

NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 19 September 2023 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, District Council Offices, Monaghan Row, Newry and via MS Teams.

Chair: Councillor T Andrews (Chamber)

In Attendance in Chamber:

Councillor W Clarke	Councillor D Finn
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor O Magennis
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Savage	

In Attendance via Teams:

Councillor T Kelly	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor M Rice	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale	

Non-Members in Attendance
Via Teams:

Councillor C Enright	Councillor O Hanlon
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Officials in Attendance:

Mr A Cassells, Director Sustainability and Environment
Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director Waste Management
Ms G Kane, Acting Assistant Director: Facilities and Maintenance
Mrs L Cummins, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs L Dillon, Democratic Services Officer

SE/083/2023: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies received from Mr A Mallon, Acting Assistant Director, Facilities and Maintenance.

The Chairperson extended sincere sympathy to the family, friends and colleagues of Councillor Damien O'Reilly from Meath County Council, who passed away suddenly.

SE/084/2023: DECLARATIONS OF "CONFLICTS OF INTEREST"

Councillor Reilly and Andrews declared an interest in item 17 - 'FASTER' EV Project Update.

SE/085/2023: ACTION SHEET OF THE SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 AUGUST 2023

Read: Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 22 August 2023. *(Circulated)*.

SE/071/2023: Report re: Upgrade to Public Space CCTV Systems

In response to a query from Councillor Truesdale in relation to toilets at Newcastle Centre and Central Promenade toilets, Mrs Kane advised that they were not included within the Business Plan however she would continue to liaise with officers. She stated the current toilet blocks were modular units and would be most likely be taken away and replaced however, the type of

structure for replacement units would depend upon the specification and the contractor. She advised that standardised opening times were part of the Public Convenience Strategy Document.

Councillor Reilly advised he had been working closely with officers regarding standardised opening times of toilets and was confident a satisfactory outcome would be achieved. He requested if there was any further update on the monitoring of vegetables for pesticide residue.

Mrs Murphy advised there would be an upcoming presentation at a future committee meeting regarding food sampling which would incorporate pesticide sampling.

Mr Cassells agreed to contact Councillor Clarke outside of the meeting with an update on the Island Park toilets Newcastle, which had been out of action for some time.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 22 August 2023 be noted and actions removed as marked.**

FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR DECISION

SE/086/2023: **REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION IN RELATION TO ESTABLISHMENT OF A DISABLED USERS FORUM AND OTHER MATTERS**

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment regarding a Notice of Motion on Recycling. *(Circulated).*

Councillor Clarke presented the following Notice of Motion which was referred to the Sustainability and Environment Committee from the Council Meeting held on Monday 4 September 2023:

***"That this Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the district's tourist attractions, services and products are fully accessible for all.
Will establish a disabled users forum to proactively engage with local residents & organisations who experience accessibility issues in the district to hear first-hand how they experience council facilities and local attractions.
All Council facilities and promotional material will clearly display a list of local changing places and accessible facilities in the district.
All Council employees will be made aware of changing places, units and accessible features within council facilities.
Furthermore, when an event is applied for that it includes the use of portable toilet facilities a mobile changing places unit must be provided also."***

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Clarke stated the purpose of the Motion was to make changes for people with disabilities in the community and across the District and ensuring that facilities, local attractions and events throughout the district were made accessible for all.

He stated that individuals with disabilities had faced unnecessary obstacles that prevented them from fully participating and enjoying what the district had to offer and this should be changed by working towards the creation of a more accessible and inclusive environment with the prioritisation of addressing inequalities and breaking down barriers. He stated that ways of achieving this would mean more 'changing places' facilities, improvement of local transport services, ensuring infrastructure is fit for purpose and looking at innovative ways to make towns and villages more inclusive.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Kearns commended Councillor Clarke for highlighting the importance of fully accessible tourist attractions for all throughout the district regardless of ability. It was crucial that Council officials set up a disabled user forum in which residents and community groups could express their views as to how this issue could be improved.

Councillor Truesdale stated that she agreed with sentiments of the motion but did not want it being a tokenistic populous gesture. She stated that the title and wording of the motion seemed to only apply to disabled people with accessibility issues and discriminated against those disabled people who did not have the same issues. She proposed the following amendment to the title and wording of the Motion:

'Inclusion and Accessibility Forum - That this Council recognises the importance of ensuring that the districts tourist attractions, services and products are fully accessible and inclusive for all and to establish an accessibility and inclusion forum to pro-actively engage with local residents and organisations who experience accessibility and inclusion.'

Councillor Kelly seconded the proposed amendment.

Councillor Clarke did not accept Councillor Truesdale's proposed amendment.

The Chairperson put the amended motion to a vote, the results of which was as follows:

FOR:	2
AGAINST:	13
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The proposal was lost.

Councillors Savage, Taylor, Finn and Reilly all spoke in support of Councillor Clarke's motion, stating that the terminology used was adequate and addressed all the core issues. Members needed to work together on the matter to achieve the desired results and see positive outcomes if a forum was established.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Kearns , it was agreed that Members consider the Motion and approve the following recommendations:**

- **To establish a disabled users forum to proactively engage with local residents & organisations who experience accessibility issues in the district to hear first-hand how they experience council facilities and local attractions.**
- **All Council facilities and promotional material will clearly display a list of local changing places and accessible facilities in the district.**

- **All Council employees will be made aware of changing places, units and accessible features within council facilities.**
- **When an event is applied for that it includes the use of portable toilet facilities and a mobile changing places unit.**

SE/087/2023: NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN ACTIVE TRAVEL MASTERPLAN UPDATES TO COUNCIL AND SHARED FOOTWAY/CYCLEWAY ROUTE DEVELOPMENT AT DUNDRUM/MURLOUGH

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment regarding Newry Mourne and Down Active Travel Masterplan updates to Council and Shared Footway/Cycleway Route Development at Dundrum/Murlough **(Circulated)**.

Councillor Savage stated on behalf of the SDLP party he welcomed any such funding for the District and supported the project, in principle. He stated however, that preference would be to retain the cyclists on the shore side with the cycle lane running along the same side from Clough, mitigating the need to cross a very busy road. He proposed that Council write to the Department for Infrastructure requesting a crossing at the junction of the Dundrum Road with the Old Road in order to progress the project.

Councillor Finn seconded the proposal.

Councillor Clarke concurred with Councillor Savage’s comments stating safety measures needed to be installed, it was a fast stretch of road, which all parties had previously lobbied on to improve crossing safely. He added he hoped to see the cycle lane on the Castlewellan route extended into Newcastle.

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the report and Councillor Savage’s comments, raising concerns about the lane that adjacently exists to the A2 carriageway referred to as a hard shoulder. She stated the hard shoulder was not enforced with cars regularly parking along without any consequences. She asked whether the question could be put to the Department that parking should be discouraged within the design of the travel way.

Mr Cassells confirmed he was happy to write to the Department for Infrastructure regarding the points raised and update Members accordingly.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the proposed project to construct the Shared Footway/Cycleway route on the Council owned old railway route between Murlough and Dundrum and to approve the approach moving forward to provide 2 updates per year to Council on DfI and other Active Travel projects in the district.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was also agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure raising the following points:

- **To request a crossing at the junction of the Dundrum Road with the Old Road in order to progress the project.**
- **Whether parking would be discouraged within the design of the travel way?**

SE/088/2023: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING PARTNERING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE REMOVAL OF SNOW AND ICE FROM TOWN CENTRE FOOTWAYS AND PEDESTRIAN AREAS

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Aidan Mallon, Acting Assistant Director, Facility Management & Maintenance regarding memorandum of understanding partnering arrangements for the removal of snow and ice from town centre footways and pedestrian areas. ***(Circulated)***.

In presenting the report Mr Cassells clarified that the start date would be the 1st November 2023 and not 1st October 2023 as stated in the report. He advised that Council had no statutory obligation to clear snow and ice from footpaths, it was a partnering agreement, and salt would be provided by Department for Infrastructure, free of charge, but would rely on Council redeploying staff to assist DfI.

Councillor Clarke welcomed the report stating he had previously brought a Notice of Motion with on this particular item. He stated it was a crucial piece of work by Council to ensure that members of public were able to safely navigate footpaths and roads. He said that regular replenishing of grit bins was a problem in particular, King Street, Newcastle and School Hill, Dundrum, where there was only one grit bin provided that was not being regularly stocked. He stated that clear communication was required between Council and DfI Roads on what grit was available and whether they would be replenishing priority grit bins in dangerous situations. He further requested clarification on when and who would trigger the activation point.

Councillor Taylor requested that Bessbrook and Newtownhamilton be included in the partnership arrangement going forward.

Councillor Finn also requested Canal Street, Canal Bank onto New Street, Newry along with St Josephs, Our Lady's and potentially students walking on footpaths from St Colman's schools be included.

Councillor Enright complimented Councillor Clarke for following up on the original Motion. He stated the key point of the original Motion he brought in 2012 referred to the practise of sending street sweepers home instead of reassigning them to salt pavements. He also suggested consideration be given to purchasing a small number of gritters to enable street sweepers to cover large amounts easily and that consideration be given to reviewing the small number of streets highlighted and include shopping streets or particularly dangerous streets.

Councillor Reilly stated one of the biggest concerns would be the issue of 'Public Liability' which would require clarity on.

Councillor Clarke suggested that if agreement could be reached on what was contained within the report now to be actioned for this Winter and other areas be looked at in the future and the possibility of being added to the list.

Councillor Taylor advised he did not want to hold back what was proposed in the report however would like it noted that other areas be expanded on and included on in the near future and not forgot about.

Councillor Savage agreed with Councillor Clarke's comments, stating it was vital that Kildare Street area encompassing Canal Bank and the front of the Town Hall and access to the

Sean Holywood centre in Newry be included as it was heavily pedestrianised. He suggested Members engage with DfI to ensure this was an evolving document, while ensuring the work commenced between now and this winter to test its effectiveness and measures for improvement.

The Chairperson acknowledged Members had raised concerns about towns and villages, highlighting there were areas in Crossgar and Saintfield which would benefit from being added to the list.

Councillor Kelly echoed the sentiments of the Chairperson including Rowallane on the list and also proposed the following:

'Council Management to follow up and look into using Council street sweepers to grit streets during icy weather instead of sending employees home.'

Councillor Kearns seconded the proposal.

All Members were in agreement.

Mr Cassells advised he was happy to evaluate all efficient methods for clearing snow of footways and report back to Committee.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the proposal and extend for a further three years, in accordance with the 'Scope of the Agreement' Clause 3 and Appendix 1 of the officers report as amended, and to sign the updated MOU with additional locations.**

AGREED: **It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Kelly, Seconded by Councillor Kearns that Council Management follow up and look into using council street sweepers to grit streets during icy weather instead of sending employees home.**

EXEMPT INFORMATION ITEMS

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McEvoy, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 6-12 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 Magennis, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

SE/089/2023: NEW SERVICE PROVISION TENDER PROCESS

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Aidan Mallon, Acting Assistant Director, Head of Maintenance, regarding new Service Provision Tender Process. (*Circulated*)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to note the report and agree the following:

- 1. To approve the extension of the current Agency Agreement with The Department for Infrastructure until 31st March 2024 and permit additional extensions as required, up to 31st October 2024.**
- 2. To provide authorisation that NMDDC as a member of the 8 Council Consortium, will equally share the burden of additional legal costs associated with Belfast City Council's defence of the Writ.**

SE/090/2023: PURCHASE OF A NEW COUNCIL BOAT FOR AQUATIC GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS DISTRICT WIDE

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Aidan Mallon, Acting Assistant Director, Facilities Management & Maintenance regarding the purchase of a new Council boat for aquatic grounds maintenance at various locations District wide. (*Circulated*)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to note the content of the report and associated Business Case and accept the conclusion of the Business Cases that Option 3 be chosen as the preferred option. This would see the procurement of a suitable aquatic boat/clearance unit.

SE/091/2023: PURCHASE OF NEW TRACTORS & CUTTING MACHINERY FOR GROUNDS MAINTENANCE AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS DISTRICT WIDE

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Aidan Mallon, Acting Assistant Director, Facilities Management & Maintenance regarding the purchase of new tractors and cutting machinery for grounds maintenance at various locations District wide. (*Circulated*)

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage seconded by Councillor Truesdale, it was agreed to note the content of the report and associated Business Case and accept the conclusion of the Business Cases that Option 3 be chosen as the preferred option. This would see the procurement of effective replacement machinery.

SE/092/2023: BUSINESS CASE FOR THE USE OF A SUITABLE SUPPLY FRAMEWORK TO FACILITATE THE USE OF FUEL CARDS

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director, Waste Management (Acting) regarding a business case for the use of a suitable supply framework to facilitate the use of fuel cards.
(Circulated).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, it was agreed to approve the business case within appendix 1 of the officer's report for the continuing use of a supply framework to support the use of fuel cards across the District.

FOR NOTING – The following items are deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014

SE/093/2023: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEMBERS' MONTHLY BULLETIN – 31 AUGUST 2023

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Members' Monthly Bulletin held on 31 August 2023. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to note the Bulletin.

SE/094/2023: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING IN COMMITTEE MINUTES OF THURSDAY 29 JUNE 2023

Read: Arc21 Joint Committee Meeting In Committee Minutes held on 29 June 2023. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to note the minutes.

FOR NOTING

SE/095/2023: REVIEW OF 2023 SUMMER SEASON CLEANSING

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Ms S Murphy, Assistant Director, Waste Management (Acting) regarding a review of 2023 Summer season cleansing. *(Circulated)*.

Councillor Truesdale commended the pavement clean and pressure washes carried out with the district, particularly in Newcastle where there was a high footfall, however stated there was a real need for a much more regular clean at a sustainable level. She also highlighted that there were no additional enforcement officers seasonal or otherwise employed and jobs were advertised on a UK Wide Recruitment Agency site when they really need to be advertised on the GETGOT portal as this is where the Council's own website directed people who searching for jobs.

Councillor Savage requested if Monaghan Street and Hill Street could undergo a deep clean as soon as possible as it had not been done in sometime.

Mrs Murphy advised deep cleansing was an external contract that was currently under review and due for re-procurement. She stated some equipment had been acquired to be used in-house and pending the re-tendering process, officers would investigate the allocation of resources at the areas highlighted.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the contents of the review of 2023 Summer season cleansing.

SE/096/2023: REVIEW OF BUS SHELTER REQUESTS BEING ACTIONED BY COUNCIL

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mrs G Kane, Acting Assistant Director of Facilities Management & Maintenance regarding review of bus shelter requests being actioned by Council. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the report.

SE/097/2023: UPDATE ON MUNICIPAL CEMETERY DEVELOPMENT

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mrs G Kane, Acting Assistant Director of Facilities Management & Maintenance regarding an update of Municipal Cemetery Development. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the contents of the officer's report.

SE/098/2023: SUSTAINABLE FOODS UPDATE

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment regarding an update on sustainable foods. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the update in relation to sustainable foods.

SE/099/2023: 'FASTER' EV PROJECT UPDATE

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment regarding an update on the 'FASTER' EV Project. *(Circulated)*.

In response to a query from Councillor Finn, Mr Cassells advised that the 'EV Chargers' would not be installed until the month of December due to funding constraints. He stated the scheme was to be welcomed and an opportunity had arisen that allowed additional funding for the installation of more chargers than originally envisaged. Mr Cassells advised he would update Councillor Finn further once more information was available.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the update in relation to the 'FASTER' EV Project.

SE/100/2023: UPDATE ON DEVELOPMENT OF A SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & ANNUAL ACTION PLANS

Read: Report dated 19 September 2023 from Mr A Cassells, Director of Sustainability & Environment regarding an update in relation to the development of a Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy & Annual Action Plans. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the update on the development of a Council Sustainability & Climate Change Strategy and Annual Action Plans. Elected representatives were also invited to provide any initial feedback, prior to public consultation, using the information provided.

SE/101/2023: ARC21 JOINT COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES OF THURSDAY 29 JUNE 2023

Read: Minutes of ARC21 Joint Committee Meeting held on Thursday 29 June 2023. *(Circulated)*.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the Minutes of the ARC21 Committee Meeting held on 29 June 2023.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 19.29 pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2 October 2023.

Signed: **Councillor T Andrews**
Chairperson of Sustainability & Environment Committee

Signed: **Mr A Cassells**
Director of Sustainability & Environment