
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor S O'Hare

Councillor C King
Councillor D McAteer
Councillor M Rice

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor P Byrne
Councillor R Howell
Councillor H Reilly

Councillor M Hearty
Councillor T Howie
Councillor D Taylor

Non-Committee Members

In Attendance: Councillor T Andrews

Non-Committee Members

In Attendance via teams: Councillor C Bowsie

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital & Procurement
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director: Economy, Growth & Tourism
Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/183/2025:

APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

An apology was received from Mr Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism.

SPR/184/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

SPR/185/2025:

**ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES
MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER 2025**

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 16 October 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 16 October 2025.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/186/2025: MID YEAR ASSESSMENTS OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CORPORATE SERVICES DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, and Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Mid-Year Assessment of Chief Executive and Corporate Services Business Plans 2025 - 26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, the Mid Year Assessment of Chief Executive and Corporate Services Directorate was agreed.**

SPR/187/2025: MID YEAR ASSESSMENT – PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025-26

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Mid-Year Assessment – performance Improvement Plan 2025-26. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne outlined the Report, advising Members that the information presented may be subject to change once results were verified by the Northern Ireland Audit Office prior to 30 September 2026.

Councillor Byrne queried the baseline energy consumption and why no targets had yet been established, to which Mr Byrne advised that the Performance Improvement Objective for 2025/26 was to establish the baseline, which would then inform the development of targets for 2026/27 to support future growth.

Mrs Murphy added that energy consumption reporting was a new statutory obligation for Council, and that targets would be set through a Climate Action Plan in partnership with DAERA, in line with the Net Zero 2050 plan. She noted that consultation was ongoing and welcomed all feedback.

Councillor McAteer highlighted the low number of fixed penalty notices issued for dog fouling, referencing complaints he had received. He expressed hope that performance would improve once vacant posts were filled. He also referred to the Planning Department statistics and expressed his hope that processing times would improve.

Mrs Murphy reported that recruitment was ongoing, with the Education & Enforcement Manager post now filled, which would be key to ensuring staff coverage, targeted

interventions and enforcement activity. She reminded Members of the online reporting tool for dog fouling.

Councillor Hanlon referred to the recent discussion at the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee meeting where she had raised concerns regarding processing times for major applications and the resulting impact on other applications.

Councillor Byrne queried the HGV sweepers introduced within the District, noting their inability to access smaller spaces in Crossmaglen, and asked what steps were being taken to address this.

Ms Murphy advised that a review of the District cleaning schedule was under way to ensure an equitable allocation of resources across the District, including residential areas for which Council had responsibility. She confirmed she would follow up with the Member after the meeting.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor McAteer, the Mid Year Assessment – Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26 was agreed.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Lewis, 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 O'Hare, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

SPR/188/2025: RENEWAL OF MICROSOFT ENTERPRISE AGREEMENT

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Renewal of Microsoft Enterprise Agreement. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to approve the renewal of Council's Microsoft Enterprise agreement through a compliant procurement route. This represents a continuation of existing**

arrangements, with all associated costs already included within budget.

SPR/189/2025: HEALTH CASH PLAN

Read: Report from Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager, regarding Health Cash Plan. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to support the continuation of the Employee Health Cash Plan as outlined within the report.**

SPR/190/2025: LEASE ARRANGEMENTS – DELAMONT COUNTRY PARK CARAVAN PARK

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Lease Arrangements – Delamont Country Park Caravan Park **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to defer this item to allow officers to bring back further information on the proposed lease.**

SPR/191/2025: ACCESSIBILITY PROPOSAL

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, the following was agreed:**

- **AccessAble be commissioned to develop guides for Council venues and locations.**
- **The relevant Year 1, 2 and 3 costs be included in the rate setting process for 2026/27, 2027/28 and 2028/29.**

SPR/192/2025: MINI-DIGI HUB PROJECT BESSBROOK

Read: Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director: Capital Projects & Procurement, regarding Mini-Digi Hub Project Bessbrook. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed commence procurement and appointment of a contractor to undertake the works as outlined within section 2 of the Officer's Report.**

SPR/193/2025:

RECRUITMENT DIRECTOR: CORPORATE SERVICES

Read:

Report from Mrs Ward, CEO, regarding Recruitment Director: Corporate Services. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Rice, the following was agreed:

- **To approve the recruitment for Director: Corporate Services**
- **Confirm the recommendations as contained within 2.1 of the Officer's Report**
- **Nominations to the selection panel to be appointed in due course, in consultation with Party Leaders.**

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

SPR/194/2025:

EXEMPT NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MINUTES 5 SEPTEMBER 2025

Read:

Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Minutes 5 September 2025 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the minutes.

SPR/195/2025:

MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS – QUARTER 2 2025/26

Read:

Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Management Accounts - Quarter 2. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the Quarter 2 2025/26 Management Accounts.

SPR/196/2025:

MINUTES OF SFWG MEETING HELD 4 NOVEMBER 2025

Read:

Minutes of SFWG Meeting held 4 November 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the minutes.

SPR/197/2025:

**LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES
SUB-0772-2025**

Read:

Correspondence from the Department for Communities. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

FOR NOTING

SPR/198/2025:

**OFFICER REPORT ON CORRESPONDENCE FROM
CONSULATE GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES OF
AMERICA DATED 2 JUNE 2025 RE 250TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE**

Read:

Report from Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Officer Report on Correspondence from Consulate General of the United States of America dated 2 June 2025 re 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Reilly asked whether it would be possible for the Council to undertake some form of audit within the District to identify any roles played by residents and their ancestors in the formation of the United States of America.

Mrs Ward cautioned that conducting a District-wide audit could require substantial resources. However, she advised that the matter would be discussed with museum colleagues to determine whether any relevant information could be gathered without significant resource implications.

Councillor Reilly clarified that he was not seeking an extensive piece of work, but rather a high-level overview that could inform any future discussions.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note correspondence had been discussed at the Councillor's Equality & Good Relations Reference Group on 8 October 2025, and that the consensus of Members present was to support the Museum and Heritage Services section organising a talk or small exhibition to acknowledge this anniversary.

SPR/199/2025:

ATTENDANCE AT NI AMENITY COUNCIL AGM

Read:

Recommendation from Party Representatives to allow attendance by an Elected member at the NI Amenity Council AGM.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the recommendation.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 6.54pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 December 2025.

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**
 Chairperson

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