

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

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### **Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 19 January 2023 at 6.00pm via Microsoft Teams & Mourne Room, Downshire Civic Centre**

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<b>In the Chair:</b>	Councillor O Hanlon (Chamber)
<b>In Attendance in Chamber</b>	Councillor G Hanna Councillor A McMurray Councillor A Lewis Councillor D Murphy Councillor B Ó Muirí Councillor G Sharvin
<b>In Attendance via Teams:</b>	Councillor P Byrne Councillor H Gallagher Councillor R Howell Councillor O Magennis Councillor M Rice Councillor D Taylor
<b>Non-Members:</b>	Councillor J Brennan (Chamber) Councillor C Enright (Chamber) Councillor A Finnegan (Chamber) Councillor D McAteer (via Teams) Councillor H McKee (via Teams) Councillor H Reilly (via Teams) Councillor J Tinnelly (via Teams)
<b>Officials in Attendance:</b>	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Administration Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy Mrs C Miskelly, Assistant Director Corporate Services (HR & Safeguarding) Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism. Mr P Rooney, Legal Advisor Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting) Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer

**SPR/001/2023: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

No apologies were received.

**SPR/002/2023: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest

**SPR/003/2023:**

**ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 15 DECEMBER 2022**

**Read:**

Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 15 December 2022. **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Magennis to approve the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 15 December 2022.**

**NOTICE OF MOTION**

**SPR/004/2023:**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – KINGS CORONATION**

**Read:**

Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy regarding Notice of Motion – Kings Coronation **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Lewis proposed the Notice of Motion, seconded by Councillor Hanna.

Mrs Mackin advised members that the call for the application would now open on the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023 and not 20<sup>th</sup> March 2023 as previously advised, and would then close on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2023, giving the applicants 3 weeks to complete and submit applications.

Councillor Sharvin stated that the SDLP party were supportive of the establishment of the fund and respected that there were people within the district who wished to celebrate the King's Coronation, however, the Council needed to be conscious and financially prudent. He stated he had raised some concerns at the Good Relations forum regarding the level of funding, particularly given the rates process and challenges that the Council was currently facing. He queried what the implications would be on the rates process and where the funding would come from as this was not within budget.

Mrs Mackin advised under 4.1 of the report it stated that proposed allocation of £40,000 was an additional financial resource not agreed within the current 23/24 revenue budget but was to be included in the 23/24 budget if external funding was not available.

Mrs Kelly advised this was a new request and would be found within the next financial year and incorporated into the budget.

Councillor Ó Muirí advised that on behalf of his Party they supported the Motion and recognised there were Councillors within the Chamber and Unionists within the community wanting to celebrate the event.

Mrs Ward advised that there would be a review of all existing internal revenue budgets to provide the allocated funds, if required and that it would be highlighted at next Strategic Finance Working Group. Mrs Ward also confirmed that the level of £40,000 had been determined by the demand expressed during the Jubilee and by reducing the level of funding would most likely end in oversubscription.

Councillor Taylor spoke in support of the Motion, stating that the amount of money being provided was minimal in comparison to what other Councils were providing. Asking members to be mindful that this was an important once in a lifetime occasion and there would be other potential external funding source opportunities available.

Councillor Byrne agreed with previous comments made regarding marking the event across the district however the Council was in a very different financial position than when the Queen's Jubilee took place, and any additional funding would need to be found within current budgets so as not to have an impact on the rates process.

Councillor Byrne proposed the following amendment:

*'That Elected Members give consideration to establishing a King Charles III Coronation Financial assistance programme within the existing budget, to be brought back to the next Strategic Finance Working Group for consideration and ratification at full Council.'*

This was seconded by Councillor Gallagher.

After lengthy discussions on the matter and all parties confirming they unanimously supported the event, Councillor Sharvin and Byrne confirmed that there was no suggestion of a reduction in budget for the event, it was about finding it within an existing budget and being financially prudent and respectful to the ratepayer.

Councillor Taylor, Lewis, Reilly and Hanna voiced their disappointment and concerns that it was an attempt to reduce the budget and scupper the event, however agreed that it be brought to the next Strategic Finance Working Group for further discussion to see if the funding could be found within existing resource budgets.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Gallagher, that Elected Members give consideration to establishing a King Charles III Coronation financial assistance programme within the existing budget and be brought back to the next Strategic Finance Working Group for consideration and ratification at full Council.**

**SPR/005/2023:** **NOTICE OF MOTION – ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ALL-IRELAND CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy regarding Notice of Motion – Establishment of an ALL-Ireland Citizens' Assembly **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Ó Muirí proposed the Notice of Motion, seconded by Councillor Magennis.

Councillor Ó Muirí and Byrne spoke in support of the Motion.

Councillor McMurray stated he broadly supported the Motion however added that a Unionist Outreach i.e a Northern Ireland office may have eased it slightly. He was still not convinced that Council should be planning for constitutional change at such an early stage. He stated on a positive note there was a lot of good work being done regarding the Shared Island Unit.

Councillor Hanna and Taylor stated their parties did not support the Motion, stating it was very much one sided with no mention of the British Government with a total disregard and disrespect to the vast majority who wanted to remain as part of United Kingdom.

The Chairperson put the matter to a vote, the results of which are as follows:

**FOR: 10**  
**AGAINST: 3**  
**ABSTENTIONS: 0**

**The proposal was carried.**

**Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Byrne, that Elected Members consider the Notice of Motion – Establishment of an All-Ireland Citizens’ Assembly noting the content of the report.**

## **CORPORATE PLANNING AND POLICY**

**SPR/006/2023: NEW IRELAND WORKING GROUP**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy regarding New Ireland Working Group (**Copy circulated**)

Councillor Ó Muirí informed members that it had been a productive first meeting and a very good initiative.

Councillor Taylor stated he had been very clear in terms of his position with regards the establishment of the group and it was important to note his objections on the opposition of setting up of the group.

Councillor Byrne concurred with Councillor Ó Muirí’s comments highlighting that more information being collated from experts in their field and being made available on the Council website for people to read the research in one place was a positive step. He stated that working closely with other Councils i.e Strabane and Derry that had established similar types of working groups would help to improve conversation around the issue.

Councillor McMurray asked to note going forward that in the Terms of Reference it stated supporting people of different constitutional backgrounds and officers should be conscious of this when they were collating various academic journals.

Councillor Hanna reinforced his Party’s position by stating they decided not to take part in the working group as they seen no benefit in it. He asked for clarity if the Council website would be promoting in a fair and even-handed manner what was published as a result of the working group.

Mrs Ward referred to 1.2 of the report where it stated ‘It should be noted the actions undertaken in relation to the Notice of Motion do not presuppose a corporate position, support or endorse an outcome in relation to constitutional change’ and advised that would be the position that would remain.

The Chairperson advised Councillor Enright he should bring any queries he may have to the next New Ireland Working Group meeting as all Councillors were invited to attend and this was the platform at which they should be discussed.

The Chairperson put the matter to a vote, the results of which are as follows:

**FOR: 9**  
**AGAINST: 3**  
**ABSTENTIONS: 1**

**The proposal was carried.**

**Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Byrne that Elected Members approve the following recommendations from the meeting of the New Ireland working group:**

- 1) To collate and gather all the relevant research, reports, presentations and articles in relation to the issue of Constitutional Change from government agencies and academia and upload these to the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council website. Where possible, the information should be categorised and include those related to economic, environmental, cultural and social policy impacts, including health and education.**
- 2) Council increase engagement with Intertrade Ireland.**
- 3) An Executive summary to be produced on the Newry-Dundalk-Drogheda economic zone research.**
- 4) Engage with local Councils on an annual basis to share information and best practice.**

**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 Gallagher, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 9-17 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 any particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.**

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

*Councillors Hanna and Lewis left the meeting at 19.04pm and 19.07pm.*

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed while in closed session.

**SPR/007/2023: REQUEST TO DISPOSE OF LANDS AT HEATHER PARK, NEWRY**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding request to dispose of lands at Heather Park, Newry. **(Copy circulated).**

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed Elected Members agree to the sale of the lands outlined in blue on the attached map to the party detailed in the report for the value determined by Council's valuer subject to the interested party paying Council's legal and valuation costs. The purchaser shall erect at their own cost a suitable boundary to be agreed with Council Officers.**

**SPR/008/2023: PLAY PARK AT RIVERSIDE, LEITRIM**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Services (Acting) regarding, Play Park at Riverside, Leitrim **(Copy circulated).**

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Gallagher, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the transfer of the Riverside Play Park from Armagh Banbridge Craigavon Council to ensure compliance with the Scheme of Transfer and subject to the Assignment of Lease.**

**SPR/009/2023: ARDGLASS ROWING CLUB**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding, Ardglass Rowing Club **(Copy circulated).**

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed that Elected Members approve to continue to encourage and support Ardglass Rowing Club and additional water sports provision across the district via Councils Sport and Community Leasing Policy and Financial Assistance Programme.**

**SPR/010/2023: ASSET DISPOSAL**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director ERT regarding Asset Disposal (**Copy circulated**).

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed Elected Members approve to auction non-fixed assets as detailed in the report.**

**SPR/011/2023: DIRECTOR RECRUITMENT**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive regarding Director Recruitment (**Copy circulated**).

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor McMurray, it was agreed Elected Members approve the following:**

- A) The Recruitment for Director: Active and Healthy Communities.**
- B) The decision in relation to 2.3 of the report.**
- C) The nominations to the selection panel.**

**FOR NOTING – This item is deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the October 2022 Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014**

**SPR/012/2023: NOTICE OF MOTION C/205/2022 BROADENING RATES BASE, INCREASING DIRECT INCOME AND REDUCING COSTS**

**Read:** Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Notice of Motion C/205/2022 Broadening Rates Base, Increasing Direct Income and Reducing Costs. (**copy circulated**)

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed to note the recommendations contained within the officer's report.**

**SPR/013/2023: STRATEGIC FINANCE WORKING GROUP ACTION SHEET – 12 JANUARY 2023**

**Read:** Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet – 12 January 2023. (**Copy circulated**)

**Agreed:** **On the proposal of Councillor Gallagher, seconded by Councillor Ó Muirí, it was agreed to note the Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet – 12 January 2023.**

## **FOR NOTING**

**SPR/014/2023:**

### **STATUTORY REPORTING – SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2022**

**Read:**

Report dated 19 January 2023 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy, regarding Statutory reporting - Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2022 **(Copy circulated)**

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed Elected Members note the Statutory reporting - Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2022**

**SPR/015/2023:**

### **RATES SUPPORT GRANT ALLOCATION 2022/23**

**Read:**

Rates Support Grant Allowance dated 22 December 2022 **(Copy circulated)**

The Chairperson advised members there would be a copy of the letter, that all 5 party leaders wrote to the Permanent Secretary and Secretary of State asking that they give consideration to an increase of support to local Councils, going to the next Council meeting.

Councillor Sharvin proposed that the Council write also to the Permanent Secretary and the Secretary of State urging them to provide further financial assistance giving the challenges we as a Council face in striking a rate and to lessen the burden to the ratepayer.

This was seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

Councillor Byrne supported the proposal to write a letter as a Council, however stated the wording of the letter received from the Department for Communities was disappointing, as there hadn't been a move away from the principle of what the Rate Support Grant was set up for and last year was a set of extreme circumstances right across all Councils. This needed reinstated to some level that would go towards the meaning of why the Rates Support Grant was set up in the first place.

**Agreed:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed Elected Members note the Rates Support Grant Allocation 2022/23, and Council write to the Permanent Secretary and the Secretary of State urging them to provide further financial assistance giving the challenges we as a Council face to strike a rate and to lessen the burden to the ratepayer.**



There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 19.36pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 06 February 2023.

**Signed:**           **Councillor Oonagh Hanlon**  
                          **Chairperson**

**Signed:**           **Josephine Kelly**  
                          **Director of Corporate Services**