

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 22 January 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon

In Attendance in Chamber:

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor T Howie
Councillor A King	Councillor C King
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor M Rice

Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:

Councillor M Hearty	Councillor R Howell
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor H Reilly
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
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
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 E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms C McClean, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Ms A Robb, Assistant Director of Healthy Communities
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in Attendance
Via Teams:**

Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Health Living

SPR/001/2026:

APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

There were no apologies.

Councillor Hanlon took the opportunity to welcome Ms E. Kirk to her new post as Assistant Director of People and Legal.

SPR/002/2026:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/003/2026:

**ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES
MEETING HELD ON 11 DECEMBER 2025**

Read:

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

SPR/213/2025 – Planning update

In response to an enquiry from Councillor Reilly regarding the above item, Mr McGilly advised that officers were aware of the issues raised and a response from NI Water was awaited.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 December 2025.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/004/2026:

REGIONAL INNOVATION HUB QUB MOU

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Regional Innovation Hub, QUB MoU. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon presented the report and advised that approval was sought for the recommendations at section 3.1, relating to the proposed signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Queen's University in respect of the Regional Innovation Hub, a key pillar of the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD).

Councillor Byrne asked whether the MOU would provide scope for the Council to work more closely with Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT). Mr Mallon confirmed that opportunities existed through Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC), the strategic alliance with Louth, BRCD and any future partnership with Queen's University as its collaboration with DkIT developed.

In response to a query from Councillor McAteer regarding broadening engagement to include institutions such as Dublin City University, Mr Mallon advised that DCU was already a DBEC partner, working closely with Queen's University and maintaining partnerships and MOUs with universities across the island.

Councillor McAteer also sought clarification on the potential impact of the Judicial Review relating to the Newry Civic and Regional Hub. Mr Mallon advised that the Council was not in a position to comment on the Judicial Review, which was scheduled to be heard in March 2026.

Councillor Reilly highlighted the extensive collaborative work between the East Border Region and several universities in the field of life sciences and suggested that engagement be explored.

Councillor Reilly further expressed concern regarding the proposed location of the Regional

Innovation Hub within the Newry Civic and Regional Hub, given the possibility that the project might not receive approval to proceed, and suggested that a contingency location be identified.

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to note the update on the development of a Regional Innovation Hub and approve the establishment of a MoU with Queen's University to promote further co-operation and collaboration between Queen's and NMDDC.

SPR/005/2026:

DFI GREENWAYS OFFER OF FUNDING

Read:

Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding DFI Greenways Offer of Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon outlined the report and advised that approval was sought for 50% match funding, with the remaining 50% to be provided by Department for Infrastructure (DfI) as set out in section 4.1. He confirmed that approval was also sought to accept the DfI Letter of Offer and the Business Case, and to appoint consultants from the Belfast City Deal Framework to undertake feasibility and design work for the three Greenways.

Councillor King proposed to accept the officer's recommendation, noting that Greenways were a valuable asset for the District and referred to the success of the Newry to Omeath Greenway.

Councillor Howie seconded the proposal stating that Greenways encouraged and promoted green spaces and emphasised the importance of community engagement.

Councillor McAteer also welcomed the report, highlighting the tourism benefits and wider opportunities associated with Greenways.

In response to a query from Councillor Byrne regarding whether the £90,000 represented additional capital, Mr Mallon confirmed that it did not and advised that, if approved, the project would be added to the capital programme.

Councillor Bowsie expressed support for Greenways but raised an issue regarding a footpath between Crossgar and Saintfield. Councillor Hanlon advised that this matter was not on the agenda and should be raised with officers outside the meeting.

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly regarding the definition of a Greenway, Mr Mallon advised that DfI defined Greenways as strategic routes providing safe off-road walking and cycling opportunities as part of a wider active travel network linking communities, workplaces and leisure facilities.

Councillor Hanlon requested that this definition be circulated to all Members.

Councillor Bowsie referred to the proposed Ballynahinch Spur Greenway, noting that the Ballynahinch bypass would run through the old railway corridor and that early engagement with the DfI design team would therefore be required.

AGREED:

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

- That Council approve capital match funding for this project with a contribution over 2 years including as set out in section 4.1.
- That Council accept the DFI Letter of Offer for the 3 projects: Newry to Poyntzpass Greenway (Newry Canal Towpath), Downpatrick to Ardglass Greenway and Ballynahinch Spur Greenway (Saintfield to Ballynahinch).
- That Council approve the Business Case (attached), to appoint consultants from the Belfast City Deal Framework to look at the feasibility & design work for the 3 Greenways.

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 Rice, 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 C King, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/006/2026:

DAERA FUNDING – AIR QUALITY MONITORING EQUIPMENT

Read:

Report from Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director of Environment, presented by Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment, regarding DAERA funding for air quality equipment. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to note the report and approve the procurement and installation of the additional air quality monitor.

Councillor Andrews joined the meeting during above item – 6:30pm

SPR/007/2026:

CARLINGFORD GREENWAY FINAL FUNDING APPROVAL

Read:

Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding Carlingford Lough Greenway Northern Section 3 Final Funding Update. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, that Council note the Final Letter of Offer available to the project from the EU Interreg Programme, DFI Active Travel Blue / Green Fund and the Shared Islands Fund; and the Final agreed Business Case for the Project works on the Northern Section.

SPR/008/2026:

DONARD PARK WORKS

Read:

Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding Donard Park Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Howie, to approve the appointment of contractors for the installation of automated barriers and lighting infrastructure at Donard Park in line with Council procurement policies; and the required capital budget for delivery of the works as set out in the officer's report.

SPR/009/2026:

LEISURE CENTRE CAPITAL WORKS

Read:

Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities, presented by Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Healthy Living regarding Leisure Centre Capital Works. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to proceed with the capital works in line with Council procurement policies and approve the required capital budget for delivery of the works as set out in the officer's report.

SPR/010/2026:

ANNALONG COMMUNITY CENTRE – CONTRACTOR PROCUREMENT AND APPOINTMENT

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Services, regarding Community Centre Works. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Reilly, to procure and appoint a contractor to undertake the required works as outlined in the officer's report.**

SPR/011/2026: **KILKEEL TOWN HALL**

Read: Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects, regarding Disposal of Kilkeel Town Hall. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, to defer this item to be tabled at a future Committee meeting.**

SPR/012/2026: **COLLECTING TOGETHER: COMMUNITIES AS CURATORS PROJECT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Collecting Together: Communities as Curators Project. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to approve:**

- The Letter of Offer from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation for its Collecting Together: Communities as Curators project**
- The recruitment of a funded part-time project officer to support the project.**
- The implementation of the project including any necessary procurements.**

SPR/013/2026: **PEACEPLUS STAFF RECRUITMENT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding PEACEPLUS Staff Recruitment. (**Copy circulated**)

AGREED: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, to approve, under the ERT Department, AONB and Geo Park Structure, the creation of an additional post and associated recruitment for one FTE staff resource to deliver the associated PeatPlus project actions.**

SPR/014/2026:

LEASE OF THE GENERATOR HOUSE, NEWCASTLE HARBOUR

Read:

Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Lease of the Generator House, Newcastle Harbour. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to extend the term of the lease as outlined in the officer's report to 33 years from 1st September 2023, subject to Departmental Consent.

SPR/015/2026:

RENEWAL OF LEASE FOR CAR PARK AT GREENBANK, NEWRY

Read:

Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Lease of Car Park at Greenbank Industrial Estate, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to enter into a further lease of the Lands with the party named for a term of 3 years subject to the rent set out in the officer's report.

SPR/016/2026:

SURRENDER OF LEASE AT MAIN AVENUE, NEWRY

Read:

Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Surrender of Lease of lands at Main Avenue, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to permit the Club named in the officer's report to surrender the sub-lease in respect of the Lands at Main Avenue, Newry.

SPR/017/2026:

ACQUISITION OF LAND AT CAMLOUGH LAKE

Read:

Report from Mrs C McClean, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Proposed Acquisition of Land adjacent to Camlough Lake. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to purchase the Lands shown on Map 2 outlined in green from the Private Landowner referred to in the officer's report at the purchase values quoted, subject to retention of right of way.

SPR/018/2026:

EXTENSION OF IT CONTRACT

Read:

Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance and Performance, regarding Finance & Performance – IT Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, to extend the current contract for Performance Management System for a one-year license period; and to recontract the Purchase to Pay system via the G-Cloud for a 2-year license period.

SPR/019/2026:

CAPITAL WORKS DUNLEATH PARK

Read:

Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director of Healthy Living, regarding Capital Works Dunleath Park. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor A King, to approve the submission of a grant funding application; the required Council match-funding; and the appointment of a contractor for the delivery of Capital Works at Dunleath Park as set out in the officer's report.

SPR/020/2026:

KILBRONEY CAFÉ AND CASTLEWELLAN FOREST PARK

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding Syngé and Byrne Abbey Limited Agreements for Kilbroney Café and Castlewellan Forest Park. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Rice, to grant a Deed of Variation and Novation Agreement in relation to Kilbroney Café and Castlewellan Forest Park and to agree the proposed repayment plan.

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Rice that the Chief Executive contact all Members of Council to advise agreement had been sought and given at SPR Committee held on 22 January 2026 and if full agreement from all Members is forthcoming the Chief Executive can proceed to engage with the company.

FOR NOTING

SPR/021/2026:

STATUTORY REPORTING - SECTION 75 POLICY
SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR
PERIOD OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2025

Read:

Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Statutory reporting - Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2025.
(Copy circulated)

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the report.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.10pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 February 2026.

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**
Chairperson

Signed: **Marie Ward**
Chief Executive