

At Council Meeting held on 6 November 2023 the following was agreed:

The Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 12 October 2023 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, subject to the following:

- SPR/148/2023: Report on Conacre Lettings : it was agreed an expression of interest in respect to cutting of grass at the hay meadow at Kilbroney Park be issued and that Council enter into a conacre licence agreement for a period of 1 year rather than 4 years and that officers explore other options and bring report back to officers after 12 months.

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 12 October 2023 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row and remotely via Microsoft Teams

In the Chair: Councillor L McEvoy (Chamber)

In Attendance in Chamber:

Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor G Sharvin

In Attendance via Teams:

Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor C Enright	Councillor R Howell
Councillor T Kelly	

Non-Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor M Rice
Councillor J Truesdale	

Officials in Attendance

In Chamber:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director: Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director: Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr C Moffett, Assistant Director: Corporate Planning and Policy (Acting)
Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director: Economy, Growth & Tourism
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

Officials in Attendance

Via Teams:

Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director: Capital & Procurement
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration

SPR/139/2023: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Taylor.

SPR/140/2023: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

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SPR/141/2023: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 14 SEPTEMBER 2023

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 September 2023. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, to approve the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 14 September 2023.**

CORPORATE PLANNING AND POLICY

SPR/142/2023: IRISH LANGUAGE STRATEGY 2024-2027

Read: Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding Irish Language Strategy 2024 – 2027. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Hanlon thanked officers for the preparation of the report however proposed to defer this item to November SPR Committee. This was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

Following a request from Councillor McAteer as to the reasons for deferring, Councillor Hanlon stated she would not go into all the details however having spoken to Irish Language groups over the last few things there were a few areas within the strategy document that needed ironed out prior to ratification.

Councillor McAteer proposed the strategy be deferred to a meeting of the Irish Language working group for further discussions. Councillor Sharvin seconded the proposal stating the Irish Language Working group was a productive meeting with great discussion.

Councillor Reilly raised concerns around the costings of the implementation of the strategy and asked whether recruitment for posts would identify that people need to have the Irish language as an essential or desirable criteria as that would disenfranchise a lot of people in the community.

Mr Moffett advised these were objective justification principles and they had always been used under the recruitment and selection processes.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, to defer decision until**

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a meeting of the Irish Language Working Group be held for further discussions.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SPR/143/2023:

COUNCIL'S DECISION MAKING PROCESS

Read:

Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mrs J Kelly, Director, Corporate Services, regarding Council's Decision Making Process. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed:

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to note the process maps and narratives for dealing with Notices of Motion at both Council and Committee Meetings.

SPR/144/2023:

MOURNE GATEWAY – ICT PROCUREMENT

Read:

Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism regarding Mourne Gateway ICT Procurement. **(Copy circulated)**.

Mr Patterson presented the report stating this was to progress the procurement of an integrated consultancy team (ICT) however the actual appointment of an ICT would be subject to Council approval at a later stage.

The Chief Executive advised she had asked for a further special meeting of the Programme Board to be held prior to the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee in November, the purpose of which would be to give consideration to aspects of the Notice of Motion, in particular in relation to alternatives. She stated officers would present the details of the options that were considered in the development of the Mourne Mountain Gateway project and also provide an update as to how the Council had arrived at the project from its formation in 2016.

Councillor Enright stated that it would be reckless to commit to appointing a consultancy team when Council has no indication of whether they will get a lease for the land from the National Trust who are the landowners. He stated a Memorandum of Understanding was requested from the Department of the Economy along with updated costs and timelines and as this was not forthcoming he proposed to defer any decision on this item. This was seconded by Councillor Kelly.

Councillor Hanlon proposed to accept the officer's recommendation stating that once again Councillors are asking to stall the project which would potentially risk the loss of £30million into the District through the City Deal. She welcomed the input from the Chief Executive that a Special Board Meeting would be held.

At Council Meeting held on 6 November 2023 the following was agreed:

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- SPR/148/2023: Report on Conacre Lettings : it was agreed an expression of interest in respect to cutting of grass at the hay meadow at Kilbroney Park be issued and that Council enter into a conacre licence agreement for a period of 1 year rather than 4 years and that officers explore other options and bring report back to officers after 12 months.

Councillor Byrne seconded Councillor Hanlon's proposal stating the appointment of an ICT would help to dispel some of the false news that was being associated with the project. He recognised that people did have genuine fears and questions they need answered however that cannot happen until there is a team in place to do this.

Councillor Reilly stated that Kilkeel Harbour was put forward as a potential project for Belfast Region City Deal however it didn't go through and this had to be accepted. At that time all of the potential projects had gone through rigorous scrutiny. He stated the misinformation around this project was staggering and wondered who was spreading these untruths. He stated there would be opportunities with the project.

Councillor McAteer stated the officers were well versed in how to conduct and bring projects forward, however, for the benefit of new Councillors he felt it maybe helpful for officers to explain how the stakeholder engagement would take place and what form it would take.

Mr Mallon advised the Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Strategy was presented to the Programme Board at its recent meeting and was agreed as the framework for engagement with the public and key stakeholders as the project progressed through the various stages. He stated it would be the responsibility of the Project and Programme Board to design the specific stakeholder engagement events with regard to how and when engagement would take place.

Councillor Enright stated he would be seeking a vote on the issue at the meeting as in his opinion the appointment of an ICT would inevitably commit Council to a large sum of money without seeing what the position of the National Trust as the landowner was.

Councillor Truesdale stated that since Council reconvened after the election, every time the Gateway project has come up, the Alliance had been told the Project Board was the place to discuss issues relating to the project. She stated the Project Board finally met on the 6th of October, the minutes of which were circulated on the 11th of October for review. She stated around 50% of her comments and questions were missing therefore she sent them back for editing and they have not been seen. She went on to say that for this Committee, with no idea of what was agreed at the Project Board, to approve through ICT procurement, which was going to cost the ratepayers hundreds, thousands, millions of pounds was extremely bad governance and a total disservice to the ratepayer.

Councillor Sharvin stated it was a bit disingenuous to say that committee members don't have any idea as to what occurs at the Programme Board. He hoped that party colleagues across the chamber that sit on the Project Board would regularly update their other party members on discussions that take place at the meetings.

The Chief Executive stated it was really important for Members to understand that by approving the process to proceed with ICT does not commit the Council to any costs at this point. The recommendation is to approve the Project Board to progress procurement of an ICT to develop the project to Final Business Case stage. The appointment of the ICT would be subject to Council approval also. This report was allowing Council to get ahead of the procurement process without any commitment to actually signing a contract until such time as a contract for funding was in place.

At Council Meeting held on 6 November 2023 the following was agreed:

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The Chairperson advised she would take Councillor Enright's proposal at this stage and asked for a roll call vote.

The results of the vote were as follows:

FOR: 2
AGAINST: 12
ABSTENTIONS: 0

The Chairperson advised she would take Councillor Hanlon's proposal at this stage and asked for a roll call vote.

The results of the vote were as follows:

FOR: 12
AGAINST: 2
ABSTENTIONS: 0

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the recommendations of the Project Board to progress procurement of an Integrated Consultancy Team (ICT) to develop the project to Final Business Case stage. Appointment of the ICT would be subject to Council approval of the Contract for Funding/Funding Agreement.

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 Howell, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 9-18 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 O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Brennan, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/145/2023: PROPOSED SURRENDER OF LEASE AT LISNACREE

Read: Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding proposed surrender of lease at Lisnacree. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to surrender the lease of the lands known as Lisnacree Community Centre subject to the terms set out in this report.**

It was also agreed that the Director would revert to Members regarding operational matters concerned with the site.

SPR/146/2023: LICENCE FOR UNIT AT MILLTOWN PLAYING FIELDS

Read: Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding licence for unit at Milltown Playing Fields. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to:**

- **Enter into a Licence with the Club noted within the report for a period of two years to enable the Club to retain the container placed upon Council lands which are outlined in red on the map attached to the officer's report;**
- **To grant the licence subject to a licence fee of one peppercorn subject to Departmental Consent**

SPR/147/2023: RENEWAL OF LICENCE AT BESSBROOK COMMUNITY CENTRE

Read: Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding renewal of licence at Bessbrook Community Centre. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to enter into a lease in respect of an office space at Bessbrook Community Centre to the party identified in the officer's report for a period of**

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12 months subject to the market value rent as noted in the report.

SPR/148/2023:

REPORT ON CONACRE LETTINGS

Read:

Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding Conacre Lettings. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed:

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

- **That an Expression of Interest is issued in respect the cutting of grass from the Hay meadow, Kilbroney Park and that Council enter into a Conacre Licence Agreement for a period of 4 years with the highest bidder.**
- **That an Expression of Interest is issued in respect of the grazing of the lands at Courtney Hill, Newry and that Council enter into a Conacre Licence Agreement with the highest bidder for a period of four years.**
- **That an Expression of Interest is issued in respect of the grazing of the lands at Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel and that Council enter into a Conacre Licence Agreement with the highest bidder for a period of four years.**
- **That an Expression of Interest is issued in respect of the grazing of the lands at Rostrevor Cemetery, Rostrevor and that Council enter into a Conacre Licence Agreement with the highest bidder for a period of up to 2 years.**

SPR/149/2023: LEASE OF OFFICE SPACE AT MARKET HOUSE, BALLYNAHINCH

This item was withdrawn by the Chief Executive

SPR/150/2023:

FOREST PARK CHARGING

At Council Meeting held on 6 November 2023 the following was agreed:

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Read: Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism regarding forest park car park charging. **(Copy circulated).**

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

- **1 free carpark pass per household within the District for 1 park of their choice;**
- **To proceed with the collection of drive-up charges and the issuing of resident carpark passes as detailed in the officer's report at the charging rates set out in the report.**

It was also agreed to undertake a 6 month review on the operation of the scheme.

SPR/151/2023: ELECTRONIC GRANT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Read: Report dated 12 October 2023 from Mr A Patterson, Assistant Director, Economy, Growth and Tourism regarding Electronic Grant Management System. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Brennan, seconded by Councillor Byrne it was agreed officers would prepare a communications strategy to assist groups and service users with the move to a new system and approve the business case to procure a new grant management system, and to appoint a suitable supplier from the G-Cloud Framework following the conclusion of procurement processes.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.15pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 6 November 2023.

Signed: **Councillor Leeanne McEvoy**
Chairperson

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