

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Wednesday 16 March 2022 at 6.00pm via Microsoft Teams**

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon (Chamber)

In Attendance in Chamber Councillor R Howell
Councillor B Ó Muirí

In Attendance via Teams: Councillor P Brown
Councillor P Byrne
Councillor H Gallagher
Councillor O Magennis
Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Tinnelly

Also in attendance: Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor G Hanna
Councillor A Lewis
Councillor D McAteer
Councillor A McMurray

**Officials in Attendance
In chamber:** Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive
Mrs C Miskelly, Assistant Director Corporate Services
(HR & Safeguarding)
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services
(Administration)
Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration (Acting)
Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy
Mr G Scott, Safeguarding Coordinator
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in Attendance
Via Teams:** Mr M Lipsett, Director Active and Healthy Communities
Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Tourism Culture Events
Mrs H McElroy, HR Policy and Projects Manager

**Also in Attendance:
Via Teams:** Mrs N Largey, Legal Advisor, Belfast City Council

SPR/036/2022: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Savage; Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive and Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise Regeneration and Tourism.

SPR/037/2022: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Tinnelly declared an interest in item 6 - Surrender of Ballykinlar Playing Fields to facilitate new sports facility at Ballykinlar GAC

SPR/038/2022: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 17 FEBRUARY 2022

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 17 February 2022. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Byrne that the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2022, be approved.**

NOTICE OF MOTION

SPR/039/2022: NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING IRISH UNITY WORKING GROUP

The following Notice of Motion was received from Councillor Ó Muirí.

“That this Council recognises that discussions about a constitutional change are now well underway and that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have a duty to consult with its ratepayers on this important issue and the implications for the Council area and the wider border corridor. Therefore, this motion calls on the Council to establish a working group on Irish unity and to begin a consultation with ratepayers and community and business representatives to assess views on the issues related to constitutional change.”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Howell.

In proposing the motion, Councillor Ó Muirí stated that he appreciated all the efforts by all involved to date and was glad to get the motion this far as it had been 12 months since he had first intended for it to be brought to Council.

Councillor Ó Muirí advised the thinking behind the motion was that Partition was imposed 100 years ago against the democratically expressed will of the vast majority of the people of Ireland and he felt the need for a one Ireland one island approach across our public services, the economy and society generally had been starkly demonstrated by the Covid pandemic. Brexit had been hugely damaging for Ireland especially for the border counties and the 6 counties with part of the island being inside the EU, with the rest outside it.

Councillor Ó Muirí advised that a similar working group had already been established in Derry & Strabane Council and proposed in Belfast City Council. He appreciated the difficulties that some Parties may have with the motion and welcomed their views but hoped to start a conversation and break ground to show there was nothing to be feared by talking.

Councillor Taylor stated many conversations had already been had and an opportunity for meeting on minds, however in this instance that had not been the case due to the lack of agreement on the motion and that if Council were to proceed with an Irish Unity working group this would send a very hostile message to the Unionist community within the district. He stated that as a committed Unionist neither himself nor his party colleagues would be participating in the proposed forum should it be approved as there were greater issues that needed focused on such as cost of living crisis, rebuilding the NHS, creation of jobs and improving education, rather

than an issue that was not a priority for many people. Council would be setting a policy that they support a united Ireland which was a very dangerous precedent when Council was in place to represent all citizens.

Councillor Byrne stated that the SDLP supported the motion and asked that an amendment be made to delete the wording 'a working group on Irish Unity' and replace with 'a New Ireland working group'. He stated this would offer a hand to Unionists and others of different persuasions to come into the forum and outline what this new Ireland would look like to them. This island was changing due to previous decisions taken and everyone should be working on this together to provide better services. Councillor Gallagher seconded the amendment.

Councillor Ó Muirí stated he was happy to accept the amendment, any wording that might be more welcoming to Unionism in particular should be promoted.

Councillor Tinnelly said he had the greatest respect for his Unionist colleagues and their views. Brexit had turbo charged the situation and was going to lead to the reunification of the country quicker than expected. The outcome was inevitable however it needed to take on the views of all people on the island, ignoring it would not make it go away and all parties needed to engage in discussions and be involved going forward to shape the new island. Councillor Tinnelly proposed a further amendment be made to include "a consultation with other Councils, ratepayers and community and business representatives to assess views on the issues related to constitutional change." This was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Councillor Ó Muirí accepted the amendment.

Councillor Hanna stated he endorsed what Councillor Taylor had previously said and that he nor the DUP would be forced into taking part in any forum as it was something that they see no future in.

Councillor McMurray stated that the Alliance party did not support the motion, however he looked forward to the invite to the working group.

Councillor Byrne wanted to make clear that no member was being forced onto the group, they were wanted on the group to have those discussions.

In summing up, Councillor Ó Muirí stated he respected all Party's beliefs and understood where everybody was coming from, however on this particular issue there was never going to be agreement.

Councillor Taylor asked for a recorded vote and clarity on what the amended motion was.

The following notice of motion was put to a recorded vote copy of which are appended to the minutes.

"That this Council recognises that discussions about a constitutional change are now well underway and that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have a duty to consult with its ratepayers on this important issue and the implications for the Council area and the wider border corridor. Therefore, this motion calls on the Council to establish a New Ireland Working Group and to begin a consultation with other Councils, ratepayers and community and business representatives to assess views on the issues related to constitutional change."

FOR: 9
AGAINST: 1

ABSTENTIONS: 1

The motion was agreed.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Howell that this Council recognises that discussions about a constitutional change are now well underway and that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council have a duty to consult with its ratepayers on this important issue and the implications for the Council area and the wider border corridor. Therefore, this motion calls on the Council to establish a New Ireland Working Group and to begin a consultation with other Councils, ratepayers and community and business representatives to assess views on the issues related to constitutional change

FOR CONSIDERATION AND OR DECISION

SPR/040/2022: THE SAFEGUARDING BOARD FOR NORTHERN IRELAND (SBNI) CONSULTATION ON THE PROPOSED STRATEGIC PLAN 2022 – 2026 AND EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS SCREENING

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr G Scott, Safeguarding Coordinator, regarding, The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) consultation on the proposed Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026 and Equality and Human Rights Screening. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Howell stated that it was vitally important as a Council that the plan was supported along with the proposed amendments and priorities set out within it.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members approved the following recommendations:

- That Council supports all proposals contained in the SBNI Strategic Plan 2022 – 2026 and Equality and Human Rights Screening.
- To approve the proposed Consultation Response (Appendix 1), incorporating the amendments outlined at 2.6 and 2.7 of the report.
- To approve the proposed response to the Equality and Human Rights Screening.

CORPORATE SERVICES

SPR/041/2022: SURRENDER OF BALLYKINLAR PLAYING FIELDS TO FACILITATE NEW SPORTS FACILITY AT BALLYKINLAR GAC

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services, regarding Surrender of Ballykinlar Playing Fields to facilitate new sports facility at Ballykinlar GAC **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Sharvin requested that the Youth League still have access to the pitch up until the point the pitch needs closed off or an alternative suitable venue be found in order that the youth league matches could continue.

Mrs Robb confirmed she would liaise with Mr C Haughey for alternative provision when the youth league were required to relinquish the playing fields..

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to approve to progress surrender of lease for Ballykinlar Playing Fields to the MOD subject to Down County Board providing a commitment for shared community and sporting use of the facilities going forward. The surrender to exclude the lands leased to Ballykinlar Cross Community Pre School Playgroup Limited by Council for the term of 30 years from 27 October 2006.

SPR/042/2022: **PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT AUDIT AND ASSESSMENT 2021-22**

READ: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive, regarding Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment 2021-22. (Copy circulated)

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment Report 2021-22, including the two 'proposals for improvement', as outlined in Appendix 2

SPR/043/2022: **DRAFT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2022-23**

READ: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive, regarding Draft Performance Improvement Objectives 2022-23. (Copy circulated)

In response to a query from Councillor Gallagher, Mrs Carville confirmed a range of promotional activities would be carried out in order to promote Speak NMD with the usage of public advertisements in local newspapers and social media platforms to encourage as much engagement as possible.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed to approve the following recommendations:

- The five draft performance improvement objectives 2022-23, as outlined in Appendix 1
- The proposed approach and timetable for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan 2022-23, as outlined in Appendix 2, including approval to commence the consultation and engagement process on 21 March 2022

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Sharvin it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the next matter which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

SPR/044/2022: OFFICER'S REPORT ON REQUEST AND NOTICE OF MOTION – QUEEN ELIZABETH II PLATINUM JUBILEE FUNDING PROGRAMME

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding officer report on request and Notice of Motion – Queen Elizabeth II Platinum Jubilee funding programme (**Copy circulated**)

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed that Elected Members approve £40,000 for a Queen's Platinum Jubilee financial assistance programme for 2022/23, and that Officers proceed to implementation in advance of ratification of the decision at the Council's Monthly meeting in April 2022.

SPR/045/2022: REQUEST FOR EASEMENT FOR A SEWAGE PIPE AT CLONALLON PARK, WARRENPOINT

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration (Acting), regarding request for easement for sewage pipe at Clonallon Park, Warrenpoint (**Copy circulated**)

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Tinnelly, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the grant of an Easement for a sewage pipe under the lands known as Clonallon Park along the route outlined on the map attached. This is subject to the applicant providing evidence of NI Water Consent, and to the applicant providing an appropriate map and paying the market value for the grant of easement and discharging Council's legal and valuation costs.

SPR/046/2022: BOUNDARY RECTIFICATION REQUEST – LANDS AT HARBOUR

CLOSE, KILKEEL

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration (Acting), regarding Boundary Rectification Request – Lands at Harbour Close, Kilkeel **(Copy Circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed that Elected Members approve to rectify the registered title boundary between the private property at Harbour Close, Kilkeel and the adjoining Council-owned property at Mourne Esplanade, with the requester being responsible for any ancillary costs of Council including legal costs.

SPR/047/2022: PURCHASE OF LAND FROM NIHE FOR REDEVELOPMENT OF PLAYPARK AND TROJAN HORSE COMMUNITY FACILITY, DOWNPATRICK

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration (Acting) regarding purchase of land from NIHE for redevelopment of playpark and Trojan Horse Community facility, Downpatrick **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed that Elected Members agree to the outright purchase of the freehold land at the Flying Horse Estate, Oriel Drive, Downpatrick, from the NIHE, at a cost of £6,500.00, for the redevelopment of the existing playpark and Trojan Horse community facility in Downpatrick. This remains subject to contract and does not at this stage represent a formal contractual offer.

SPR/048/2022: DOWNPATRICK AND COUNTY DOWN RAILWAY

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration (Acting) regarding Downpatrick and County Down Railway. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed that Elected Members approve that Council enters into a Heads of Terms agreement with DCDR on the terms as set out in the appendix attached to the officer's report, re-defining the relationship between Council and DCDR on the future operation of the tourism railway, and including a commitment to a contribution of 80% funding towards the repair projects described in para 2.2 of the officer's report.

SPR/049/2022: NON - CURRENT ASSET POLICY

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive, regarding the Non - Current Asset Policy. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the Non-Current Asset Policy.

SPR/050/2022: SUPPORT TO NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive, regarding support to Neighbourhood Services. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the proposal at 2.4 for the reasons outlined within section 2 of the officer's report. Also caveated with a report back to Committee should an extension be required.

SPR/051/2022: BRCD MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive, regarding BRCD Memorandum of Understanding. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the signing of the BRCD Memorandum of Understanding and to approve an annual financial contribution made to Belfast City Council, which represents Council's share of the financial cost associated with the

BRC D Programme Management Office in carrying out the functions required of the accountable body. The annual cost to be reviewed and agreed annually by the BRC D Executive Board.

SPR/052/2022: TERMS AND CONDITIONS UPDATE

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mr M Lipsett, Director Active and Healthy Communities, regarding Terms and Conditions Update. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the following recommendations:**

- i) That Members note the progress on the workplan as set out in appendix 1.**
- ii) That Members note that the JTUS intend to ballot their members on the remaining items of dispute.**
- iii) That Members support the continued release of employees supporting the programme of work, the cost of which are shown at 4.1.**

FOR NOTING –

This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

SPR/053/2022: RATES SUPPORT GRANT 2021/2022

Read: Letter dated 8 March 2022 from Department for Communities, regarding Rates Support Grant 2021/2022. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed that Elected Members note the letter dated 8 March 2022 from Department for Communities.**

SPR/054/2022: MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS 2021/2022 – PERIOD 9

Read: Report dated 16 March 2022 from Mrs D Carville, Deputy Chief Executive, regarding Management Accounts 2021/2022 – Period 9. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed that Elected Members note the Management Accounts – 2021/22 – Period 9.

FOR NOTING

SPR/055/022: **MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD ON 10TH MARCH 2022**

Read: Minutes of Newry City Regeneration Programme Board Meeting – 10 March 2022. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on 10 March 2022.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 19.46pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 04 April 2022.

Signed: **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**
Chairperson

Signed: **Dorinnia Carville**
Deputy Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 16/03/2022 **VENUE:** Downshire Civic Centre & Microsoft Teams **MEETING:** SPR Committee

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Notice of Motion – Irish Unity – Cllr Ó Muirí

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
P Brown			1	
P Byrne	1			
H Gallagher	2			
O Hanlon	3			
R Howell	4			
O Magennis	5			
D Murphy				1
B Ó Muíri	6			
H Reilly				2
M Rice	7			
M Savage				3
G Sharvin	8			
D Taylor		1		
J Tinnelly	9			
W Walker				4
TOTALS	9	1	1	4