NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 13 August 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair:	Councillor C Bowsie	
In Attendance in Chamber:	Councillor P Byrne	Councillor O Hanlon
	Councillor T Howie	Councillor A King
	Councillor C King	Councillor A Mathers
	Councillor D McAteer	Councillor H Reilly
	Councillor M Rice	Councillor J Truesdale
Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:	Councillor M Hearty	Councillor R Howell
	Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Taylor
Non-Committee Members in Attendance in Camber:	Councillor T Andrews	
Non-Committee Members in Attendance in via Teams:	Councillor A Quinn	

Officials in Attendance in Chamber:
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Ms A Jones, Director of Corporate Services
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director Legal & People
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Engagement
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Ms J Tierney, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mr C Smyth, Democratic Services Officer

Officials in attendance via Teams: Ms C Hughes, Head of Performance & Improvement

SPR/108/2026: **<u>APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS</u>**

Apologies were received from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, and Mrs Sinead Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment.

Councillor Bowsie took the opportunity to welcome Ms Jones to her role as Director of Corporate Services.

SPR/109/2026: **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest

SPR/110/2026: **ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 11 JUNE 2026**

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 11 June 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 11 June 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/111/2026: **OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION: ALL-ISLAND CITIZENS ASSEMBLY**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Officer Report on Notice of Motion: All-Island Citizens Assembly. (Copy circulated)

Councillor Quinn spoke of her pride at bringing the motion as a young woman from South Armagh, noting that her generation had grown up in the context of partition and the Good Friday Agreement. She said there was increasing discussion about Irish unity across all communities and emphasised the need for planning, preparation and inclusive dialogue to ensure that any future constitutional change worked for everyone.

She highlighted the aspirations of young people, farmers and workers for greater opportunity, improved services and economic security, stating that preparation was essential ahead of any future unity referendum. In response to concerns about costs, she noted that the Council had re-established the New Ireland Working Group, with an action plan already in place to support dialogue on constitutional issues and to engage with both supporters and opponents of Irish unity.

Councillor Reilly said he was opposed to the motion, stating that, while there may have been discussions about the constitutional future of the island, constituents he worked with, many within the Catholic, nationalist community, were content with the existing constitutional settlement and the benefits of being part of the United Kingdom. He expressed concern that Council funds could be used for what he considered to be a political and partisan proposal, which he believed could conflict with local government legislation. He reaffirmed his support for maintaining Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom and said that the existing constitutional settlement allowed people to express and celebrate their Irish identity and culture, citing examples such as the Belfast Fleadh. He reiterated his objection to the motion and stated that he wished to request a recorded vote on the matter.

Councillor Taylor said he strongly opposed the motion as a committed Unionist, arguing that there was no evidence of growing support for constitutional change in Northern Ireland and that polling continued to indicate majority support for remaining within the United Kingdom. He stated that the provisions of the Good Friday Agreement provided for a border poll where sufficient evidence existed but confirmed that he did not believe that such circumstances currently existed. He said Council representatives should instead focus on issues that directly affected residents and expressed concern that the New Ireland Working Group and the motion could alienate the Unionist community. He emphasised that the Council should serve all citizens of Newry, Mourne and Down and work together on matters affecting the wider community and that Council officials should consider the implications of progressing work on constitutional matters and confirmed that he would not support the motion.

Councillor Byrne said he supported the motion and argued that, regardless of differing views on constitutional change, the Council had a responsibility to engage with its communities and prepare for any potential future changes. He said discussions through the New Ireland Working Group could address practical issues such as service duplication, infrastructure, healthcare and the wider all-island economy, noting the Council's involvement in the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC). He disagreed with Councillor Taylor's view that the conditions for a border poll were clearly defined in the Good Friday Agreement, arguing that the criteria were vague and left significant discretion to the Secretary of State. He said greater clarity was needed on what circumstances should trigger a poll and suggested that these criteria should be developed through democratic discussion across the island rather than determined solely by the UK Government.

Councillor Byrne supported the use of Citizens' Assemblies and other forums for discussion but said that stronger structures were needed to progress the work and therefore proposed an amendment to the motion as follows as a fourth bullet point:

"to write to the Irish Government to request that they establish a Ministry for a New Ireland, with a dedicated Minister to lead and advance discussions on the island's future"

This was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

Councillor Quinn accepted the amendment.

Councillor Reilly said that a similar proposal had previously been defeated in the Irish Parliament and therefore questioned the value of discussing the matter at Council level. He also raised concerns regarding the officer's assessment of the motion's potential equality and good relations implications, arguing that, from a unionist perspective, the proposal was clearly contentious and questioned the officer's conclusion that it was not likely to have an adverse effect on equality of opportunity or good relations.

Ms Kirk clarified that, when the report had been prepared, no equality issues had arisen. She noted that any decision taken by Council would subsequently be subject to equality screening where necessary, in accordance with the Council's ongoing obligations.

Councillor McAteer said he supported the motion, acknowledging that the issue could be controversial for Unionist parties. He argued that the Council had a responsibility to engage with the debate on the island's future, particularly in the interests of future generations, and said that increasing economic and social integration across Ireland made such discussions necessary. He emphasised that any potential constitutional change would be complex and required careful preparation rather than simplistic debate. Referring to Brexit, he said that inadequate preparation had resulted in difficulties afterwards and argued that similar issues should be avoided in relation to any future border poll and he therefore considered the motion necessary and was fully supportive of it.

Councillor King stated that there was an ongoing conversation about Irish unity and argued that a younger generation was seeking change and different approaches to housing, health and education. He questioned why there should be reluctance to engage with the debate when such discussions were taking place across the island. He referred to recent events such as the Belfast Féile and Belfast Fleadh that had brought people from different backgrounds together and said these demonstrated a growing sense of togetherness and an openness to alternative approaches.

Councillor Bowsie stated that conflating the Fleadh with Irish unity did a disservice to the event. He sought clarification from Councillor Quinn on what the motion would require the Council to do, particularly regarding listening to the views of residents across the district. He noted that the New Ireland Working Group was already directing Council officers to undertake work relating to Irish unity and expressed concern about the resources being devoted to what he considered to be politically motivated research, particularly given that no date had been set for a border poll.

Councillor Quinn clarified that she was not proposing any new structures or additional costs arising from the motion, rather that any research or associated work could be undertaken through the existing New Ireland Working Group, which was open to all Members.

Councillor Taylor assured Councillor King that there was also a younger generation committed to sustaining and protecting the Union and stated that support for the Union would not be relinquished easily.

Councillor Byrne clarified that the motion was not intended to direct Council officers to undertake politically charged work, but rather to ensure that the views of residents were sought. He said that residents would be able to express support, opposition or any other view on the work of the New Ireland Working Group, without being directed towards a particular position. He emphasised that the Council should use its existing engagement mechanisms, including NMD Speak, to consult residents on matters being considered by the Council and to ensure that their views were heard.

Councillor Bowsie said that, although neither he and his Party had attended the New Ireland Working Group, he had read the associated report and noted that Council officers had been asked to undertake research into planning and preparing for Irish unity, which he did not consider to be an appropriate role for Council officers or for local government.

Councillor Andrews said he had attended the New Ireland Working Group meeting and emphasised the importance of open debate and hearing different opinions. He expressed his appreciation for Council officers, noting their professionalism and commitment to delivering work on behalf of the Council.

Ms Kirk outlined two actions arising from the discussions and requested clarification from Members, those being the writing of a letter as set out in the report, with the proposed amendment adding a fourth point calling for the establishment of a Ministry for a New Ireland; and consideration by Members of the next steps regarding engagement with residents, which could have resource implications. She sought clarification on whether the proposed engagement with residents was to be taken forward through the existing New Ireland Working Group and sought clarification on the points discussed during the debate that the final sentence was to be removed from the motion.

Councillor Quinn confirmed that any actions could be taken forward through the New Ireland Working Group and all other points were to remain as part of the motion. Regarding cost implementation, Councillor Quinn clarified that she did not anticipate any additional costs arising from the motion, stating that any work undertaken by the Council in relation to the motion would be linked to the existing New Ireland Working Group and that the motion did not specify any separate work or associated expenditure. She reiterated that the purpose was to ensure that the views of residents were heard, and the motion would remain as stated with the agreed upon amendment.

Councillor Byrne said that motions were often broad in nature and established a position of the Council, with officers subsequently tasked with considering how they should be progressed. He argued that it was premature to specify the precise nature of any future engagement with residents, reiterating that existing mechanisms, including the New Ireland Working Group and NMD Speak, could be used to communicate with residents and seek their views. He said that the proposed engagement should therefore remain within the motion, with officers bringing a further report to Members on how it could be taken forward and what resources might be available and expressed concern that an Elected Member was requested to retract an element of a motion.

Ms Kirk clarified that she had not requested any elected Member to retract a statement, explaining that her question had been solely to clarify whether the New Ireland Working Group was intended to be the mechanism for progressing the proposed engagement with residents and to clarify her understanding of the agreed upon actions following the discussion.

Councillor Bowsie agreed with Ms Kirk’s clarification, stating that he did not believe she had asked any elected Member to retract their statements.

Councillor Byrne clarified that his statement related to an unrecorded discussion at the top table about what the next steps would be. He stated that, in his view, it was not necessary to determine the precise next steps before a motion could be agreed, as these could be considered and developed subsequently.

As there was dissent in the chamber, the amended motion was put to a recorded vote at the request of Councillor Reilly, the results of which were as follows:

FOR	10
AGAINST	3
ABSTENTION	2

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed that this Council notes the growing public discussion on the constitutional future of this island and recognises the provision within the Good Friday Agreement for the people of Ireland to decide that future through referendums. Accordingly, this Council agrees to write to the Office of An Taoiseach, urging the Irish Government to plan and prepare for Irish unity through the following actions:**

- **Establish an all-island Citizens' Assembly and a Joint Oireachtas Committee on Irish**
- **Unity;**
- **Produce and publish a plan towards Irish unity in conjunction with civic society and key**
- **stakeholders, including local government;**
- **Work to secure a date for a referendum on unity, as provided for in the Good Friday**
- **Agreement.**
- **Write to the Irish Government to request that they establish a Ministry for a New Ireland, with a dedicated Minister to lead and advance discussions on the island's future**

This Council further commits to ensuring that the voices of people across Newry, Mourne and Down are heard as part of this important conversation about the future of our island."

SPR/112/2026: **<u>BRCD TOURISM PROJECT – PROGRAMME BOARD</u>**

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, presented by Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding BRCD Tourism Project – Programme Board. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth outlined the report, advising that it provided an update on the BRCD Tourism Project and sought approval for the establishment of a project board to oversee its management, comprising seven elected Members as detailed in the report. She noted that a multidisciplinary team had been appointed in May following the April Strategy, Policy & Resources (SPR) Committee meeting and had since progressed the next steps identified at that meeting.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the proposed challenge fund for businesses but expressed disappointment that similar consideration had not been given to residents facing issues including traffic, parking, litter, anti-social behaviour, inadequate services and a lack of sustainable employment, arguing that addressing these basic issues would also help encourage visitors to remain in the area. She raised concerns about the proposed project board, noting that no Terms of Reference (ToR) had been provided and that previous ToR had been subject to repeated changes. She sought greater clarity on the roles and responsibilities of the different groups, escalation arrangements, meeting frequency, chairing arrangements and reporting to SPR Committee, warning that a lack of clarity could lead to confusion and duplication.

Councillor Truesdale then proposed that meetings of the project board should be recorded, noting previous difficulties with minutes and information not being provided to SPR in a timely manner. This was seconded by Councillor Howie.

Councillor Truesdale also raised concerns regarding transparency and access to project documentation. Referring to the Mourne Mountain Gateway Project, she questioned when a decision had been made not to include appendices relating to major capital projects in papers presented to SPR Committee for decision and asked whether this approach would be reconsidered to ensure greater transparency for the current project.

Councillor Byrne sought clarification from officers regarding the proposed establishment of the project board, stating that traditionally, the project board would first develop and agree its ToR, which would then be brought back to SPR for approval. He also acknowledged Councillor Truesdale's concerns about previous project boards and agreed that while improvements were needed, he emphasised that the role of a project board was to support officers in delivering an agreed capital project, rather than to revisit whether the project should proceed. He noted that Members could have differing views on aspects of a project while still working collectively to support its delivery.

Councillor Truesdale clarified that she was not seeking to set the ToR for the project board but wanted to ensure that lessons from previous arrangements were reflected in the new ToR, with greater openness and transparency. She emphasised that her role as an elected Member was to provide scrutiny, ask questions and seek clarification, particularly where she did not agree with aspects of a project, which she considered an important part of her role in considering any project or report brought before the Committee.

Mr Patterson confirmed that Councillor Byrne was correct that the proposed ToR for any programme board would be considered and agreed by the board at its first meeting and then brought back to the SPR Committee for approval.

Councillor Hanlon sought clarification on why programme board meetings were not currently recorded, noting that she had understood them to operate as working groups and had not been aware of any requirement for recording. She questioned whether agreeing to record this programme board would establish a precedent for recording other Council meetings. She also agreed with Councillor Byrne that the ToR should be established at the first meeting of the programme board. Referring to the Ulster-Scots Working Group as an example, she said that Members had recently agreed a process for developing its ToR and suggested that Members might be moving ahead of the established process by making decisions on these matters at this stage.

Mr Patterson clarified that programme board meetings could involve significant budget, risk, financial and commercially sensitive information for Members' consideration. However, he emphasised that any major decisions would still be brought back to the SPR Committee and to full Council for approval, citing an example of an investment decision between an outline business case (OBC) and full approval to appoint a contractor, noting that such decisions would return to the Committee and then proceed to full Council.

Councillor Reilly noted that a recent project board meeting had taken place at Newry Town Hall before works commenced on the Arts Centre and Town Hall, where the architects had explained the proposed works and sought Members' agreement, noting that there had been no facility to record that meeting. He expressed concern that the Alliance Party was creating the impression, through comments to the Council and local media, that there was a lack of transparency or an improper motive behind the project board process. He rejected this suggestion and stated that Members from across the political parties were working together in the interests of the District.

Councillor Bowsie sought clarification as to what Councillor Truesdale was proposing to be recorded, to which she confirmed it was solely audio.

Councillor Howie sought further clarification that any proposed ToR would be tabled at SPR for approval, to which Mr Patterson confirmed that was correct, as it outlined the layers of assurance and governance regarding programme boards.

Councillor Howie said that the questions being raised were intended to help ensure the project succeeded and that the funding delivered benefits for the district. She referred to concerns arising from the previous project, particularly regarding the recording and timely reporting of programme board discussions to SPR and said that lessons should be learned to improve transparency and oversight. She emphasised that Members had a responsibility to scrutinise projects and said that the questions were intended to help ensure the project was progressed effectively and transparently.

Councillor Howie also sought clarification on the engagement session held on 1 July, including its outcome, and asked how the planned community engagement in autumn 2026 would meaningfully inform the OBC, given that the OBC was due to return by the end of 2026 and the timeframe for incorporating community feedback appeared limited.

Mrs Smyth advised that the results of the business engagement event were not yet available, as the consultants were still compiling the information, however, early indications suggested that the event had been well received, with positive input from participating businesses and individuals. She said an update would be provided to Members at the first meeting of the new working group. In response to concerns about timescales, she explained that significant engagement would continue through the autumn and would be undertaken alongside preparation of the OBC. She confirmed that the consultants had structured the timetable to ensure that feedback from the engagement and consultation could be reflected in the OBC.

Councillor Bowsie noted that the Council's Audit Committee provided an opportunity for Members to scrutinise capital projects and the Corporate Risk Register. He referred to a previous report tabled at July's Audit Committee which indicated that Alliance Members had the lowest attendance at the Committee and suggested that this was an available forum for the scrutiny concerns being raised.

Councillor Hanlon said that the Committee risked becoming overly focused on procedural detail and emphasised the importance of maintaining a balance between scrutiny and progressing the project positively. Drawing on her experience of SPR and audit and governance matters, she said that lessons had been learned from the previous project, particularly regarding land ownership, and welcomed the early engagement undertaken by officers. She highlighted the significant funding being brought into the district and said that Members should focus on supporting the project while continuing to provide appropriate scrutiny. She welcomed the engagement with the business and community sectors and emphasised the potential for the project to deliver significant investment in tourism across Newry, Mourne and Down.

Councillor McAteer echoed Councillor Hanlon's comments, saying that the focus should remain on the significant investment coming into the district and ensuring that the funding was spent properly. He defended Council officers against criticism, noting that major public-sector projects required careful planning, scrutiny and a longer timescale than private-sector projects. He welcomed the proposed project board and considered the timescale positive, given the complexity of bringing together a number of projects across three areas, stating that officers were right to take a cautious approach to ensure that proposals were properly developed and scrutinised before being submitted for approval.

Councillor Truesdale clarified that her comments were intended as scrutiny rather than creating a conspiracy, stating that she remained supportive of the project. She confirmed that her Party had consistently supported the project because of its potential to spread economic benefits across the district. She reiterated her request for clarification on when and where the decision had been made not to attach appendices to capital projects brought before the Committee for decision and asked whether that approach would now be reversed.

Mr Patterson said he was unaware of any formal decision to stop attaching appendices to capital project reports. He explained that, where documents were particularly lengthy or included numerous appendices, they could instead be provided as background documents and made available to Members on request.

Councillor Bowsie sought confirmation from Councillor Truesdale that she was content with the assurances regarding ToR, to which she confirmed she was and withdrew her proposal.

Councillors Andrews and Bowsie spoke in support of the planned investment for their local areas.

Cllr Howell left the meeting at this stage – 7.03pm

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

- **To note the ongoing work in relation to the development of the BRCD Outline Business Case (OBC) and project timeline.**
- **To agree the establishment of a Project Board for the management of the BRCD Tourism Project with 7 Councillors and membership to be formed as follows – 2 Sinn Féin, 2 SDLP, 1 DUP, 1 Alliance, 1 UUP / Independent.**

SPR/113/2026: **ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE 2025/26**

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, presented by Ms C Hughes, Acting Head of Performance and Improvement, regarding Assessment of Performance 2025/26. (Copy circulated)

Ms Hughes asked Members to consider and approve the assessment of performance for 2025/26 as set out in the report, confirming that the final planning statistics, once released at year-end, be incorporated into the published report and that any changes from the draft statistics currently included be circulated to Members for information.

In proposing the report, Councillor Byrne highlighted the significant increase in leisure centre usage, particularly at Newry Leisure Centre, noting that visitor numbers had risen from approximately 330,000 to 500,000 and that memberships had increased by almost 25%. He commended the AHC and Leisure Services teams for their work and said the figures demonstrated strong public confidence in the service, taking the opportunity to praise the staff and the improvements implemented at Newry Leisure Centre.

Councillor Hanlon concurred with Councillor Byrne's comments and noted the tangible improvements to Council leisure facilities. She also raised concerns regarding planning performance, saying that the volume of queries received through both her role as a councillor and the MLA Office suggested that progress remained inconsistent. While acknowledging the pressure on planning staff, she questioned whether applications should continue to be dealt with solely in the order received, suggesting that greater consideration could be given to applications that could be determined more quickly or which had significant economic value. She requested that senior management consider providing Members with a more comprehensive report on planning performance and progress, to assist elected representatives in responding to residents' concerns.

Mr Patterson noted Members' comments and advised that a detailed report on the planning service was due to be prepared for the next Audit Committee, with the possibility of it also being presented to SPR in September. He confirmed that Mr McGilly would be drafting the report for consideration by the Committee.

Councillor Truesdale echoed the positive comments regarding Council performance but noted that issues remained within the planning service. She highlighted cases that appeared to become delayed between Planning Enforcement and Legal Services, resulting in prolonged cases and potentially increasing the scale of issues requiring resolution. She also sought clarification on the performance figure relating to 236 new jobs being "promoted", asking whether this referred to jobs actually created.

Mrs Smyth explained that "jobs promoted" was a statutory performance indicator reported annually under the Go Succeed programme. She said the figure was calculated using an agreed formula based on the number of business plans produced through the programme and was effectively an estimate of jobs created.

Councillor Reilly raised concerns about the Council's performance objective to improve cleanliness by addressing littering, fly-tipping and dog fouling. He said that the reference to reducing dog fouling appeared aspirational rather than practical, particularly given the level of incidents across the district. He expressed concern that the Council had been unable to secure prosecutions to deter irresponsible dog owners and stressed that performance statements needed to be supported by tangible improvements in services if they were to retain public confidence.

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

- **The Assessment of Performance 2025-26, including the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward'.**
- **That the finalised planning statistics 2025-26 be included in the final report to be published on the website and that any changes from the unvalidated data reported be sent to all members for information.**

SPR/114/2026: **AIDS TO NAVIGATION REPAIRS ON STRANGFORD LOUGH**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, and Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Aids to Navigation Repairs on Strangford Lough. (Copy circulated)

Mrs Smyth advised that a consultant's review of the navigational aids along Strangford Lough had identified a number of required improvements, including the replacement of obsolete aids, repairs to existing equipment and the installation of new navigational aids at certain locations. She noted that some maintenance work had already been undertaken and that the Council was now seeking to progress the remaining recommendations, with the relevant business case and associated costs included in the report.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the business case and associated budget to enable Council to implement the key findings of the Review of Navigational Aids to improve**

navigational safety and ensure that the Council fulfils its responsibilities as the Local Lighthouse Authority for its area of Strangford Lough.

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

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

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

SPR/115/2026: **BUSINESS CASE - IDOX IT SYSTEMS**

Read: Report from Mr G Ringland, IT Manager, presented by Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Continued Use of IDOX Line of Business IT Systems. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the attached business case and approve the continued use of the IDOX line-of-business IT systems through a direct award under the Government Commercial Agency Framework Agreement RM6259 (Vertical Application Solutions), Lot 3 with the incumbent supplier. This represents a compliant procurement route and will ensure continuity of service and support for the Council's critical business systems.**

SPR/116/2026: **HEALTH CASH PLAN AND EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to support the continuation of the scheme and the outline business case for the scheme as outlined at appendix 1 of the officer's report.**

SPR/117/2026: **FMA/SLA PROPOSALS**

Read: Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Community Development, regarding FMA/SLA Proposals. (Copy circulated)

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

- **A one-year extension of the current FMAs and SLAs relating to community centres to facilitate a comprehensive review of contract specifications and service delivery.**
- **The uplift in funding allocation to community groups who currently run community facilities under an FMA or SLA based on all relevant groups fully claiming the uplifted amount.**
- **The incorporation of the Community Development Strategy public consultation findings into the future re-procurement strategy for the facilities.**

SPR/118/2026: **ANNALONG HARBOUR**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Annalong Harbour. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to approve the preferred option of the business case for the appointment of the Civil Engineering Framework Contractor to complete the recommended remedial works at the South Pier and the further investigations as outlined in section 2.6 of the officer's report.**

SPR/119/2026: **TYRELLA WINTER GRAZING AND KILBRONEY CONACRE**

Read: Report from Ms E kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Tyrella Winter Grazing and Kilbroney Conacre. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed that Council's agent seek to make an appointment for the following by conacre agreements:**

- **The conservation winter grazing of the dunes at Tyrella for 2 years.**
- **The area detailed at Kilbroney Park, which is approved for 2 years but only let annually.**

SPR/120/2026: **<u>CHARGED PARKING AUTOMATION AT FOREST PARKS</u>**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Charged Parking Automation at Forest Parks. (Copy circulated)

Cllr O'Hare left the meeting at this stage – 7.44pm.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the updated capital budget for charged parking as detailed at section 2 and 4 of the officer's report.**

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howie, that a workshop would be held with Members in advance of the implementation of the new charged parking automation.

SPR/121/2026: **<u>FUNDING REPAYMENT</u>**

Read: Report from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Funding Repayment. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed that the organisation named in the report are permitted to apply for financial assistance on the condition that they continue their repayments.**

SPR/122/2026: **<u>INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS UPDATE</u>**

Read: Report from Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager, regarding Industrial Relations Update. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Reilly, the following was agreed:**

- **To note the agreed IR Framework documents to date and the proposed approach to reach agreement to progress the Trade Union Co-ordinator job description.**
- **To note the finance and resources associated with the establishment of 2 permanent Trade Union Co-ordinator posts and approve the temporary HR and payroll posts to support the workplan activities, as set out in section 2.4 of the officer's report for a period of up to 3 years.**

SPR/123/2026: **<u>LEASE OF LIBRARY SPACE AT CROSSMAGLEN COMMUNITY CENTRE</u>**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Lease of Library Space at Crossmaglen Community Centre. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to grant a lease of that portion of Crossmaglen Community Centre as outlined in red on the map attached to the officers report for a term of 99 years subject to the yearly market rent as set out in this report and the continued contribution towards running costs of Crossmaglen Community Centre.**
It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, that officers bring further information back on third party users.

SPR/124/2026: **<u>LEASE OF LAND ADJACENT TO MEIGH COMMUNITY CENTRE</u>**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Lease of Land Adjacent to Meigh Community Centre. (Copy circulated)

Cllr Taylor left the meeting at this stage – 7.54pm

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to enter into a lease with the group noted in the report in respect of that portion of the lands adjacent to Meigh Community Centre as outlined in red on the map attached to the officer's report for a term of 25**

years at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.

SPR/125/2026: **REQUEST FOR EASEMENT AT LIGHTHOUSE CAR PARK CASTLEWELLAN**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Request for Easement at Lighthouse Car Park Castlewellan. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to grant an easement for electricity cables under that portion of the Council facility known as The Lighthouse Road Car Park, Castlewellan as shown by a green line on the map attached to the officers report to the adjoining Landowner for market value consideration, subject to payment of Council's legal and valuation costs.**

SPR/126/2026: **LICENCE FOR PORTION OF BURREN VILLAGE GREEN**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Licence for Portion of Burren Village Green. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to grant a licence of Burren Village Green as shown outlined in yellow on the map attached, to the group named in the officer's report for a term of 5 years at a peppercorn licence fee, subject to Departmental Consent.**

SPR/127/2026: **SURRENDER OF LEASE AT BURRENBRIDGE ROAD, CASTLEWELLAN**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Surrender of Least at Burrenbridge Road, Castlewellan. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to permit the group named within the report to surrender the lease in respect of the lands at Burrenbridge Road, Castlewellan back to Council.**

SPR/128/2026: **BOUNDARY RECTIFICATION AT AMERACAM LANE, CRANFIELD**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal, regarding Boundary Rectification at Ameracam Lane, Cranfield. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to rectify the registered title boundary between the dwelling known detailed on the attached map and Council's private road known as Ameracam Lane, Cranfield, subject to the owner agreeing to pay Council's legal costs.**

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

SPR/129/2026: **NILGA ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION 2026/27**

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, presented by Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Annual NILGA Subscription. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the annual NILGA Subscription fee for 26/27.**

SPR/130/2026: **LOCAL AUTHORITY DEEDS**

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Local Authority Deeds. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/131/2026: **SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD APRIL – JUNE 2026 AND NMD COUNCIL AND PUBLIC AUTHORITY STATUTORY, EQUALITY AND GOOD RELATIONS DUTIES ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT 2025-26**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Section 75 Policy Screening Quarterly Report for Period

April – June 2026 and NMD Council and Public Authority Statutory, Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report 2025-26. (Copy circulated)

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

- **To note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period April – June 2026**
- **To note NMD District Council's Public Authority Statutory Equality and Good Relations Duties Annual Progress Report for the period 2025 – 2026 for submission to the Equality Commission for NI by 31 August 2026.**

SPR/132/2026: **<u>RURAL NEEDS ANNUAL MONITORING REPORT FOR PERIOD 1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026</u>**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Rural Needs Annual Monitoring Report for Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the rural needs impact assessments undertaken during 2025-26 reporting period (Appendix 1) details of which will be submitted to DAERA through the new online portal to meet their requested deadline of 2 October 2026.**

SPR/133/2026: **<u>ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD 1 APRIL 2025 – 31 MARCH 2026 ON REQUESTS RELATED TO NAMING COUNCIL FACILITIES, PLANTING TREES AND TO LOCATE ARTWORKS/SCULPTURES ON COUNCIL PROPERTY</u>**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on Requests Related to Naming Council Facilities, Planting Trees and to Locate Artworks/Sculptures on Council Property. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Annual Report for the Period 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026 on Requests Related to Naming Council Facilities,**

Planting Trees and to Locate Artworks/Sculptures on Council Property.

SPR/134/2026: **ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY WEALTH BUILDING ACTIONS AND MEASURES – DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS 2025-2026**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures – Directorate Business Plans 2025-2026 (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note Assessment of Community Wealth Building Actions and Measures as detailed at Appendix 1.**

SPR/135/2026: **2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM MONITORING STATISTICS**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal & People, regarding 2025/26 FOI/EIR/RM Monitoring Statistics. (Copy circulated)

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the monitoring statistics.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 8.13pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 September 2026.

Signed: ________________________
Councillor Callum Bowsie
Chairperson

Signed: ________________________
Marie Ward
Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

<u>RECORDED VOTE</u>

DATE: 13/08/2026. VENUE: Mourne Room. MEETING: SPR Committee.

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Item 4 – Officer Report on Notice of Motion (as amended) – All Island Citizens Assembly.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
C Bowsie		Against		
P Byrne	For			
O Hanlon	For			
M Hearty	For			
R Howell	For			
T Howie			Abstain	
A King	For			
C King	For			
A Mathers	For			
D McAteer	For			
S O'Hare	For			
H Reilly		Against		
M Rice	For			
D Taylor		Against		
J Truesdale			Abstain	
TOTALS	<u>10</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	