

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 December 2023 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre and remotely via Microsoft Teams

In the Chair: Councillor L McEvoy (Chamber)

In Attendance in Chamber: Councillor P Byrne Councillor C Enright
Councillor O Hanlon Councillor R Howell
Councillor T Kelly Councillor D McAteer
Councillor A Mathers Councillor A Quinn
Councillor G Sharvin

In Attendance via Teams: Councillor J Brennan Councillor A Lewis
Councillor S O'Hare Councillor D Taylor

**Non-Committee Members
in Attendance in Chamber:** Councillor T Andrews

**Non-Committee Members
in Attendance via Teams:** Councillor C Bowsie Councillor K Murphy

**Officials in Attendance
In Chamber:** Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy Regeneration and
Tourism
Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director: Capital and Procurement
Mr C Moffett, Assistant Director: Corporate Planning and
Policy (Acting)
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration (Acting)
Mr P Preen, Human Resources Operations Manager
Ms C Hughes, Acting Head of Performance and
Improvement
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in Attendance
Via Teams:** Ms V Keegan, Head of Communications and Marketing
Ms A Smyth, Programme Manager, DBEC

SPR/173/2023: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apology received from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance.

SPR/174/2023: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/175/2023: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2023

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 16 November 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Brennan, to approve the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 16 November 2023.**

CORPORATE PLANNING AND POLICY

SPR/176/2023: DRAFT NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN 2024-2027

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy regarding draft Newry Mourne and Down District Council Corporate Plan 2024-2027. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Enright referred to a previous Notice of Motion in October 2019 C/156/2019 – Climate Change Emergency Declaration stating he did not feel that this had been adequately reflected within the Corporate Plan.

Mrs Ward agreed to add in a paragraph to fact that Council had declared a Climate Emergency in line with the Notice of Motion rather than hold up the Corporate Plan. Clarifying that Page 27 of the report did refer to protect and enhance the environment to secure a sustainable future and did refer to the Sustainable Development Strategy. She added that the business plans for the Directorates would detail what the Council was doing in relation to the Climate Emergency.

Members raised concerns at the figures quoted in the plan in relation to the amount of people in the District who felt they did not have a say stating more engagement and interaction was required to try and counteract some of the figures. It was also suggested that the performance objectives be considered based on the Audit report recommendations with reference to climate change.

Mr Moffett advised that a lot of the queries raised would fall under the Performance Improvement Section and he would direct any concerns raised to the appropriate section and come back to members.

Councillor Kelly concurred with previous comments and queried the Councils' consultation process with regard to consulting and advertising to make engagement better and raised concerns around street cleansing and how these issues would be addressed. She also requested to put on record that as a Party they were not content with the Mourne Gateway Project being included in the Corporate Plan.

Mr Moffett advised that the consultation process would be in line with what would be expected under the online 12 week public consultation process.

Development Trust Northern Ireland (DTNI). That was the same approach Newry Mourne and Down had previously used and was also used for the Equality Scheme, Irish Language Strategy and Disability Action Plan. He stated that through the Community Planning sector they had met with the Youth Sector to look at ways they could further develop consultations to different communities in order to get different opinions, but primarily would be an online approach with 12 week consultations and include some interactive sessions.

In response to query from Councillor McAteer, Mr Moffett advised that Council were already aware of and trying to look at linkages right across the board to deliver and work with partners where it was best and deliver upon that.

Councillor Enright proposed to reference the Climate Change Emergency more robustly within the Corporate Plan, this was seconded by Councillor Kelly.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to consider and agree the draft Corporate Plan 2023 – 2027 and to proceed to a 12 week public consultation.**

It was also agreed to include to reference the Climate Change Emergency more robustly within the Corporate Plan in line with the Sustainability section.

SPR/177/2023: OFFICER REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – LEID WEEK

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy regarding, Leid Week. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Lewis thanked Mr Moffett and his team for the good work already done and proposed that Council hold an event on Leid week every year, this was seconded by Councillor Taylor.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Taylor, to note that the notice of motion had been considered and discussed at the Councillor's Equality and Good Relations Reference Group on 20 November 2023 and that members of the Reference group were supportive of the notice of motion and the talk organised in Newry and Mourne Museum on 22 November 2023.**

It was also agreed that Council hold an event on Leid week every year.

SPR/178/2023: OFFICERS REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION (AMENDED) – CROSSGAR'S TITANIC VICTIM

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding Crossgar's Titanic Victim. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Byrne expressed disappointment that there was no mention in the report of the Titanic victim from Forkhill despite being previously discussed and he would have expected the report to have included both the Forkhill and Crossgar victims. He proposed that Forkhill Titanic Victim also be considered, this was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

Councillor Sharvin confirmed that the person from Forkhill had been mentioned at the Equality and Good Relations meeting however the proposer of the motion felt it would be better if the people of Forkhill brought that matter forward separately and not dilute the original motion regarding Crossgar.

Councillor Andrews thanked the officers for their report and welcomed all efforts that had been put into recognising both victims of the Titanic.

Councillor Bowsie stated the motion had come about through research to uncover the story of the Crossgar Titanic victim who was the last crewman recovered from the ocean. He thanked the local maritime historian for her passion and research into the local figure and stated he was pleased that recognition was being given to the significant connection that Crossgar had with the Titanic.

Councillor Byrne proposed the following amendment, 'that Council should give consideration to the erection of an information panel in Crossgar and Forkhill, this was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Reilly, to note the amended notice of motion had been considered and discussed at the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group on 20 November 2023 and that members of the Reference Group recommended Council should give consideration to the erection of an information panel in Crossgar and Forkhill referencing the Titanic, explaining Crossgar's link to the Titanic; and that the local community should seek to source funding and submit an application through the appropriate process to place a bench on Council property. Should Council agree to approve the Notice of Motion this will be progressed as per Council's Policy on Naming Council facilities.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SPR/179/2023: **S95 AUDIT AND ASSESSMENT REPORT 2023-24**

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance and Performance, regarding S95 Audit and Assessment report 2023-24 **(Copy circulated)**

In response to request from Councillor Byrne, Mrs Kelly advised that quarterly reports would be brought to Committee to update members.

In response to query from Councillors Enright and Hanlon, regarding how much money could

be saved in taking action regarding climate change and how this would fit into the performance objectives, Mrs Ward confirmed that the paper would be looking to try and include some form of targets for Council for the following year and would form part of the basis of the paper for consideration.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to agree the Performance Improvement Audit and Assessment report 2023-24 (Appendix 2)**

SPR/180/2023: **THEATRE CONFERENCE REVISED ELEVATIONS**

Read: Report dated 15 December 2023 from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy Regeneration and Tourism, regarding Theatre Conference Revised elevations. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to query from Councillor McAteer, Mr Mallon advised there had been a range of suggestions from Historical Environment Division, not all had been accepted or implemented. The design team reflected their preference to retain the arched colonnades across all elevations of the building and officers continue to work collaboratively with statutory consultees on all elements of the project.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, to approve the recommendation of the NCCR Programme Board to formally submit the amended elevations for the project to the planning department, as set out in appendix 1 the report.**

SPR/181/2023: **MID YEAR ASSESSMENTS OF DIRECTORATE BUSINESS PLANS 2023-24**

Read: Report dated 15 December 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director, Corporate Services, regarding Mid Year Assessments of Directorate Business Plans 2023-24 **(Copy circulated)**.

In response to queries raised by Councillor Sharvin and Byrne, Mrs Ward confirmed the following:

- There was a recruitment process ongoing in relation to resource and vacancy issues and she would revert to members on the detail of what stage the process was at currently.
- The Elected Member Development Charter would be picked up in the New Year by the Democratic Services Manager and a paper later on the agenda in relation to conferences, would allow to focus the budgets on that particular aspect if approved.
- The Capital process still had to go through Senior Management Team and would follow to committee at a later stage for approval.

Mrs Kelly advise the corporate website was an internal procedure and an update would be brought to committee within this financial 2023/24 year along with accounts receivable position

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to approve the following recommendations:**

- **Mid Year Assessment of the Chief Executive's Department Business Plan 2023-24.**
- **Mid Year Assessment of the Corporate Services Directorate Business Plan 2023-24.**

SPR/182/2023: **OFF STREET CAR PARKING: DECEMBER 2023 CHARGING ARRANGEMENTS**

Read: Report dated 15 December 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment, regarding Off Street Car Parking: December 2023 Charging Arrangements (**Copy circulated**).

Members thanked officials for taking on board the feedback especially of the Downpatrick Councillors because of the flooding and spoke in support of the no parking charges on a Saturday in December. Council needed to do more to promote the district and champion people to come back into Downpatrick particularly to increase the foot flow for local businesses.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed to approve the decision made at Party Leaders meeting on Wednesday 6 December 2023 to suspend car parking charges in the Councils pay and display off-street car parks on Saturday 9, 16 and 23 December 2023.**

Councillor Lewis left the meeting during discussions of the above item – 6.57pm

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SPR/183/2023: **REPORT ON CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE**

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting), regarding report on Conference Attendance (**Copy circulated**).

Mrs Ward advised Members that it was up to themselves to determine if they deemed they had a conflict of interest.

Councillor Andrews left the room at this stage.

Ms Taggart advised that the process going forward was that any conference details would be brought to Committee for approval with Members being encouraged to provide reports on the benefit and learning outcomes. This would all be included as part of the Elected Member Development Charter.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to refocus the Conference budget to reflect Elected Member Development and**

ensure any attendance at conferences was on the basis of benefit and learning for Council as recommend at Party Rep's meeting.

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 Hanlon, 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 Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/184/2023: **EXTENSION OF LEASE IN RESPECT OF LANDS KNOWN AS ROSCONNOR PAVILLION AND PLAYING FIELDS, ANNACLOY DOWNPATRICK**

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding Extension of lease in respect of Rosconnor Pavillion Playing Fields, Annacloy, Downpatrick (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed to extend the term of the Lease noted in the report by 25 years subject to Departmental Consent.

SPR/185/2023: **PROPOSED RENEWAL OF LEASE OF OFFICE SPACE AT DOWNSHIRE CIVIC CENTRE TO PROBATION BOARD**

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding, Renewal of Lease of office Space at Downshire Civic Centre to Probation Board (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed Elected Members approve to grant a further lease in respect of the lands shaded red and green to the party noted in the report for a period of five years subject to a market rent to be determined by Council's valuer and subject to the

payment as set out in the officer's report towards the costs of removing and reinstating Council's recording equipment.

SPR/186/2023:

RENEWAL OF LEASE OF OFFICE SPACE AT DOWNSHIRE CIVIC CENTRE TO YOUTH JUSTICE AGENCY

Read:

Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding, Renewal of Lease of office Space at Downshire Civic Centre to Youth Justice Agency. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed:

On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed Elected Members approve to renew the lease in respect of the lands coloured red on the map attached to this report with the party noted in this report for a period of five years subject to market rent to be determined by Council's valuer.

SPR/187/2023:

RENEWAL OF LEASE OF LANDS AT CRANFIELD BEACH, KILKEEL.

Read:

Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding, renewal of lease of lands at Cranfield Beach, Killeel **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed:

On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, it was agreed Elected Members approve to enter into a lease in respect of the lands at Cranfield Beach as outlined in red on the map attached to this report for a term of 5 years from 14th September 2021 subject to the annual rent as set out in this report.

SPR/188/2023:

RENEWAL OF STATIONERY AND OFFICE SUPPLIES FRAMEWORK

Read:

Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding Renewal of Stationery and Office Supplies Framework. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed:

On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed Elected Members approve, that from the expiry of the current Framework Agreement, Council participate in a new 4 year direct award Framework Agreement as set out in the officer's report, from 1 April 2024 for stationery and office supplies.

SPR/189/2023:

NCCR – PROFESSIONAL FEES UPDATE

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr C Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration and Tourism regarding NCCR – Professional Fees update. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed Elected Members note the Compensation Events approved in accordance with the provisions of the NEC Professional Services contract and approve the updated professional fees for the project.**

Councillor Reilly left the meeting at this stage – 7.19pm

SPR/190/2023: INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS BRIEFING PAPER

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr C Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration and Tourism and Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding industrial relations briefing paper. **(Copy circulated).**

Following lengthy discussions, it was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Howell to have a short adjournment to consider the Legal advice provided.

The meeting did then adjourn - 8.02pm

The meeting did then resume - 8.31pm

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to approve option A with any officer papers in relation to Trade Union negotiations coming forward to Committee to be provided to Trade Unions prior to the meeting, with the caveat that any legal or financial information be exempt under the usual rules.**

It was agreed to advance the proposals in relation to option B to establish if there was the potential for terms of reference that would ensure it protects the governance of the Council and the role of Councillors.

It was also agreed that Members meet with Belfast legal services before the next SPR Committee Meeting in January in relation to this matter.

It was further agreed to accept the proposed LRA Conciliation Agreement as shown at Appendix 1 of the officer's report. It was also agreed that Members accept the financial and resource implications as set out in section 4 of the officer's report.

SPR/191/2023: THE NEWRY CITY PARK: ICT APPOINTMENT

Read: Report dated 14 December 2023 from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director, Capital Projects and Procurement regarding, The Newry City Park: ICT Appointment (**Copy circulated**).

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed Elected Members consider and approve to appoint an Integrated Consultant Team (ICT) for The Newry Park Project as per the cost outlined in section 4.1 of the report.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/192/2023: **MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 8TH SEPTEMBER 2023**

Read: Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held on Friday 8th September 2023. (**Copy circulated**).

Councillor Enright raised an issue on page 4 of the minutes regarding the need for an estimate of lifetime cost for building projects and clear commitments were required to the NETZIV building code which had been invoked in other countries across the border and in the UK GB for some years.

Councillor Byrne queried whether the old practice of having board members signing off on minutes could be reestablished as it was taking too long for members to sign off minutes currently which meant Committee Members were not able to scrutinise the decisions taken.

Mr Mallon advised it was not always possible that the minutes could be agreed by email therefore sometimes they needed to be referred to the next meeting of the Programme Board for ratification before being presented to SPR Committee. He stated he would endeavour to have the minutes agreed as quickly as possible.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to note the minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Project Board Meeting held on Friday 8th September 2023.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 9.01pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 8 January 2024.

Signed: **Councillor Leeanne McEvoy**
Chairperson

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