

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 11 December 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor D McAteer

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor P Byrne
Councillor C King
Councillor A Mathers

Councillor A King
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor H Reilly

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor R Howell
Councillor S O'Hare

Councillor T Howie
Councillor D Taylor

Non-Committee Members

In Attendance: Councillor G Hanna

Non-Committee Members

In Attendance via Teams: Councillor T Andrews Councillor C Bowsie

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital & Procurement
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mrs V Keegan, Assistant Director of Digital & Communications
Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in Attendance

Via Teams: Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment

SPR/200/2025:

APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Hanlon, Hearty and Rice along with Mrs Ward, Chief Executive and Mr Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities.

As the Chairperson for the Committee was an apology, Deputy Chairperson Councillor McAteer assumed the role of Chair for the meeting.

SPR/201/2025:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/202/2025:

**ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES
MEETING HELD ON 13 NOVEMBER 2025**

Read:

Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 13 November 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

SPR/193/2025: Recruitment Director: Corporate Services

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly regarding membership of the interview panel, Mr Mallon advised that the matter was being taken forward by the Chief Executive, who would engage with Parties accordingly.

SPR/198/2025: Officer Report on Correspondence from Consulate General of the USA dated 2 June 2025 re 25th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly regarding a staff canvass on relatives who had excelled in the United States, Mrs Kelly advised that she would progress the matter and revert to the Member outside the meeting.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 13 November 2025.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/203/2025:

**OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – AUTISM
FRIENDLY TOWNS**

Read:

Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Officer Report on Notice of Motion – Autism Friendly Towns. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs McClean presented the Report, noting that the Motion had been discussed at the Council's Equality & Good Relations Group on 8 October 2025, where Members were supportive as outlined in section 3.1 of the Officers' Report.

Councillor Howie proposed the Motion, spoke in support, thanked Officers for their work, and highlighted Alliance's commitment to inclusion.

Councillor Byrne also spoke in support and proposed to accept the recommendations.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to note that following discussion at the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group on 8 October, Members of the Reference Group were supportive of the Notice of Motion. Members agreed to progress the actions set out in the notice of motion, and consideration be given to the following:

- **Autism Initiative NI be contacted by the ERT Directorate to determine if there is updated training, guidance or funding for the Autism Friendly Towns Initiative.**

- **The proposal to establish a Disability Forum be referred to the Community Planning Partnership for consideration.**

SPR/204/2025: PERFORMANCE S95

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Performance S95. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne presented the 2025/26 Section 95 Audit and Assessment Report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office, noted they had issued an unqualified opinion and confirmed that the Council had met its performance duties, including the 2024/25 assessment and 2025/26 plan. He advised that one improvement had been proposed i.e. that future self-assessments should report only on performance improvement measures. He further confirmed that a report would be brought to Members and management early in the New Year on reporting arrangements.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor C King, the Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment Report 2025-26 was agreed.**

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor C King that Item 7 be held in open session.

SPR/205/2025: CAR PARKING CHARGES – ST PATRICKS DAY

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Car Parking Charges – St Patricks Day. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage outlined that Council operated six annual non-charge days for off-street pay-and-display car parks, inherited from DFI. He noted that DFI had agreed to recognise St Patrick's Day as a non-charge day and to amend legislation accordingly. He added that to ensure consistency and avoid confusion, the Report sought approval to designate St Patrick's Day as a non-charge day for Council-operated off-street car parks.

Councillor C King welcomed the proposal, noting that it aligned St Patrick's Day with other statutory public holidays and acknowledged the Minister for Infrastructure for setting the direction that enabled this. The proposal was seconded by Councillor A King.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to designate St Patricks Day as a new, non-chargeable day for all Council operated pay-and-display off-street car parks, commencing 2026.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded**

by Councillor A King, 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 Lewis, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/206/2025: **PROPOSED LEASE MONAGHAN ROW, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Proposed Lease Monaghan Row, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Byrne to renew the lease at Monaghan Row until end of March 2026. It was also agreed that a Report is brought back to February SP&R Committee detailing options for relocation of staff going forward.

SPR/207/2025: **CAPITAL PROJECT EXTENSION OF STRUELL CEMETERY**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Capital Project Extension of Struell Cemetery. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to approve the recommendations contained within the business case as attached at Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report.

SPR/208/2025: **FLEET TECHNOLOGY BUSINESS CASE**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Fleet Technology Business Case. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the business case to procure Fleet Safety Technology systems for Council fleet as detailed within the

Officer's Report. It was noted that Councillors had raised queries regarding discussions with Trade Unions with the agreement that a Report would be brought back prior to implementation.

SPR/209/2025:

LANDS AT SHRIGLEY

Read:

Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Lands at Shrigley. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the recommendation of the SFWG meeting held on 18 November 2025 to proceed with Option One as set out in the Officer's Report.

SPR/210/2025:

TYRELLA BEACH AMENITY BUILDING

Read:

Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects and Procurement, regarding Tyrella Beach Amenity Building. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to approve the additional spend as detailed within the Officer's Report and to update the Council's Capital Plan to reflect the change.

SPR/211/2025:

BALLYNAHINCH SQUARE

Read:

Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects, regarding Ballynahinch Square. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to accept the bid as outlined within the Officer's Report and proceed with the sale of the site.

SPR/212/2025:

**REVISED TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR COUNCILLORS
EQUALITY & GOOD RELATIONS REFERENCE GROUP**

Read:

Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Revised Terms of Reference for Councillors Equality & Good Relations Reference Group. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, the revised Terms of Reference of the Councillors Equality & Good Relations Reference Group were agreed.

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

SPR/213/2025: PRUDENTIAL INDICATORS & TREASURY MANAGEMENT UPDATE QUARTER 2 2025/26

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Prudential Indicators and Treasury Management Update Quarter 2 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to note the quarter 2 25/26 Prudential Indicator and Treasury Management update.**

Councillors O'Hare and Howie left the meeting during above discussion – 07:14pm and 07:16pm respectively.

FOR NOTING

SPR/214/2025: PLANNING UPDATE

Read: Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration, regarding Planning Update. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly presented the Report which provided an update on the Local Development Plan, enforcement and recruitment.

Councillor Byrne raised concerns regarding performance in relation to deadlines not being adhered to.

In response to his request for an update on Higher Level Apprenticeships, Mr McGilly confirmed that interviews had taken place, a candidate had been selected and a reserve list compiled.

Councillor Byrne requested a Report in January on the resource implications of the HLA reserve list to assess whether additional staff could be recruited into the Planning Department. Mr Mallon advised that this timeframe was not suitable due to decisions being required prior to course enrolment and confirmed that engagement would take place with Members outside the meeting.

Councillor Reilly expressed disappointment at responses from NI Water representatives at the recent Special Council meeting, noting they were unable to provide assurance that capacity would be increased to enable development. He stated his understanding that NI Water considered homes or businesses vacant for five years as new applications, thereby hindering development, and proposed writing to the Northern Ireland Executive to seek clarification on NI Water making unilateral decisions on planning grounds. This was seconded by Councillor Lewis.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to note the update.

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, to write to the Northern Ireland Executive to seek clarification on NI Water making unilateral decisions on planning grounds.

SPR/215/2025: **LETTER FROM THE DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES SUB-0772-2025**

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

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Taylor regarding a review of legislative compliance from the Council, Mrs Kelly advised that the matter was for noting only and that a Report would be brought back to the Committee in the New Year. She added that, as the issue was subject to Judicial Review, it was prudent to make no further comment at this time.

Councillors Howie and Howell concurred, emphasising the importance of awaiting the outcome of legal proceedings before any action was taken by Council.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to note the correspondence.

Although not on the agenda, Councillor Reilly reported constituent concerns regarding the Kilkeel Christmas tree lights. Mr Sage noted that several trees across the District had been damaged due to anti-social behaviour and undertook to gather further information on the Kilkeel tree and revert to Councillor Reilly outside the meeting.

Councillor McAteer offered a farewell to Mrs J. Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, thanked her for her dedicated service to the Council and wished her well for the future.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.37pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 12 January 2026.

Signed: Councillor Declan McAteer
Deputy Chairperson

Signed: Josephine Kelly
Director of Corporate Services