

## **NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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### **Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 May 2026 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 M Hearty	Councillor T Howie
Councillor A King	Councillor C King
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor H Reilly

**Committee Members in  
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor R Howell
Councillor M Rice	Councillor D Taylor

**Non-Committee  
Members In Attendance  
via Teams:**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor G Hanna
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**Officials in Attendance  
in Chamber:**

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism  
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities  
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance  
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living  
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People  
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Community Development  
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager  
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability  
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance  
via Teams:**

Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director Economy, Growth & Tourism

**SPR/068/2026:**

**APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS**

An apology was received from Councillor O'Hare, and also from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive; Mrs Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment and Mr Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital, Estates & Procurement.

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. She asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

**SPR/069/2026:**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

**SPR/070/2026: ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2026**

**Read:** Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 23 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 23 April 2026.**

**FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION**

**SPR/071/2026: LDP REVISED TIMETABLE**

**Read:** Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director: Regeneration, regarding LDP Revised Timetable. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly advised that the paper provided an update on the progress of the Local Development Plan in line with the current timetable, along with a revised timetable for future stages. He explained that the legislative framework required the timetable to be updated to reflect changing circumstances, noting that the last revision had taken place in 2023, and that the report outlined the key actions taken to date.

In proposing the report, Councillor McAteer queried the additional time that had been added to the proposed timeline, stating that he believed it had originally proposed in 2029 and now a further 2 years had been added to the timeline.

Mr McGilly explained that the main uncertainty related to the Public Examination stage, which would be managed by the Department, making it very difficult to accurately predict timescales. He noted that the revised timetable had been based on the experiences of other councils that had already progressed through the same process, and that the timetable required revision to reflect these uncertainties and the statutory procedures that had to be followed at each stage, as outlined within the report. He confirmed that the proposed timetable represented a realistic approach.

Councillor McAteer stated that he believed the processes needed to be improved at a legislative level and that public consultation should not be blamed for any further delays to the timetable, stating that representations should be made to improve the processing of the LDP.

Councillor Hanlon queried where Councillor McAteer would like to make representations.

Councillor McAteer stated that as the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) were the lead Department for LDP, representations should be made to them to consider the LDP development across the North, to consider what changes in legislation could be brought forward to improve the timeline of the LDP.

Mr McGilly explained that the two-tier process for developing the LDP had been set out through legislation and was therefore required to be followed, noting that concerns around the process had been raised through the Planning Performance Improvement Forum with the

Department, and that work was ongoing to review the issue. He noted that all councils were at different stages of the process, which made any changes difficult to implement consistently.

Mr McGilly acknowledged that the process was cumbersome but emphasised that it was a statutory process Councils were required to undertake. Referring to comments made by another officer, he said there was a view that more could potentially be done to improve the process, although this would need to happen above Council level rather than within Councils themselves and suggested that the issue could be raised further through the Planning Performance Improvement Forum.

Councillor McAteer proposed to write to the Planning Performance Improvement Forum and ask them to consider the LDP development across the North and examine what legislative changes could be introduced to improve and shorten the LDP timeline.

This was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hearty, the following was agreed:**

- **The draft revised timetable at Appendix A.**
- **That following approval by resolution of the Council, the Planning Department liaises with the PAC prior to submitting the revised Timetable to the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) for agreement.**
- **That following agreement of the revised Timetable by DFI, that it be made available and published in accordance with regulation 8 of the Planning (Local Development Plan) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.**

**It was also agreed, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Reilly, 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.**

**SPR/072/2026:**

**PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2026/27**

**Read:**

Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance & Performance, regarding Performance Improvement Plan 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne explained that the draft plan had been tabled at January's Committee and had been followed by a nine-week consultation period. He advised that feedback received during the consultation process was outlined in Appendix 2 of the report, and that page 5 contained a table detailing the amendments made between the draft and final versions.

In proposing the report, Councillor Reilly queried whether all cleansing staff had completed the required training for working at busy roadsides, noting that littering was a worsening problem that needed addressed.

Mr Sage confirmed that 5 courses of the Lantra Temporary Traffic Management course had been completed and advised that all required staff would be fully trained by the end of June 2026. He also advised that Mrs Murphy was considering options where litter issues had been raised and an update would be tabled in due course.

Councillor Mathers stated that his Party was contacted daily about littering and that communities were now addressing the issue themselves. He requested a clear timeline when Council staff would be able to commence the litter picking in the problem areas.

Councillor Mathers also noted that the backlog in planning applications had not improved and queried whether it was now time to bring in a temporary resource to deal with the backlog as applicants were getting frustrated at delays over issues such as Bat Surveys not being requested when an application was submitted

Mr Mallon advised that a report was tabled at SPR, Audit and Planning Committee each quarter that detailed the challenges around recruitment and retention, noting that a paper had been tabled in closed session later on the agenda and further proposals would be tabled in the coming months regarding the Planning Department. He advised that Bat surveys were under the remit of the applicant and were also seasonal therefore should the applicant have missed the seasonal window, there would be a delay to the application and that this was outside of Council control. He advised that Bat Surveys were then shared with NIEA for consideration as a statutory consultee.

Councillor Howie noted the issues raised by constituents were fly tipping and dog fouling and requested that Council consider how enforcement targets could be met in this area.

Councillor McAteer stated that fly tipping was a cause for concern in his area, noting that Council should consider monitoring the known hotspot areas utilising the same measures other councils used, such as solar powered CCTV. He further noted that Bat Surveys did cause problems for applicants, but all applications received should be scanned for required surveys before being validated and the applicant made aware that one was required.

Councillor Hanlon advised Councillor McAteer that Councillor C King had tabled a motion regarding solar powered CCTV which was being progressed through the appropriate committee and requested that officers provide an update to Councillor McAteer on the matter.

Mr McGilly confirmed that a report would be tabled at a subsequent meeting regarding planning proposals, noted that the Planning Committee were aware of the implementation of Validation Checklists and that these would stop applications being validated that did not have all the required documentation.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Howie, the Performance Improvement Plan 2026-27 (including the five performance improvement objectives), Consultation and Engagement Report 2026-27 and Objective Delivery Plans 2026-27 were agreed.**

**SPR/073/2026:** **CULLYHANNA COMMUNITY CENTRE**

**Read:** Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director: Community Development, regarding Cullyhanna Community Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Robb stated that the report sought approval to appoint a contractor to replace the roof at Cullyhanna Community Centre following weather-related damage and water ingress that had temporarily closed the facility earlier in the year. Although the centre had reopened, she explained that a full roof replacement and some internal works were required to extend the building's lifespan and advised that the works would likely take place over the summer for an estimated eight to twelve weeks, with engagement taking place with the Community Association regarding disruption and support measures for lost income during the closure period.

In proposing the report, Councillor Hearty welcomed the investment as the centre was a well utilised resource for the area.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Hearty, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of a contractor to replace the roof at Cullyhanna Community Centre as detailed within the report.**

**SPR/074/2026:** **CHANGING PAVILION AT MILLTOWN, WARRENPOINT**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director: Healthy Living, regarding Changing Pavilion at Milltown, Warrenpoint. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Haughey stated that the report sought members' approval, as outlined in Section 3, to procure and appoint a contractor to replace the changing pavilion at the sports facility in Milltown in line with the approved capital budget presented to the recent Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG) on 7 May 2026.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of a contractor for the replacement of the existing changing pavilion at Milltown, Warrenpoint, with a new modular facility, ensuring compliance with health and safety standards and supporting continued use of the site by local sports clubs.**

**SPR/075/2026:** **FITNESS EQUIPMENT – KILKEEL LEISURE CENTRE**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director: Healthy Living, regarding Fitness Equipment – Kilkeel Leisure Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Haughey stated that the report sought members' approval, as outlined in Section 3 of the report, to purchase gym equipment for the refurbished Kilkeel Leisure Centre through the council's current framework supplier, as agreed at a recent SFWG meeting.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor C King, it was agreed to approve the**

**purchase of fitness equipment for Kilkeel Leisure Centre as detailed within the report.**

**SPR/076/2026: CRANFIELD SEA DEFENCES**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Cranfield Sea Defences. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon explained that the report, which had also been tabled at a recent SFWG meeting, related to damage caused at Cranfield during Storm Bram in December 2025. He stated that a technical note had been completed to provide direction on the required repair works and to identify the processes and reports needed to secure ASSI assent from the NIEA. He advised that the report recommended approval of the capital programme and budget to progress the Cranfield Sea Defences project, along with progression of the necessary ICT appointments.

In proposing the report, Councillor Reilly highlighted his disappointment that NIEA had refused permission to repair the damaged sea defences when the existing footprint would not be expanded and the work was urgently needed. He queried whether any responses had been received regarding his motion related to coastal erosion given that Council was to bear the cost of the additional workload required when funding was available from Central Government in other areas.

Councillor Hanlon advised that officers would revert to Councillor Reilly regarding his query.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the provision in the capital programme a budget to progress the Cranfield Sea Defences project and progress with ICT appointment.**

**SPR/077/2026: MEMBERSHIP OF ULSTER SCOTS ULSTER BRITISH WORKING GROUP**

**Read:** Report from Mrs E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People, regarding Membership of Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kirk explained that it had previously been agreed to establish an Ulster Scots/Ulster British Working Group, with the title and Terms of Reference (ToR) to be confirmed at its first meeting. She stated that, at the Group Party Leaders' meeting on 5 March, it had been agreed to recommend membership arrangements based on the council's Irish Language Strategy Cross-Party Working Group, which was listed in section 2.1 of the report and that officers were seeking approval to progress on that basis.

Councillor Reilly noted his Party had concerns regarding the proposed membership and would only reluctantly accept the make-up of the Working Group. He noted that the Irish Language Working Group had a large remit and budget, which the Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group had yet to build, and stated he believed it would be better served by allowing any interested Councillor to attend. He stated he did not believe anyone with a Nationalist background would want to promote the Ulster Scots Ulster British identity and queried whether Council would permit his Party to have two Members of the working group.

Councillor Hanlon confirmed that the ToR would be determined at the first meeting of the working group, along with confirming the preferred name of the working group.

Councillor Lewis wished to reiterate Councillor Reilly's point, noting that the Ulster Scots Ulster British identity was primarily represented by two Party's within Council and in order to give the working group as much credibility as possible, it would be ideal if Unionist Parties were given more than one seat each. He confirmed that, as alluded to, should the membership be an item to be agreed by the working group then he was content to discuss the issue at the working group.

Councillor Hanlon noted that the DUP were to be Chairperson of Council in the coming year and would have two seats for the next year, but requested Ms Kirk clarify the issue.

Ms Kirk advised that, in line with other established working groups, the first meeting would be to agree the ToR and membership of the working group.

Councillor Taylor welcomed the establishment of the working group, stating he believed it should have been in place long ago. He expressed his hope that the working group would be an effective group and Council would support the ideas of the group regarding Ulster Scots and Ulster British identity and culture, and that the ToR and membership could be agreed at a meeting that should be arranged in the coming days.

Councillor Hanlon encouraged all interested members to attend the first meeting to enable the membership and ToR to be agreed but advised that a meeting would not be arranged until June as the minutes would need to be ratified at full Council on 1 June 2026.

**Cllr Byrne left the meeting at this stage – 6.24pm**

Councillor Bowsie welcomed the report, and queried whether the make-up of the Ulster Scots Ulster British Working Group could reflect the Equality and Good Relations Reference Group.

Ms Kirk advised that the paper was to note the recommendation made by Party Leaders and reiterated that both make-up of the working group and ToR would be agreed at the working group's first meeting.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to note the recommendation of the Party Leaders meeting on 5 March 2026, and that the membership of the Ulster Scots Ulster British Working group be the same allocation as that of the Councillor's Irish Language Strategy Cross Party Working Group.**

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

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor A King, 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 Lewis, 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/078/2026: DISPOSAL OF LAND AT ANNALONG**

**Read:** Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director: Legal & People, regarding Disposal of Lands at Annalong. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to accept a surrender of the Lease from the tenants and grant a new lease to the existing tenants of the land outlined in magenta and green on the map attached to the officer's report for a term of 99 years from 2026 at a peppercorn rent subject to revised Departmental Consent.**

**SPR/079/2026: PLANNING – PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Planning – Professional Support. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to approve the engagement of the Professional Planning support to the Development Management Team for 1-2 days support per week over an initial period of 6 months.**

**SPR/080/2026: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS FOR IT SOLUTIONS**

**Read:** Report from Ms G Ringland, IT Manager, regarding Direct Award Contracts for IT Solutions. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the continuation of use of the DAC process for the contracts at Appendix 1 until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2030 in order to enable continued use of existing solutions which are deeply embedded into operational practices.**

**SPR/081/2026: ADDITIONAL VOLUNTARY CONTRIBUTIONS (AVCs)**

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

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to approve the re-contracting of the AVC provider via the Portsmouth Framework for a period of 36 months, with the option to extend for a further 12 months. The proposal delivers a net saving to the Council and to officers who avail of the scheme.**

**SPR/082/2026: RELEASE OF EASEMENT AT DAISY HILL, NEWRY**

**Read:** Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Release of Easement at Daisy Hill, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed release the Easement detailed in the officer's report for the market value.**

**SPR/083/2026: REQUEST FOR WAYLEAVE AT MARKET STREET CAR PARK, DOWNPATRICK**

**Read:** Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Request for Wayleave at Market Street Car Park, Downpatrick. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to enter into a Wayleave Agreement with Northern Ireland Electricity Networks over the lands known as Market Street Car Park, Downpatrick.**

**SPR/084/2026: LICENCE AT FORESHORE BLOODYBRIDGE NEWCASTLE FOR BIRD SURVEY**

**Read:** Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Licence for Bird Survey at Foreshore at Bloody Bridge, Newcastle. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to grant the British Trust for Ornithology a licence permitting them to carry out a survey of the Kittiwakes from May 2026 until September 2026 and then again from May 2027 to September 2027 in respect of a strip of the foreshore at the Bloody Bridge,**

**Newcastle, subject to the consent of the Crown Estate.**

**SPR/085/2026: LICENCE FOR GLENREE HOUSE**

**Read:** Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Licence for Glenree House. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed to sign and seal the licence with the Department of Finance for the occupation of premises at Glenree House, Springhill Road, Newry as detailed on the map shaded grey attached to the officer's report for the amount detailed in the report, together with the accompanying Licence for Works to facilitate preparation for Council occupancy.**

**SPR/086/2026: FLEET REPLACEMENT PROGRAMME 2026/27**

**Read:** Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, presented by Mr C Sgae, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Fleet Replacement Programme 2026/27. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Hearty, it was agreed to approve the Fleet Replacement Programme 2026 – 27.**

**SPR/087/2026: CAMLOUGH LAKE RECREATIONAL HUB**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital, Estates & Procurement, presented by Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Camlough Lake Recreational Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to progress the appointment of the preferred contractor (supplier 4) to deliver the Camlough Lake Recreational Hub Facility subject to the completion of standstill period.**

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

**SPR/088/2026: SFWG MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 7 MAY 2026**

**Read:** SFWG Minutes of Meeting held 7 May 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the minutes.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.26pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 1 June 2026.

**Signed:**

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**Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**  
**Chairperson**

**Signed:**

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**Marie Ward**  
**Chief Executive**