



January 31st, 2025

**Notice Of Meeting**








You are requested to attend the Council meeting to be held on **Monday, 3rd February 2025** at **6:00 pm** in **Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre.**

# Agenda

## 1.0 Apologies and Chairperson's Remarks

## 2.0 Declarations of Interest

## 3.0 To set a District Rate for the Financial Year 2025/26

 <i>Council Report re District Rate 2025-26 - final_.pdf</i>	<i>Page 1</i>
 <i>Appendix 1 - MTFP 202526.pdf</i>	<i>Page 8</i>
 <i>Appendix 2 - General Estimates of Rate 202526 DfC Return.pdf</i>	<i>Page 9</i>
 <i>Appendix 3 - Capital Strategy Report 2025-26.pdf</i>	<i>Page 11</i>
 <i>Appendix 4 - Capital Programme at 31 Jan 2025.pdf</i>	<i>Page 16</i>
 <i>Appendix 5 - Treasury Management Strategy 2025-26.pdf</i>	<i>Page 18</i>
 <i>Appendix 6 - Minimum Revenue Provsion Statement 2025-26.pdf</i>	<i>Page 35</i>

### 3.1 Items deemed to be exempt under paragraph 3 of part 1 of schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (NI) 2014

Copy report to follow.

## 4.0 Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 13th January 2025

 <i>Action Sheet 2025 01 13.pdf</i>	<i>Page 37</i>
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### *Council Minutes For Adoption and Signing*

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## 5.0 Minutes of Council Meeting held on 13 January 2025


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### *Committee Minutes for Consideration and Adoption*

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## 6.0 Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2025

 <i>Economy Regeneration and Tourism Minutes 2025 01 20.pdf</i>	<i>Page 58</i>
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## 7.0 Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 January 2025

 *Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting Minutes 2025-01-23.pdf*

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## 8.0 Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2025

 *Active and Healthy Communities Minutes 2025 01 27.pdf*

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## 9.0 Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 January 2025

 *Sustainabilty\_and\_Environment\_Committee\_Minutes\_2025\_01\_29.pdf*

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## 10.0 Planning Section

There were no issues arising.

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### *Correspondence*

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## 11.0 Correspondence Report

 *Correspondence Report Council 2025 02 03.pdf*

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### 11.1 Correspondence from Northern Ireland Housing Council

Minutes from meetings held in September, October and November 2024 attached.

 *Housing Council Minutes - 10th October 2024.pdf*

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 *Housing Council Minutes - 14th November 2024.pdf*

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 *Housing Council Minutes - 12th September 2024.pdf*

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### 11.2 Response from the Minister for the Economy re: Notice of Motion, Young People with Special Educational Needs under 19

 *Response from Minister for the Economy NOM Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19.pdf*

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### 11.3 Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road

 *Dept for Infrastructure Newry Southern Relief Road Notice of Intention to make Statutory Orders.pdf*

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**11.4 Response received from the Minister of Health re: Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service**

 **Response from Minister of Health re NOM Residential Rehabilitation Service.pdf** **Page 120**

**11.5 Response received from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council re: Notice of Motion Gender Based Violence Against Women**

 **Response from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council - Motion Violence against Women.pdf** **Page 122**

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**11.6 Response received from Chief Executive SEHSCT re Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service**

 **Response from CEO - SEHSCT re NOM Residential Rehabilitation Service.pdf** **Page 123**

 **Response from SEHSCT re NOM Residential Rehabilitation Service.pdf** **Page 124**

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***Notices of Motion***

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**12.0 Notice of Motion - Department of Health's Consultation on Hospital Reconfiguration Framework re: Daisy Hill Hospital**

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Feehan:

*"This Council notes the Department of Health's ongoing consultation on the hospital reconfiguration framework; expresses its dissatisfaction that the Department has failed to schedule a public meeting in Newry as part of their consultation exercise; registers its concern at the proposed designation of Daisy Hill Hospital as a General Hospital.*

*This Council calls on the Department of Health to schedule a public meeting in Newry on the hospital reconfiguration framework before the February 28th deadline; commits to submitting a consultation response that supports the designation of Daisy Hill as an Area Hospital and further calls for the Department of Health to engage with the Irish Government to identify mechanisms for establishing Daisy Hill as a cross-border Area Hospital."*

**13.0 Notice of Motion - Street Lighting**

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Finn:

*"NMDDC notes with concern areas which are lacking or have no street lighting, particularly in light of the issue of women's safety and will in conjunction with the Department of infrastructure undertake a scoping exercise to identify areas which could avail of additional street lighting across the District".*

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## **14.0 Notice of Motion - Parking Strategy**

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Mathers:

*"That this Council;*

*Recognises;*

- .It's responsibility to make Newry, Mourne and Down an attractive, accessible and welcoming place to live, work, shop and socialise in*
- .That our residents with disabilities face challenges in their day to day life and Council, like all public authorities, must do all they can to address these challenges*
- .Off-street public car parking is a competency of Council*
- .Access to off-street car parking can be a challenge for persons with disabilities. This challenge can be in physically accessing pay stations or in the use of mobile apps*

*Therefore, calls on Council;*

- To examine the feasibility, and implement when viable, free car parking for 'Blue Badge' holders in all Council run car park.*
- To develop a publicity campaign to promote this change*
- To provide an urgent update to elected members on the new Parking Strategy mandated by full Council in July 2024."*

<b>Report to:</b>	<b>Council</b>
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3 February 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>District Rate 2025/26</b>
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Marie Ward, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Gerard Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

<b>For decision</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>For noting only</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Members are asked to approve the recommendations at 3.1 below.

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1	District councils are obliged under legislation to fix for the next financial year the amount estimated to be required to be raised by means of rates made by the Council before 15 February each year; section 3 of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 and Regulation 3 of Part 2 of the Local Government (Capital Finance and Accounting) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011 refer.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Key issues</b>
2.1	<p><b>Chief Executive's submission to Council on the adequacy of the Council's reserves position and robustness of the revenue estimates.</b></p> <p>In accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Chief Executive, as Chief Financial Officer is required to provide assurance to Members on the robustness of the revenue estimates and the adequacy of the Council's reserves position as part of the rate setting process prior to submission to the Department of Communities (DfC).</p> <p>Detailed estimates have been formulated, presented to and scrutinised by Members at Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG). These have taken into account outturns from previous years, corporate pressures, planned savings and efficiencies, current spending plans and projected future investment and that adequate funding is available to protect frontline services.</p> <p>There have been five SFWG meetings since November 2024 in preparation for striking of the 2025/26 rate. The action sheets for each meeting are attached at <b>Appendix 7</b>.</p> <p>As a result of this extensive process and the detailed analysis that has been undertaken, I am satisfied that the estimates presented should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2025/26 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council have been made in the preparation of the estimates.</p>

## **Significant uncertainties highlighted by the Chief Executive**

### **Future impact of current Economic Climate**

We continue to operate in unprecedented times, with higher interest rates and inflationary pressures which have the equivalent adverse impact on Council as it does on our ratepayers. A recent report from Ulster University Economic Policy Centre (4 December 2024) highlights that;

*'the local economy has had a relatively strong 2024, particularly in the first half of the year when it exceeded UK performance, yet recent indicators point to slower growth in the second half of this year. Additional borrowing and spending announced in the UK Budget will increase growth in the short term, but looking ahead, this raises inflation expectations and interest rates. With higher taxes coming, particularly National Insurance Contributions, lower growth can be expected in the medium term.'*

The future impact of inflation and interest rates rises on Council's operations, on our rate base and on our finances remains uncertain, and many assumptions are included within our budgets for 2025/26 (see 2.3).

In addition, there are several other significant uncertainties within the current estimates:

### **Staff Costs**

Staff costs are in excess of 50% of Council's expenditure. Any increases in rates of pay therefore can have a material impact on Council finances.

The National pay award for 2024/25 was agreed on 22 October 2024. However, with the rates of inflation still high, the Council, like other employers, is likely to receive pay demands for 2025/26 reflecting the economic environment.

In setting the Rate for 2025/26, pay assumptions have had to be made as the Pay Award for 2025/26 will not be known until later in the financial year. The outcome of any pay processes will have to be managed in year, if the Pay Award exceeds the working assumptions made.

### **Draft budget at NI Executive level**

With the return of the Assembly, a budget is developed at Executive Level. Prior to the collapse of the Assembly, Ministers were determining a three-year budget for NI (2022-25). This would have been a significant help to Local Councils in determining the Annual District Rate having a multiyear budget. In the absence of an agreed and legislated annual budget at this point, some significant uncertainties remain at the time of striking the district rate.

Included within our 2025/26 estimates are various areas of funding received from Central Government. We have included amounts on the basis of our previous arrangements with Central Government. However, it is important to note that until such times as a budget is agreed by the Northern Ireland Executive these funding streams are uncertain. Also, the Regional Rate for 2025/26 has not yet been set, but there is a proposed increase of 5% for Domestic and 3% for Non-Domestic properties.

### Rates Support Grant (RSG)

Rates Support Grant was devised to assist the least wealthy and most deprived and rural Councils to provide equality of service provision equal to the wealthier Councils. Seven Councils are impacted by the cuts and four Councils not impacted. NMDDC is significantly impacted with a **14.41%** share of the regional pot.

These cuts will fall across a range of services but given the correlation between low income/deprivation and Section 75 groups and inequality it will fall hardest on the poorest within these areas. The Rate Support Grant has been significantly eroded over the years to the point where it is now essentially ineffective in delivering the policy objective. See table below to show how the grant (total Northern Ireland regional pot) has been reduced over the years;

Year	NI Recurrent Baseline Allocation £'000	Notes
2008/09	£20,497	<11% reduction
2015/16	£18,300	
2016/17	£18,300	
2017/18	£17,568	<4% reduction
2018/19	£16,865	<4% reduction
2019/20	£15,865	<6% reduction
2020/21	£15,865	
2021/22	£11,924	<25% reduction
2022/23	£8,924	<25% reduction
2023/24	£4,900	<45% reduction
2024/25	£3,100	<36% reduction

Until an NI Executive Draft Budget is agreed for 2025/26, the total amount of RSG to be awarded to the Local Government sector will not be known. However, the table above demonstrates a worrying trend of significant reductions in the level of RSG being granted to the relevant Councils. This will have a significant impact on the Council's finance for future years also.

Council's allocation for 2024/25 was £509k and Council had a 16.42% share of the regional pot of £3.1m. On the 16 December 2024, DfC communicated to Councils



	<p>the details of the percentages of eligibility of RSG, Council's share has decreased to <b>14.41%</b> for <b>2025/26</b> (2024/25 – 16.42%). However, the level of the RSG budget for 2025/26 will not be set until the Departmental Budget has been confirmed, however DfC have advised Council's to use the prior year regional pot as the maximum available.</p> <p><b>Uncertainties in relation to the Windsor Framework</b>                  Various uncertainties remain as to the impact of Brexit and the implementation of the Windsor Framework on the NI Economy, the NMDDC rate base and funding streams. No provision has been made in the estimates for any financial implications arising. Furthermore, included within our 2025/26 estimates are various areas of funding received from the European Union under programmes which we have been advised will continue during the coming year.</p> <p><b>Councils Rates Base going forward</b>                  Another significant uncertainty for Council is the number of non-Domestic Revaluation Challenges outstanding with Land and Property Services Northern Ireland (LPSNI) at October 2024. £14.5m of the Net Annual Value of Non-Domestic properties is currently under challenge. If a significant proportion of these challenges are successful, this will have a negative impact on our estimated and actual penny product which would devalue our ratebase.</p> <p>LPSNI have also indicated that there is very little activity across Northern Ireland on the non-domestic rates base side. Some buoyancy evident in the domestic market but this is fairly limited.</p> <p><b>Sustainability Considerations</b>                  One of the eight strategic objectives of the Councils 'draft' Corporate Plan 2024 to 2027 is to "Protect and enhance our environment and address the climate change emergency to secure a sustainable future". Work is in progress and reported through the Sustainability and Environment Committee on the Sustainability considerations including the Producer Extended Producer Responsibility (pEPR) Scheme.</p> <p>The Department for Environment, Food &amp; Rural Affairs (DEFRA) communicated with Council on the 4 December 2024 in relation to a Provisional Notice of Assessment for 2025/26. The total estimated efficient cost for managing household packaging waste is £4,133,000. pEPR is still subject to parliamentary process and Draft Regulations are expected to come into force in early in 2025. Council have allocated the equivalent of 1% of the rate against pEPR income for 2025/26.</p>
<p>2.2</p>	<p><b>Long Term Financing of Council</b></p> <p>I am satisfied that the estimates presented, subject to the significant uncertainties noted above, should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2025/26 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council as known to us have been made in the preparation of the estimates.</p> <p>The minimum prudent level of reserves that the Council should maintain is a matter of judgement. CIPFA (the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and</p>

	<p>Accountancy) guidance does not set a statutory minimum level but advised Councils to have reserves appropriate to meet the medium term financial commitments. Therefore, it is up to the Council itself, taking into account all the relevant local circumstances, to make a professional judgement on what the appropriate level of reserves and balances should be. As advised previously reserves are not to be used for paying for the normal operations of the Council. This is not prudent financial management.</p> <p>Reserves are the Councils safety net for unforeseen circumstances, the consequences of not keeping a prudent minimum level of reserves can be serious. In the event of a major problem or a series of events, the Council would run a serious risk of a deficit or of being forced to cut spending during the year in a damaging and arbitrary way.</p> <p>It is generally accepted and considered reasonable that 1 month's expenditure is a minimum level of prudence which must be maintained which equates to approximately <b>£9.5m</b> currently. This is based on the projected salaries for 2025/26 and actual spend to suppliers for the last three quarters of the 2024/25 financial year.</p> <p>As noted above, there remains many significant financial uncertainties facing Council. The impact of higher interest rates, inflationary pressures and the current challenges to LPSNI valuation lists could have a significant impact on our rate base, presently the impact is unknown.</p> <p>The Capital Strategy Report 2025/26 (<i>see Appendix 3</i>) gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed in the implications for future financial sustainability.</p> <p>Council's capital programme (<i>see Appendix 4</i>) is a corporate priority to ensure investment within the District. Council reserves will assist with any economic impacts in relation to the increasing costs of construction and future economic challenges.</p> <p>Council Treasury Management Strategy (<i>Appendix 5</i>) summarises the management of the Council's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. Council has and will be borrowing and investing substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks.</p> <p>Where the Council finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP). See <i>Appendix 6</i> for the Council's MRP statement for 2025/26.</p> <p><b>Overall Position on Reserves</b></p> <p>I am therefore content that the current reserves held by the Council are adequate to meet the medium-term financial commitments of NMDDC.</p>
2.3	<b>Key factors contributing to proposed rate increase in 2025/26</b>

	<p>Council's Treasury Management experts have advised <i>'The impact on the UK from the government's Autumn Budget is, slower expected interest rate cuts, a short-term boost to but modestly weaker economic growth over the medium term, together with the impact from President-elect Trump's second term in office and uncertainties around US domestic and foreign policy, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2025/26'</i>.</p> <p>The impact of higher interest rates and inflationary pressures will continue to affect Council services in 2025/26, with assumptions made and included within budgets as to the continuing impact on our trading operations;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Council has allowed for a <b>2.5%</b> National Pay award in 2025/26. The exact pay award will not be known until later in the year; however, it is in line with what other Local Authorities are predicting.</li> <li>• An allowance has been included within our estimates for vacancies within salaried posts. The vacancy allowance is evaluated at <b>6%</b> of gross payroll costs for salaried staff. The assumption is that front line posts must be filled immediately, or service provision will be impacted, therefore no vacancy allowance for front line posts.</li> <li>• In October 2024, The UK Government has announced an increase in the amount of National Insurance paid by employers from 1 April 2025. At the moment Council (and other businesses) pay a rate of 13.8% on employees' earnings above a threshold of £9,100 a year. This rate is increasing to 15% in April 2025, and the threshold will be reduced to £5,000. The approximate cost of this increase to Council in 2025/26 is <b>£958k</b> (which adds 1.3% to the rate). This will be a recurring cost going forward.</li> <li>• In the last number of months, Council have approved an investment in frontline services at an approximate annual cost of <b>£873k</b>. The service investments are in the Sustainability and Environment Directorate and the Planning Department.</li> <li>• The increased tonnages and associated costs of waste and recycling across the District have been factored into the 2025/26 budgets. Waste contracts are linked with CPI, which was <b>2.5%</b> in December 2024.</li> <li>• The Council Insurance budget has increased by <b>£553k</b> based on 2024/25 actuals. Our Brokers stressed that we are in unprecedented times, and the current increasingly hardening market is accelerating across a range of covers. The restricted market for Local Authority risks is reflecting the hardening of the wider market - with few potential new entrants to what is an already limited market.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3.0</b></p>	<p><b>Recommendations</b></p>
<p>3.1</p>	<p>Members are asked to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group in relation to the 2025/26 rate setting process (see Appendix 7) and, having regard to the Chief Executive's statement as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011 (see 2.1 &amp; 2.2 above):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Approve an increase in the district rate for 2025-26 of 3.98% based on an estimated penny product of 2,525,089 meaning a non-domestic rate of 30.1884 pence and a domestic rate of 0.4862 pence;</b></li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Approve the Medium-Term Financial plan and authorise the 2025/26 expenditure included in the estimates (Appendix 1);</li> <li>3. Approve the General Estimates of Rates form 2025/26 to be signed by the Chief Financial Officer (Appendix 2);</li> <li>4. Approve the Capital Strategy Report for 2025/26 as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code. (See Appendix 3);</li> <li>5. Approve the Capital Programme (see Appendix 4);</li> <li>6. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26 (see Appendix 5);</li> <li>7. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025/26 (see Appendix 6).</li> <li>8. Approve the action sheets of the Strategic Finance Working Group relating to the rate setting process. (see Appendix 7: <i>Restricted item</i>)</li> </ol>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	Resource implications are as detailed in the appendices.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Equality and good relations implications</b>
5.1	No equality or good relations implications have been identified.
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Rural Proofing implications</b>
6.1	Due regard to rural needs has been considered in making the recommendation.
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
	<p>Appendix 1: Medium Term Financial Plan  Appendix 2: General Estimates of Rate 2025/26 – DfC Return  Appendix 3: Capital Strategy Report 2025/26  Appendix 4: Capital Programme at 31/1/2025  Appendix 5: Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26  Appendix 6: Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025/26  Appendix 7: Action Sheets of meetings of Strategic Finance Working Group to consider rate setting process 2025/26 [Restricted item].</p>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background documents</b>
	Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

**Newry, Mourne & Down District Council**  
**Medium Term Financial Plan**

	Actual 2023/24	Actual 2024/25	Proposed Rate 2025/26
	£		
Revenue Income	-13,346,371	-14,831,790	-16,974,890
	<b>-13,346,371</b>	<b>-14,831,790</b>	<b>-16,974,890</b>
Revenue Expenditure	33,695,578	34,206,435	36,470,500
Payroll	42,676,872	44,770,996	47,735,727
MRP	5,303,000	5,873,000	5,763,000
Loan Interest	2,357,000	2,957,500	3,743,000
PFF MRP costs	464,000	1,008,000	1,048,000
PFF (Reserve Net Off)	0	-1,008,000	-1,048,000
Total Net Spend	<b>71,150,079</b>	<b>72,976,141</b>	<b>76,737,337</b>
Rate Support Grant	-753,437	-804,580	-509,020
RSG loss - from reserves	-720,422	-364,430	
Economic Recovery Reserve	-2,250,000		
Net to be raised	<b>67,426,220</b>	<b>71,807,131</b>	<b>76,228,317</b>
Est'd product of 1 penny	2,471,219	2,473,259	2,525,089
ND District Rate (pence)	27.2846	29.0334	30.1884
Conversion factor for DR	0.016107	0.016107	0.016107
Domestic Rate (pence)	0.4395	0.4676	0.4862
0.4004	<b>5.99%</b>	<b>6.41%</b>	<b>3.98%</b>

## Department for Communities - General Estimates of Rates 2025/2026

Council:- Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

<b>Total Amount to be Raised</b>	76,737,337	
Reduced by Rates Support Grant	-509,020	Zero or negative amount to be entered
*/- Balance Applied	0	
<b>Amount to be Raised</b> (via District Rates, De-rating and Transferred Functions Grants)	76,228,317	
Total Penny Product (from table below)	2,525,089	
<b>Non-Domestic District Rate</b>	30.1884	
Council Specific Conversion Factor	0.016107	
<b>Domestic District Rate</b>	0.4862	

Penny Product Information	
Estimated Penny Product (Rateable) - (To be based on figure provided by LPS, DoF, which is total of non-domestic and domestic penny products, with rating policy reductions applied; as this is for rate setting the council specific conversion factor will have been applied to domestic capital values)	2,390,900
Estimated Penny Product (De-rated) (To be based on figure provided by DoF)	107,850
Derived Penny Product (Transferred Functions Grant) (Fixed amount)	26,339
<b>Total Penny Product</b>	2,525,089

Grants payable by DfC	
Estimated De-rating Grant (DRG) (De-rating Grant payable by DfC during year will be Estimated PP (De-rated) x Non-domestic District Rate)	3,255,819
Transferred Functions Grant (TFG) (includes NI Local Government Commissioner for Standards Costs) (Derived Penny Product (TFG) x Non-domestic District Rate)	795,132
Rates Support Grant	509,020

Amount payable by DoF	
Estimated Amount to be Raised via District Rates (Rateable)	72,177,366

I certify that at a meeting of the council held on \_\_\_\_\_ these estimates, having been fully considered, and as applicable amended to the extent shown in red ink, were adopted and it was resolved to determine the rate shown here for the year commencing 1 April 2025.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Chief Executive

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX 3

### Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

#### Capital Strategy Report 2025/26

##### Introduction

This capital strategy report gives a high-level overview of how capital expenditure, capital financing and treasury management activity contribute to the provision of local public services along with an overview of how associated risk is managed and the implications for future financial sustainability. It has been written in an accessible style to enhance members' understanding of these sometimes technical areas.

Decisions made this year on capital and treasury management will have financial consequences for the Authority for many years into the future. They are therefore subject to both a national regulatory framework and to local policy framework, summarised in this report.

##### Capital Expenditure and Financing

Capital expenditure is where the Authority spends money on assets, such as property or vehicles, that will be used for more than one year. In local government this includes spending on assets owned by other bodies, including grants to other bodies enabling them to buy assets.

In 2025/26, the Authority is planning gross capital expenditure of £47.3m as summarised below:

*Table 1: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Expenditure in £ millions*

	2023/24 actual	2024/25 forecast *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Gross Capital Spend	15.2	28.9	47.3	35.0	11.8
Add: Leasing	-	2.2	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	15.2	31.1	47.3	35.0	11.8

*\* £2.2m of capital expenditure in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases and does not represent cash expenditure*

The main capital projects in 2025/26 include (gross): Newry City Centre Regeneration Project £30.1m, Kilkeel Leisure Centre £2.4m, Newry City Park £2.2m, Camlough Lake Recreational Hub £2.1m and Vehicles £2m. The Authority will not incur capital expenditure on investments.

**Governance:** Service managers prepare business cases on new projects which are included in the Authority's capital programme. Projections are collated by the corporate Finance Department who calculate the financing cost (which can be nil if the project is fully externally financed). The Council's Finance Working Group appraises all projects based on a comparison of service priorities against financing costs and makes recommendations to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee. The final Capital Programme is then agreed by full Council at a special meeting in February each year.

All capital expenditure must be financed, either from external sources (government grants and other contributions), the Authority's own resources (revenue, reserves and capital receipts) or debt (borrowing and leasing). The planned financing of the above expenditure is as follows:



Table 2: Capital financing in £ millions

	2023/24 actual	2024/25 forecast *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
External sources	3.3	8.6	9.6	14.8	8.4
Capital receipts	0.2	-	-	-	-
Revenue resources	6.7	5.5	-	-	-
Debt	5.0	17.0	37.7	20.2	3.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15.2</b>	<b>31.1</b>	<b>47.3</b>	<b>35.0</b>	<b>11.8</b>

\* £2.2m of debt financing in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases and does not represent cash expenditure

Debt is only a temporary source of finance, since loans and leases must be repaid, and this is therefore replaced over time by other financing, usually from revenue which is known as minimum revenue provision (MRP). Alternatively, proceeds from selling capital assets (known as capital receipts) may be used to replace debt finance. Planned MRP and use of capital receipts are as follows:

Table 3: Replacement of prior years' debt finance in £ millions

	2023/24 actual	2024/25 forecast	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Minimum revenue provision (MRP)	5.3	6.8	6.8	6.2	6.1
Capital receipts	0.2	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5.5</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.8</b>	<b>6.2</b>	<b>6.1</b>

- The Authority's full minimum revenue provision statement is shown at Appendix 5.

The Authority's cumulative outstanding amount of debt finance is measured by the capital financing requirement (CFR). This increases with new debt-financed capital expenditure and reduces with MRP and capital receipts used to replace debt. The CFR is expected to increase by £31m during 2025/26. Based on the above figures for expenditure and financing, the Authority's estimated CFR is as follows:

Table 4: Prudential Indicator: Estimates of Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	2023/24 actual	2024/25 forecast *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
<b>TOTAL CFR</b>	<b>100.8</b>	<b>116.6</b>	<b>147.5</b>	<b>161.4</b>	<b>158.7</b>

\* £2.2m of the CFR increase in 2024/25 arises from a change in the accounting for leases

**Asset management:** To ensure that capital assets continue to be of long-term use, the Authority has an asset management strategy in place.

**Asset disposals:** When a capital asset is no longer needed, it may be sold so that the proceeds, known as capital receipts, can be spent on new assets or to repay debt. Repayments of capital grants, loans and investments also generate capital receipts. The Authority plans to receive minimal capital receipts in the coming financial year as follows:

Table 5: Capital receipts receivable in £ millions

	2023/24 actual	2024/25 forecast	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Asset sales	0.2	-	-	-	-
Loans etc repaid	4.1	4.0	4.4	5.1	5.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4.3</b>	<b>4.0</b>	<b>4.4</b>	<b>5.1</b>	<b>5.4</b>

### Treasury Management

Treasury management is concerned with keeping sufficient but not excessive cash available to meet the Authority's spending needs, while managing the risks involved. Surplus cash is invested until required, while a shortage of cash will be met by borrowing, to avoid excessive credit balances or overdrafts in the bank current account. The Authority is typically cash rich in the short-term as revenue income is received before it is spent, but cash poor in the long-term as capital expenditure is incurred before being financed. The revenue cash surpluses are offset against capital cash shortfalls to reduce overall borrowing.

Due to decisions taken in the past, the Authority currently has £65.3m borrowing at an average interest rate of 4.77% and £7.5m treasury investments at an average rate of 4.14%.

**Borrowing strategy:** The Authority's main objectives when borrowing are to achieve a low but certain cost of finance while retaining flexibility should plans change in future. These objectives are often conflicting, and the Authority therefore seeks to strike a balance between cheaper short-term loans and long-term fixed rate loans where the future cost is known but higher.

Projected levels of the Authority's total outstanding debt (which comprises borrowing, PFI liabilities, leases and transferred debt) are shown below, compared with the capital financing requirement (see above).

Table 6: Prudential Indicator: Gross Debt and the Capital Financing Requirement in £ millions

	31.3.2024 actual	31.3.2025 forecast	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget
Debt (incl. PFI & leases)	60.3	73.3	106.6	121.7	119.7
Capital Financing Requirement	100.8	116.6	147.5	161.4	158.7

Statutory guidance is that debt should remain below the capital financing requirement, except in the short-term. As can be seen from table 6, the Authority expects to comply with this in the medium term.

**Liability benchmark:** To compare the Authority's actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of up to £5m at year-end. This benchmark is currently £76.4m and is forecast to rise to £121.5m over the next three years.

Table 7: Borrowing and the Liability Benchmark in £ millions

	31.3.2024 actual	31.3.2025 forecast	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget
Existing borrowing	60.3	56.3	52.5	48.5	44.6
Forecast borrowing	n/a	17.0	54.1	73.2	75.1
Liability benchmark	59.6	76.4	108.3	123.2	121.5

The table shows that the Authority expects to remain borrowed just below its liability benchmark.

**Affordable borrowing limit:** The Authority is legally obliged to set an affordable borrowing limit (also termed the authorised limit for external debt) each year. In line with statutory guidance, a lower “operational boundary” is also set as a warning level should debt approach the limit.

Table 8: Prudential Indicators: Authorised limit and operational boundary for external debt in £m

	2024/25 limit	2025/26 limit	2026/27 limit	2027/28 limit
Authorised limit - total external debt	140.6	157.5	171.4	168.7
Operational boundary - total external debt	130.6	147.5	161.4	158.7

- Further details on borrowing are included in the treasury management strategy.

**Treasury investment strategy:** Treasury investments arise from receiving cash before it is paid out again. Investments made for service reasons or for pure financial gain are not generally considered to be part of treasury management.

The Authority’s policy on treasury investments is to prioritise security and liquidity over yield, that is to focus on minimising risk rather than maximising returns. Cash that is likely to be spent in the near term is invested securely, for example with the government, other local authorities or selected high-quality banks, to minimise the risk of loss. Both near-term and longer-term investments may be held in pooled funds, where an external fund manager makes decisions on which particular investments to buy and the Authority may request its money back at short notice.

Table 9: Treasury management investments in £millions

	31.3.2024 actual	31.3.2025 forecast	31.3.2026 budget	31.3.2027 budget	31.3.2028 budget
Near-term investments	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0

- Further details on treasury investments are included in the treasury management strategy.

**Risk management:** The effective management and control of risk are prime objectives of the Authority’s treasury management activities. The treasury management strategy therefore sets out various indicators and limits to constrain the risk of unexpected losses and details the extent to which financial derivatives may be used to manage treasury risks.

- The treasury management prudential indicators are included in the treasury management strategy.

**Governance:** Decisions on treasury management investment and borrowing are made daily and are therefore delegated to the Director of Corporate Services and finance staff, who must act in line with

the treasury management strategy approved by Council. Quarterly updates on treasury management activity are presented to the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

### Revenue Budget Implications

Although capital expenditure is not charged directly to the revenue budget, interest payable on loans and MRP are charged to revenue. The net annual charge is known as financing costs; this is compared to the net revenue stream i.e. the amount funded from rates and general government grants.

*Table 11: Prudential Indicator: Proportion of financing costs to net revenue stream*

	2023/24 actual	2024/25 forecast *	2025/26 budget	2026/27 budget	2027/28 budget
Financing costs (£m)	7.1	9.2	10.6	11.4	11.8
Proportion of net revenue stream	10.4%	12.7%	14.1%	14.9%	15.0%

**Sustainability:** Due to the very long-term nature of capital expenditure and financing, the revenue budget implications of expenditure incurred in the next few years will extend for up to 40 years into the future. The Director of Corporate Services is satisfied that the proposed capital programme is prudent, affordable and sustainable.

### Knowledge and Skills

The Authority employs professionally qualified and experienced staff in senior positions with responsibility for making capital expenditure, borrowing and investment decisions.

Where staff do not have the knowledge and skills required, use is made of external advisers and consultants that are specialists in their field. The Authority currently employs Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers. This approach is more cost effective than employing such staff directly and ensures that the Authority has access to knowledge and skills commensurate with its risk appetite.

Proj/CD Code	2nd Project Code	Description	AMC up until 30/06/2024	Spent YTD @ 30/06/2024	2024/2025 (including spend forecast until 30/06/2025)	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Gross	Income/Gross	Net Brg
8181		Kewy Cdp Centre Regeneration Project (RCCB)	5,581,545	185,858	5,095,544	36,127,217	6,696,742	158,980	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000	41,981,538	-4,200,000	37,781,538
8001		Inshore Gateway Project (RMSF)	87,338	30,807	1,060,320	1,695,261	745,720	6,475,013	22,452,123	39,051,970	35,229	41,584,232	-28,763,875	12,820,357
8040	8020	Waresop (FWS Hub)	335,810	132,259	55,817	1,036,800	1,221,985					7,338,508		7,338,508
8021		Castleton Ferry Park (H.P. Fueling)	5,088,516	844,418	3,129,863	1,137,800	150,000					8,302,528	-1,865,000	6,437,528
8021		Kilwell Lane Car Centre	28,874	80,755	85,000	2,180,310	759,746					3,085,200		3,085,200
		(SFC) Sports Facility Strategy/Hub				300,000	300,000					1,300,000		1,300,000
		(SFC) Technology Hub				30,000	30,000	660,000				660,000		660,000
		(SFC) Delivery				250,000	250,000					500,000		500,000
8118		Kewy Cdp Park			797,007	2,187,868	23,120,096	2,816,308	30,311			28,881,792	-21,300,000	7,581,792
		Resident Waste Treatment Project							1,947,300			1,947,300		1,947,300
8021		Kewy C.D. Post-Use Repair		180,303	1,150,807							1,331,110	300,000	1,031,110
8110	9009	Rky Strategy Sep24-Dec24	34,903	1,685	1,222,900							1,259,488		1,259,488
8181	8009	Castleton Lake - Recreational Hub	238,868	71,121	76,000	5,083,317	1,439,845					7,688,310	-2,850,954	4,837,356
		Financial Assistance for Tourist Accommodation				500,000	500,000					1,000,000		1,000,000
8020		Boltonbrook Community Centre - Revamp/Upgrade	18,771	6,807	353,252							378,030		378,030
8021		Montrose Cemetery - Lintason	109,841	30,864	70,263							180,968		180,968
8090	9024	Tynley Amenity Building	6,132	54,809	516,607							573,548		573,548
8041		Waresop Road 3 use (P.A. Scheme Phase 1a)	189,828	188,817	1,731,218							2,009,793	-1,883,893	125,900
8118	8137	Sports Facility Strategy - Financial Assistance			250,442	200,000						450,442		450,442
8021		Downpatrick Regeneration - Church Street & Churchy			71,344	700,000	700,000					1,411,344		1,411,344
8090		Newcastle Public Caravan/Coach Hubs + new charging points		181,245	240,225							421,470		421,470
8088		OSFO 3G UPGRADE - DOWNPATRICK - 3G Hub (RPO/Access D&A)	28,117	21,269	1,177,314							1,226,690	-777,188	449,502
8018		Small Towns Programme (PAC/D&A/R)	422,254	1,275,467	198,007							1,995,728	-1,800,000	195,728
9301		Recreation Centre - to placing permission 6/24 Stage 2		30,245		349,755						380,000		380,000
8020		Community Engagement Capital Plan - Financial Assistance			109,627	200,000						309,627		309,627
8041		Recreation Park Pool		20,205		187,601						207,806		207,806
8021		Quintessence (P) Pavilion Car Park		889	76,418	122,118						199,415		199,415
8181		Forest Park Investment Programme	117,200	1,200	34,214	15,300						167,914		167,914
8090		CCTV Camera - Digital Transformation			150,000							150,000		150,000
8400		Dunham Pump Track & Skatepark			512,508							512,508	-340,176	172,332
8032	8130	8027	Kilnsey Park, Yorks to solar-ws			48,000	89,202					137,202		137,202
8021		Kilnsey Hub	100,808	1,963	1,260							103,031		103,031
9118		Community Centre Sustainable Energy Projects		7,500								7,500		7,500
8088		Bywell Castlewellan C.C.	5,300	71,303	4,617							77,220		77,220
8420		E-vehicle Chargers			80,000							80,000		80,000
8021		New Benary and walkways at HBC's - DEARB Improvement Funding to be sought			76,000							76,000		76,000
8021		SHARON Community Centre - approval of works			76,000							76,000		76,000
8021		Playpark Signage		7,508	29,612	63,210						90,330		90,330
8024		Delamont Trail Plan	43,283	6,081	33,814							83,178		83,178
8088		Sharncliffe Recycling Hub	80,800		21,216							102,016		102,016
8081		Halma Depot/Store - Fibreoptic Park	46,300		5,562							51,862		51,862
		Active Travel Milestones			40,000							40,000		40,000
8400		Sentford Hockey Pitch Floodlights upgrade			37,800							37,800		37,800
8018		Hill Top's Hub Revamp			33,000							33,000		33,000
8421		Castle Park (Hill Top) Legacy Project			274,500							274,500	-217,000	57,500
8118		Castlegarth High Greenway	576,411		1,090,200							1,666,611	-2,439,000	227,611
		Young to the trees Castlewellan			25,000							25,000		25,000
8071		Exmoor Garage Newer Hobbies			15,000							15,000		15,000
8041		OSFO/WKS - HUBSIT AND MAPPING			13,000							13,000		13,000
8421		Castleton Forest Park Cafe			11,000							11,000	-11,000	0
8001		Waresop Town Hall - Upgrade Tech Equip			10,000							10,000		10,000
8040		Tyrol House Park Upgrade Flying Horse Demolition	1,500	0	4,815							6,315		6,315
		UCSPW Darnley Storage			8,200							8,200	8,200	0
		UCSPW Tyrol Park & Caravan			10,000							10,000	10,000	0
		Doughough Community Centre			183,218							183,218	-183,218	0
8021		LEAP Upgrade Dunham Public Caravan			102,000							102,000	-102,000	0
8040		UCSPW Financial Assistance			280,340							280,340	-280,340	0
8088		SH - Mount St. Fly to Mt. St. Hillside			8,276							8,276	-8,276	0

Project Code	2024 Project Code	Description	MC up until 30/09/2024	Spent YTD @ 30/09/2024	2024/2025 including spend forecast until 30/09/2025	2025/2026	2026/2027	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30	2030/31	Total Gross	Income/Gross	Net B.Bip
500		IT - Warehouse Database Upgrade	91,704									91,704		91,704
500		IT - Newcote Portion	6,921									6,921		6,921
		<b>LAND &amp; BUILDINGS</b>	<b>6,428,867</b>	<b>2,720,264</b>	<b>16,575,278</b>	<b>44,265,228</b>	<b>31,135,440</b>	<b>11,352,322</b>	<b>16,525,124</b>	<b>21,250,203</b>	<b>1,203,218</b>	<b>167,745,118</b>	<b>107,218,544</b>	<b>60,526,574</b>
		<b>PLANT &amp; EQUIPMENT</b>		<b>25,811</b>	<b>176,594</b>	<b>30,220</b>	<b>19,800</b>	<b>10,000</b>				<b>260,525</b>	<b>-60,000</b>	<b>218,525</b>
		<b>VEHICLES</b>		<b>476,678</b>	<b>1,351,899</b>	<b>2,085,200</b>	<b>1,561,260</b>					<b>7,061,264</b>		<b>1,964,594</b>
510	500	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY	120,729	477,882	759,227	700,000	27,800	0		0	0	2,091,790		1,951,987
		<b>VOLUNTARY HUMANITY COSTS</b>										0		0
		<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>7,126,825</b>	<b>4,986,927</b>	<b>24,632,205</b>	<b>47,269,608</b>	<b>35,281,718</b>	<b>11,814,322</b>	<b>26,203,210</b>	<b>21,500,203</b>	<b>1,203,218</b>	<b>187,346,158</b>	<b>-137,605,281</b>	<b>49,740,877</b>

## APPENDIX 5

### Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

## Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26

### Introduction

Treasury management is the management of the Authority's cash flows, borrowing and investments, and the associated risks. The Authority has and will be borrowing and investing substantial sums of money and is therefore exposed to financial risks including the loss of invested funds and the revenue effect of changing interest rates. The successful identification, monitoring and control of financial risk are therefore central to the Authority's prudent financial management.

Treasury risk management at the Authority is conducted within the framework of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Treasury Management in the Public Services: Code of Practice 2021 Edition* (the CIPFA Code) which requires the Authority to approve a treasury management strategy before the start of each financial year. In addition, the former Department of the Environment (DoE) issued *Guidance on Local Authority Investments* in October 2011 that requires the Authority to approve an investment strategy before the start of each financial year. This report fulfils the Authority's legal obligation under the *Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011* to have regard to both the CIPFA Code and the DoE Guidance.

**Revised strategy:** In accordance with the DoE Guidance, the Authority will be asked to approve a revised Treasury Management Strategy Statement should the assumptions on which this report is based change significantly. Such circumstances would include, for example, a large unexpected change in interest rates, in the Authority's capital programme or in the level of its investment balance.

### External Context

**Economic background:** The impact on the UK from the government's Autumn Budget, slower expected interest rate cuts, a short-term boost to but modestly weaker economic growth over the medium term, together with the impact from President-elect Trump's second term in office and uncertainties around US domestic and foreign policy, will be major influences on the Authority's treasury management strategy for 2025/26.

The Bank of England's (BoE) Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) held Bank Rate at 4.75% at its December 2024 meeting, having reduced it to that level in November and following a previous 25bp cut from the 5.25% peak at the August MPC meeting. At the December meeting, six Committee members voted to maintain Bank Rate at 4.75% while three members preferred to reduce it to 4.50%.

The November quarterly Monetary Policy Report (MPR) expected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth to pick up to around 1.75% (four-quarter GDP) in the early period of the BoE's forecast horizon before falling back. The impact from the Budget pushes GDP higher in 2025 than was expected in the previous MPR, before becoming weaker. Current GDP growth was shown to be zero (0.0%) between July and September 2024 and 0.4% between April and June 2024, a further downward revision from the 0.5% rate previously reported by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

ONS figures reported the annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation rate at 2.6% in November 2024, up from 2.3% in the previous month and in line with expectations. Core CPI also rose, but by more than

expected, to 3.6% against a forecast of 3.5% and 3.3% in the previous month. The outlook for CPI inflation in the November MPR showed it rising above the MPC's 2% target from 2024 into 2025 and reaching around 2.75% by the middle of calendar 2025. This represents a modest near-term increase due to the ongoing impacts from higher interest rates, the Autumn Budget, and a projected margin of economic slack. Over the medium-term, once these pressures ease, inflation is expected to stabilise around the 2% target.

The labour market appears to be easing slowly, but the data still require treating with some caution. The latest figures reported the unemployment rate rose to 4.3% in the three months to October 2024 and economic inactivity fell to 21.7%. Pay growth for the same period was reported at 5.2% for both regular earnings (excluding bonuses) and for total earnings. Looking ahead, the BoE MPR showed the unemployment rate is expected to increase modestly, rising to around 4.5%, the assumed medium-term equilibrium unemployment rate, by the end of the forecast horizon.

The US Federal Reserve has continued cutting interest rates, bringing down the Fed Funds Rate by 0.25% at its December 2024 monetary policy meeting to a range of 4.25%-4.50%, marking the third consecutive reduction. Further interest rate cuts are expected, but uncertainties around the potential inflationary impact of incoming President Trump's policies may muddy the waters in terms of the pace and magnitude of further rate reductions. Moreover, the US economy continues to expand at a decent pace, rising at an (upwardly revised) annual rate of 3.1% in the third quarter of 2024, and inflation remains elevated suggesting that monetary policy may need to remain more restrictive in the coming months than had previously been anticipated.

Euro zone inflation rose above the European Central Bank (ECB) 2% target in November 2024, hitting 2.2% as was widely expected and a further increase from 2% in the previous month. Despite the rise, the ECB continued its rate cutting cycle and reduced its three key policy rates by 0.25% in December. Inflation is expected to rise further in the short term, but then fall back towards the 2% target during 2025, with the ECB remaining committed to maintaining rates at levels consistent with bringing inflation to target, but without suggesting a specific path.

**Credit outlook:** Credit Default Swap (CDS) prices have typically followed a general trend downwards during 2024, reflecting a relatively more stable financial period compared to the previous year. Improved credit conditions in 2024 have also led to greater convergence in CDS prices between ringfenced (retail) and non-ringfenced (investment) banking entities again.

Higher interest rates can lead to a deterioration in banks' asset quality through increased loan defaults and volatility in the value of capital investments. Fortunately, the rapid interest rate hikes during this monetary tightening cycle, while putting some strain on households and corporate borrowers, has not caused a rise in defaults, and banks have fared better than expected to date, buoyed by strong capital positions. Low unemployment and robust wage growth have also limited the number of problem loans, all of which are positive in terms of creditworthiness.

Moreover, while a potential easing of US financial regulations under a Donald Trump Presidency may aid their banks' competitiveness compared to institutions in the UK and other regions, it is unlikely there will be any material impact on the underlying creditworthiness of the institutions on the counterparty list maintained by Arlingclose, the authority's treasury adviser.

Overall, the institutions on our adviser Arlingclose's counterparty list remain well-capitalised and their counterparty advice on both recommended institutions and maximum duration remain under constant review and will continue to reflect economic conditions and the credit outlook.



**Interest rate forecast (December 2024):** The Authority's treasury management adviser Arlingclose expects the Bank of England's MPC will continue reducing Bank Rate through 2025, taking it to around 3.75% by the end of the 2025/26 financial year. The effect from the Autumn Budget on economic growth and inflation has reduced previous expectations in terms of the pace of rate cuts as well as pushing up the rate at the end of the loosening cycle.

Arlingclose expects long-term gilt yields to remain broadly at current levels on average (amid continued volatility), but to end the forecast period modestly lower compared to now. Yields will continue to remain relatively higher than in the past, due to quantitative tightening and significant bond supply. As ever, there will be short-term volatility due to economic and (geo)political uncertainty and events.

A more detailed economic and interest rate forecast provided by Arlingclose is in Appendix A.

For the purpose of setting the budget, it has been assumed that new treasury investments will be made at an average rate/yield of 4%, and that new long-term loans will be borrowed at an average rate of 5.66%.

### Local Context

On 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024, the Authority held £65.3m of borrowing and £7.5m of treasury investments. This is set out in further detail at **Appendix B**. Forecast changes in these sums are shown in the balance sheet analysis in table 1 below.

*Table 1: Balance sheet summary and forecast*

	31.3.24 Actual £m	31.3.25 Estimate £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m	31.3.27 Forecast £m	31.3.28 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	100.8	116.6	147.5	161.4	158.7
Less: External borrowing *	-60.3	-56.3	-52.5	-48.5	-44.6
Internal borrowing	40.5	60.3	95.0	112.9	114.1
Less: Balance sheet resources	-42.2	-42.2	-42.2	-42.2	-42.2
Treasury investments or (New borrowing)	1.7	-18.1	-52.8	-70.7	-71.9

\* shows only loans to which the Authority is committed at 31.3.24 and excludes optional refinancing

The underlying need to borrow for capital purposes is measured by the Capital Financing Requirement (CFR), while balance sheet resources are the underlying sums available for investment. The Authority's current strategy is to maintain borrowing and investments below their underlying levels, sometimes known as internal borrowing.

The Authority has an increasing CFR due to the capital programme, but minimal investments and will therefore be required to borrow up to £71.9m over the forecast period.

CIPFA's *Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities* recommends that the Authority's total debt should be lower than its highest forecast CFR over the next three years. Table 1 shows that the Authority expects to comply with this recommendation during 2025/26.

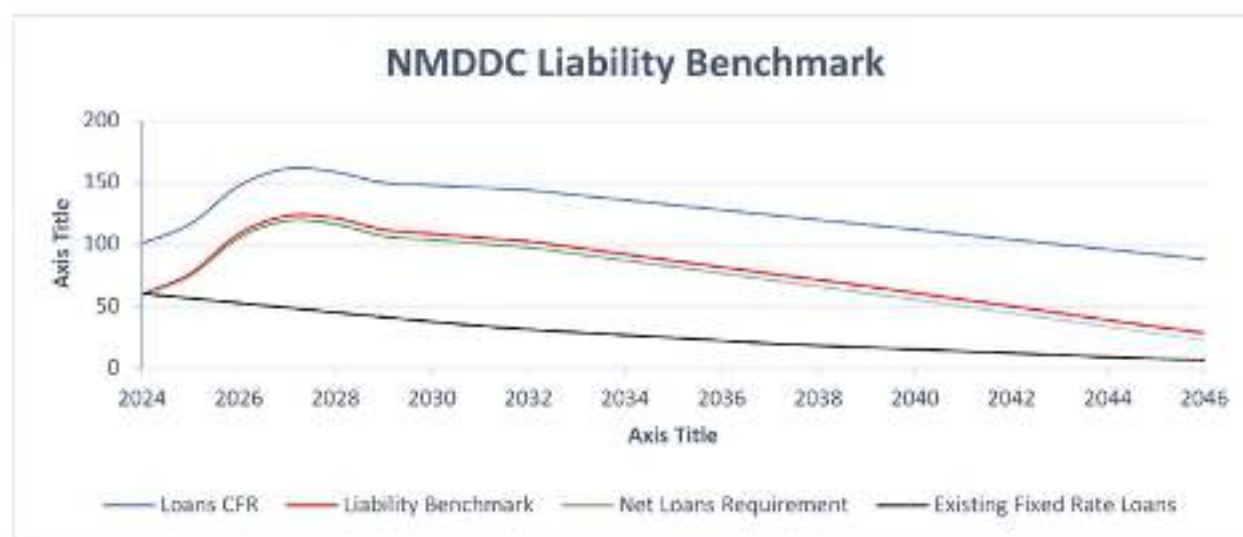
**Liability benchmark:** To compare the Council’s actual borrowing against an alternative strategy, a liability benchmark has been calculated showing the lowest risk level of borrowing. This assumes the same forecasts as table 1 above, but that cash and investment balances are kept to a minimum level of up to £5m at each year-end to maintain sufficient liquidity but minimise credit risk.

The liability benchmark is an important tool to help establish whether the Council is likely to be a long-term borrower or long-term investor in the future, and so shape its strategic focus and decision making. The liability benchmark itself represents an estimate of the cumulative amount of external borrowing the Council must hold to fund its current capital and revenue plans while keeping treasury investments at the minimum level required to manage day-to-day cash flow.

Table 2: Prudential Indicator: Liability benchmark

	31.3.24 Actual £m	31.3.25 Estimate £m	31.3.26 Forecast £m	31.3.27 Forecast £m	31.3.28 Forecast £m
Loans CFR	100.8	116.6	147.5	161.4	158.7
Less: Balance sheet resources	-42.2	-42.2	-42.2	-42.2	-42.2
<b>Net loans requirement</b>	<b>58.6</b>	<b>74.4</b>	<b>105.3</b>	<b>119.2</b>	<b>116.5</b>
Plus: Liquidity allowance	1.0	2.0	3.0	4.0	5.0
<b>Liability benchmark</b>	<b>59.6</b>	<b>76.4</b>	<b>108.3</b>	<b>123.2</b>	<b>121.5</b>

Following on from the medium-term forecasts in table 2 above, the long-term liability benchmark assumes capital expenditure funded by borrowing of £18.7m a year on average, minimum revenue provision on new capital expenditure based on a 40 year asset life (buildings) and income and expenditure increasing by estimated inflation each year and reserves by inflation from 2028. This is shown in the chart below together with the maturity profile of the Authority’s existing borrowing:



The Loans CFR can be described as the maximum permitted level of borrowing and the Net Loans Requirement is the minimum possible level of borrowing. The Liability Benchmark is then the ‘sweet spot’ between the two, where an appropriate balance of risk can be struck between these two extremes. The chart also shows a comparison of current borrowing against the need to borrow. The Liability Benchmark exceeds existing loans over time therefore the Council can take additional long-term borrowing.

### Borrowing Strategy

The Authority currently holds £65.3 million of loans, an increase of £3 million on the previous year, as part of its strategy for funding previous years' capital programmes. The balance sheet forecast in table 1 shows that the Authority expects to borrow up to £52m by 2025/26. The Authority may also borrow additional sums to pre-fund future years' requirements, providing this does not exceed the authorised limit for borrowing of £157.5 million.

**Objectives:** The Authority's chief objective when borrowing money is to strike an appropriately low risk balance between securing low interest costs and achieving certainty of those costs over the period for which funds are required. The flexibility to renegotiate loans should the Authority's long-term plans change is a secondary objective.

**Strategy:** Given the significant cuts to public expenditure and in particular to local government funding, the Authority's borrowing strategy continues to address the key issue of affordability without compromising the longer-term stability of the debt portfolio. Short-term interest rates are currently higher than in the recent past, but are expected to fall in the coming year and it is therefore likely to be more cost effective over the medium-term to either use internal resources, or to borrow short-term loans instead. The risks of this approach will be managed by keeping the Authority's interest rate exposure within the limit set in the treasury management prudential indicators, see below.

By doing so, the Authority is able to reduce net borrowing costs (despite foregone investment income) and reduce overall treasury risk. The benefits of internal / short-term borrowing will be monitored regularly against the potential for incurring additional costs by deferring borrowing into future years when long-term borrowing rates are forecast to rise modestly. Arlingclose will assist the Authority with this 'cost of carry' and breakeven analysis. Its output may determine whether the Authority borrows additional sums at long-term fixed rates in 2025/26 with a view to keeping future interest costs low, even if this causes additional cost in the short-term.

The Authority has previously raised the majority of its long-term borrowing from the Government Loans Fund via the Department of Finance but will consider long-term loans from other sources including banks, pensions and local authorities, and will investigate the possibility of issuing bonds and similar instruments, in order to lower interest costs and reduce over-reliance on one source of funding in line with the CIPFA Code.

Alternatively, the Authority may arrange forward starting loans, where the interest rate is fixed in advance, but the cash is received in later years. This would enable certainty of cost to be achieved without suffering a cost of carry in the intervening period.

In addition, the Authority may borrow further short-term loans to cover unplanned cash flow shortages.

**Sources of borrowing:** The approved sources of long-term and short-term borrowing are:

- Government Loans Fund
- National Wealth Fund Ltd (formerly UK Infrastructure Bank Ltd)
- any institution approved for investments (see below)
- any other bank or building society authorised to operate in the UK
- any other UK public sector body
- UK public and private sector pension funds except the N.I. Local Government Pension Scheme
- capital market bond investors
- retail investors via a regulated peer-to-peer platform
- UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc and other special purpose companies created to enable local authority bond issues

**Other sources of debt finance:** In addition, capital finance may be raised by the following methods that are not borrowing, but may be classed as other debt liabilities:

- leasing
- hire purchase
- Private Finance Initiative
- sale and leaseback
- similar asset based finance

**Municipal Bonds Agency:** UK Municipal Bonds Agency plc was established in 2014 by the Local Government Association. It issues bonds on the capital markets and lends the proceeds to local authorities. This is a more complicated source of finance than the PWLB for two reasons: borrowing authorities will be required to provide bond investors with a guarantee to refund their investment in the event that the agency is unable to for any reason; and there will be a lead time of several months between committing to borrow and knowing the interest rate payable. Any decision to borrow from the Agency will therefore be the subject of a separate report to full Council.

**LOBOs:** The Authority holds no LOBO (Lender's Option Borrower's Option) loans where the lender has the option to propose an increase in the interest rate at set dates, following which the Authority has the option to either accept the new rate or to repay the loan at no additional cost. Total borrowing via LOBO loans, should the Council decide to use this source of finance, will be limited to £3m.

**Short-term and variable rate loans:** These loans leave the Authority exposed to the risk of short-term interest rate rises and are therefore subject to the interest rate exposure limits in the treasury management indicators below. Financial derivatives may be used to manage this interest rate risk (see section below).

**Debt rescheduling:** The Government allows authorities to repay loans before maturity and either pay a premium or receive a discount according to a set formula based on current interest rates. Other lenders may also be prepared to negotiate premature redemption terms. The Authority may take advantage of this and replace some loans with new loans, or repay loans without replacement, where this is expected to lead to an overall cost saving or a reduction in risk. The recent rise in interest rates means that more favourable debt rescheduling opportunities should arise than in previous years.

### Treasury Investment Strategy

The Authority holds invested funds, representing income received in advance of expenditure plus balances and reserves held. In the past 9 months, the Authority's treasury investment balance has ranged between £13.5 million and £0.25 million, and similar levels are expected in the forthcoming year, with levels higher when funds are borrowed initially.

**Objectives:** Both the CIPFA Code and the DoE Guidance require the Authority to invest its treasury funds prudently, and to have regard to the security and liquidity of its investments before seeking the highest rate of return, or yield. The Authority's objective when investing money is to strike an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses from defaults and the risk of receiving unsuitably low investment income. Where balances are expected to be invested for more than one year, the Authority will aim to achieve a total return that is equal or higher than the prevailing rate of inflation, in order to maintain the spending power of the sum invested. The Authority aims to be a responsible investor and will consider environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues when investing.

**Strategy:** As demonstrated by the liability benchmark above, the Authority expects to be a long-term borrower and new treasury investments will therefore be made primarily to manage day-to-day cash flows using short-term low risk instruments.

**ESG policy:** Environmental, social and governance (ESG) considerations are increasingly a factor in global investors' decision making, but the framework for evaluating investment opportunities is still developing and therefore the Authority's ESG policy does not currently include ESG scoring or other real-time ESG criteria at an individual investment level. When investing in banks and funds, the Authority will prioritise banks that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Banking and funds operated by managers that are signatories to the UN Principles for Responsible Investment, the Net Zero Asset Managers Alliance and/or the UK Stewardship Code.

**Business models:** Under the IFRS 9 standard, the accounting for certain investments depends on the Authority's "business model" for managing them. The Authority aims to achieve value from its treasury investments by a business model of collecting the contractual cash flows and therefore, where other criteria are also met, these investments will continue to be accounted for at amortised cost.

**Approved counterparties:** The Authority may invest its surplus funds with any of the counterparty types in table 3 below, subject to the limits shown.

*Table 3: Treasury investment counterparties and limits*

Sector	Time limit	Counterparty limit	Sector limit
The UK Government	50 years	Unlimited	n/a
Local authorities & other government entities	25 years	£3m	Unlimited
Secured investments *	25 years	£3m	Unlimited
Banks (unsecured) *	13 months	£3m	Unlimited
Building societies (unsecured) *	13 months	£3m	£6m
Registered providers (unsecured) *	3 years	£3m	£5m
Money market funds *	n/a	£3m	Unlimited

*This table must be read in conjunction with the notes below*

\* **Minimum credit rating:** Treasury investments in the sectors marked with an asterisk will only be made with entities whose lowest published long-term credit rating is no lower than A-. Where available, the credit rating relevant to the specific investment or class of investment is used, otherwise the counterparty credit rating is used. However, investment decisions are never made solely based on credit ratings, and all other relevant factors including external advice will be taken into account. For entities without published credit ratings, investments may be made where external advice indicates the entity to be of similar credit quality.

**UK Government:** Sterling-denominated investments with or explicitly guaranteed by the UK Government, including the Debt Management Account Deposit Facility, treasury bills and gilts. These are deemed to be zero credit risk due to the government's ability to create additional currency and therefore may be made in unlimited amounts for up to 50 years.

**Local authorities and other government entities:** Loans to, and bonds and bills issued or guaranteed by, other national governments, regional and local authorities and multilateral development banks.

These investments are not subject to bail-in, and there is generally a lower risk of insolvency, although they are not zero risk.

**Secured investments:** Investments secured on the borrower's assets, which limits the potential losses in the event of insolvency. The amount and quality of the security will be a key factor in the investment decision. Covered bonds, secured deposits and reverse repurchase agreements with banks and building societies are exempt from bail-in. Where there is no investment specific credit rating, but the collateral upon which the investment is secured has a credit rating, the higher of the collateral credit rating and the counterparty credit rating will be used. The combined secured and unsecured investments with any one counterparty will not exceed the cash limit for secured investments.

**Banks and building societies (unsecured):** Accounts, deposits, certificates of deposit and senior unsecured bonds with banks and building societies, other than multilateral development banks. These investments are subject to the risk of credit loss via a bail-in should the regulator determine that the bank is failing or likely to fail. See below for arrangements relating to operational bank accounts.

**Registered providers (unsecured):** Loans to, and bonds issued or guaranteed by, registered providers of social housing or registered social landlords, formerly known as housing associations. These bodies are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing (in England), the Scottish Housing Regulator, the Welsh Government and the Department for Communities (in Northern Ireland). As providers of public services, they retain the likelihood of receiving government support if needed.

**Money market funds:** Pooled funds that offer same-day or short notice liquidity and very low or no price volatility by investing in short-term money markets. They have the advantage over bank accounts of providing wide diversification of investment risks, coupled with the services of a professional fund manager in return for a small fee. Although no sector limit applies to money market funds, the Authority will take care to diversify its liquid investments over a variety of providers to ensure access to cash at all times.

**Operational bank accounts:** The Authority may incur operational exposures, for example through current accounts, collection accounts and merchant acquiring services, to any UK bank with assets greater than £25 billion. These are not classed as investments but are still subject to the risk of a bank bail-in, and balances will therefore be kept, where practical, below £3m per bank. The Bank of England has stated that in the event of failure, banks with assets greater than £25 billion are more likely to be bailed-in than made insolvent, increasing the chance of the Authority maintaining operational continuity.

**Risk assessment and credit ratings:** Credit ratings are obtained and monitored by the Authority's treasury advisers, who will notify changes in ratings as they occur. The credit rating agencies in current use are listed in the Treasury Management Practices document. Where an entity has its credit rating downgraded so that it fails to meet the approved investment criteria then:

- no new investments will be made,
- any existing investments that can be recalled or sold at no cost will be, and
- full consideration will be given to the recall or sale of all other existing investments with the affected counterparty.

Where a credit rating agency announces that a credit rating is on review for possible downgrade (also known as "negative watch") so that it may fall below the approved rating criteria, then only investments that can be withdrawn on the next working day will be made with that organisation until the outcome of the review is announced. This policy will not apply to negative outlooks, which indicate a long-term direction of travel rather than an imminent change of rating.

**Other information on the security of investments:** The Authority understands that credit ratings are good, but not perfect, predictors of investment default. Full regard will therefore be given to other available information on the credit quality of the organisations in which it invests, including credit default swap prices, financial statements, information on potential government support, reports in the quality financial press and analysis and advice from the Authority's treasury management adviser. No investments will be made with an organisation if there are substantive doubts about its credit quality, even though it may otherwise meet the above criteria.

**Reputational aspects:** The Authority is aware that investment with certain counterparties, while considered secure from a purely financial perspective, may leave it open to criticism, valid or otherwise, that may affect its public reputation, and this risk will therefore be taken into account when making investment decisions.

When deteriorating financial market conditions affect the creditworthiness of all organisations, as happened in 2008, 2020 and 2022, this is not generally reflected in credit ratings, but can be seen in other market measures. In these circumstances, the Authority will restrict its investments to those organisations of higher credit quality and reduce the maximum duration of its investments to maintain the required level of security. The extent of these restrictions will be in line with prevailing financial market conditions. If these restrictions mean that insufficient commercial organisations of high credit quality are available to invest the Authority's cash balances, then the surplus will be deposited with the UK Government, or with other local authorities. This will cause investment returns to fall but will protect the principal sum invested.

**Investment limits:** The Authority's revenue reserves available to cover investment losses are forecast to be £39 million on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. In order that no more than 10% of available reserves will be put at risk in the case of a single default, the maximum that will be lent to any one organisation (other than the UK Government) will be £3 million. A group of entities under the same ownership will be treated as a single organisation for limit purposes.

Credit risk exposures arising from non-treasury investments, financial derivatives and balances in operational bank accounts count against the relevant investment limits.

Limits are also placed on fund managers, investments in brokers' nominee accounts and foreign countries as below. Investments in pooled funds and multilateral development banks do not count against the limit for any single foreign country, since the risk is diversified over many countries.

*Table 4: Additional investment limits*

	Cash limit
Any group of pooled funds under the same management	£3m per manager
Investments held in a broker's nominee account	£3m per broker
Foreign countries	£4m per country

**Liquidity management:** The Authority uses cash flow forecasting to determine the maximum period for which funds may prudently be committed. The forecast is compiled on a prudent basis to minimise the risk of the Authority being forced to borrow on unfavourable terms to meet its financial commitments. Limits on long-term investments are set by reference to the Authority's medium-term financial plan and cash flow forecast.

The Authority will spread its liquid cash over at least four providers (e.g. bank accounts and money market funds), of which at least two will be UK domiciled, to ensure that access to cash is maintained in the event of operational difficulties at any one provider.

### Treasury Management Prudential Indicators

The Authority measures and manages its exposures to treasury management risks using the following indicators.

**Security:** The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to credit risk by monitoring the value-weighted average credit rating of its investment portfolio. This is calculated by applying a score to each investment (AAA-1, AA+-2, etc.) and taking the arithmetic average, weighted by the size of each investment. Unrated investments are assigned a score based on their perceived risk.

Credit risk indicator	Target
Portfolio average credit rating	A

**Liquidity:** The Authority has adopted a voluntary measure of its exposure to liquidity risk by monitoring the amount of cash available to meet unexpected payments within a rolling three month period, without additional borrowing.

Liquidity risk indicator	Target
Total cash available within 3 months	£5m

**Interest rate exposures:** This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to interest rate risk. The upper limits on the one-year revenue impact of a 1% rise or fall in interest rates will be:

Interest rate risk indicator	Limit
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>rise</u> in interest rates	£210,000
Upper limit on one-year revenue impact of a 1% <u>fall</u> in interest rates	£210,000

The impact of a change in interest rates is calculated on the assumption that maturing loans and investments will be replaced at new market rates.

**Maturity structure of borrowing:** This indicator is set to control the Authority's exposure to refinancing risk. The upper and lower limits on the maturity structure of borrowing will be:

Refinancing rate risk indicator	Upper limit	Lower limit
Under 12 months	15%	0%
12 months and within 24 months	15%	0%
24 months and within 5 years	20%	10%
5 years and within 10 years	30%	15%
10 years and above	55%	40%

Time periods start on the first day of each financial year. The maturity date of borrowing is the earliest date on which the lender can demand repayment.



**Long-term treasury management investments:** The purpose of this indicator is to control the Authority's exposure to the risk of incurring losses by seeking early repayment of its investments. The prudential limits on the long-term treasury management investments will be:

Price risk indicator	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	No fixed date
Limit on principal invested beyond year end	£2m	£1m	£1m	£1m

Long-term investments with no fixed maturity date include strategic pooled funds and real estate investment trusts but exclude money market funds and bank accounts with no fixed maturity date as these are considered short-term.

### Related Matters

The CIPFA Code requires the Authority to include the following in its treasury management strategy.

**Financial derivatives:** Local authorities have previously made use of financial derivatives embedded into loans and investments both to reduce interest rate risk (e.g. interest rate collars and forward deals) and to reduce costs or increase income at the expense of greater risk (e.g. LOBO loans and callable deposits). The general power of competence in section 79 of the *Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014* removes much of the uncertainty over local authorities' use of standalone financial derivatives (i.e. those that are not embedded into a loan or investment).

The Authority will only use standalone financial derivatives (such as swaps, forwards, futures and options) where they can be clearly demonstrated to reduce the overall level of the financial risks that the Authority is exposed to. Additional risks presented, such as credit exposure to derivative counterparties, will be taken into account when determining the overall level of risk. Embedded derivatives, including those present in pooled funds and forward starting transactions, will not be subject to this policy, although the risks they present will be managed in line with the overall treasury risk management strategy.

Financial derivative transactions may be arranged with any organisation that meets the approved investment criteria, assessed using the appropriate credit rating for derivative exposures. An allowance for credit risk calculated using the methodology in the Treasury Management Practices document will count against the counterparty credit limit and the relevant foreign country limit.

In line with the CIPFA Code, the Authority will seek external advice and will consider that advice before entering into financial derivatives to ensure that it fully understands the implications.

**Markets in Financial Instruments Directive:** The Authority has retained retail client status with its providers of financial services, including advisers, banks, brokers and fund managers, allowing it access to a smaller range of services but with the greater regulatory protections afforded to individuals and small companies. Given the size and range of the Authority's treasury management activities, the Chief Financial Officer believes this to be the most appropriate status.

**Government Guidance:** Further matters required by the DoE Guidance are included in Appendix C.

### Financial Implications

The budget for investment income in 2025/26 is £164k, based on an average investment portfolio of £4 million at an interest rate of 4%. The budget for debt interest paid in 2025/26 is £3.9 million, based on

an average debt portfolio of £90 million at an average interest rate of 4.77%. If actual levels of investments and borrowing, or actual interest rates, differ from those forecast, performance against budget will be correspondingly different.

### Other Options Considered

The CIPFA Code does not prescribe any particular treasury management strategy for local authorities to adopt. The Chief Financial Officer, having consulted the Director of Corporate Services, believes that the above strategy represents an appropriate balance between risk management and cost effectiveness. Some alternative strategies, with their financial and risk management implications, are listed below.

Alternative	Impact on income and expenditure	Impact on risk management
Invest in a narrower range of counterparties and/or for shorter times	Interest income will be lower	Lower chance of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be greater
Invest in a wider range of counterparties and/or for longer times	Interest income will be higher	Increased risk of losses from credit related defaults, but any such losses may be smaller
Borrow additional sums at long-term fixed interest rates	Debt interest costs will rise; this is unlikely to be offset by higher investment income	Higher investment balance leading to a higher impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be more certain
Borrow short-term or variable loans instead of long-term fixed rates	Debt interest costs will initially be lower	Increases in debt interest costs will be broadly offset by rising investment income in the medium term, but long-term costs may be less certain
Reduce level of borrowing	Saving on debt interest is likely to exceed lost investment income	Reduced investment balance leading to a lower impact in the event of a default; however long-term interest costs may be less certain

## Appendix A - Arlingclose Economic & Interest Rate Forecast - December 2024

### Underlying assumptions:

- As expected, the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) held Bank Rate at 4.75% in December, although, with a 6-3 voting split and obvious concerns about economic growth, presented a much more dovish stance than had been expected given recent inflationary data.
- The Budget measures remain a concern for policymakers, for both growth and inflation. Additional government spending will boost demand in a constrained supply environment, while pushing up direct costs for employers. The short to medium-term inflationary effects will promote caution amongst policymakers.
- UK GDP recovered well in H1 2024 from technical recession, but underlying growth has petered out as the year has progressed. While government spending should boost GDP growth in 2025, private sector activity appears to be waning, partly due to Budget measures.
- Private sector wage growth and services inflation remain elevated; wage growth picked up sharply in October. The increase in employers' NICs, minimum and public sector wage levels could have wide ranging impacts on private sector employment demand and costs, but the near-term impact will likely be inflationary as these additional costs get passed to consumers.
- CPI inflation rates have risen due to higher energy prices and less favourable base effects. The current CPI rate of 2.6% could rise further in Q1 2025. The Bank of England (BoE) estimates the CPI rate at 2.7% by year end 2025 and to remain over target in 2026.
- The MPC re-emphasised that monetary policy will be eased gradually. Despite recent inflation-related data moving upwards or surprising to the upside, the minutes suggested a significant minority of policymakers are at least as worried about the flatlining UK economy.
- US government bond yields have risen following strong US data and uncertainty about the effects of Donald Trump's policies on the US economy, particularly in terms of inflation and monetary policy. The Federal Reserve pared back its expectations for rate cuts in light of these issues. Higher US yields are also pushing up UK gilt yields, a relationship that will be maintained unless monetary policy in the UK and US diverges.

### Forecast:

- In line with our forecast, Bank Rate was held at 4.75% in December.
- The MPC will reduce Bank Rate in a gradual manner. We see a rate cut in February 2025, followed by a cut alongside every Monetary Policy Report publication, to a low of 3.75%.
- Long-term gilt yields have risen to reflect both UK and US economic, monetary and fiscal policy expectations, and increases in bond supply. Volatility will remain elevated as the market digests incoming data for clues around the impact of policy changes.
- This uncertainty may also necessitate more frequent changes to our forecast than has been the case recently.
- The risks around the forecasts lie to the upside over the next 12 months but are broadly balanced in the medium term.

	Current	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Dec-25	Mar-26	Jun-26	Sep-26	Dec-26	Mar-27	Jun-27	Sep-27	Dec-27
<b>Official Bank Rate</b>													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Central Case	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75
<b>3-month money market rate</b>													
Upside risk	0.00	0.25	0.50	0.50	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75	0.75
Central Case	4.90	4.60	4.35	4.10	3.90	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85	3.85
Downside risk	0.00	-0.25	-0.25	-0.50	-0.50	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75	-0.75
<b>5yr gilt yield</b>													
Upside risk	0.00	0.70	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90
Central Case	4.34	4.30	4.20	4.10	4.00	3.90	3.90	3.95	4.00	4.05	4.05	4.05	4.05
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.65	-0.65	-0.70	-0.70	-0.75	-0.75	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80
<b>10yr gilt yield</b>													
Upside risk	0.00	0.70	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90
Central Case	4.56	4.55	4.45	4.30	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.20	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.65	-0.65	-0.70	-0.70	-0.75	-0.75	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80
<b>20yr gilt yield</b>													
Upside risk	0.00	0.70	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90
Central Case	5.05	5.00	4.90	4.80	4.70	4.65	4.65	4.65	4.65	4.65	4.65	4.65	4.65
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.65	-0.65	-0.70	-0.70	-0.75	-0.75	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80
<b>50yr gilt yield</b>													
Upside risk	0.00	0.70	0.80	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90
Central Case	4.52	4.70	4.60	4.50	4.40	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35	4.35
Downside risk	0.00	-0.50	-0.60	-0.65	-0.65	-0.70	-0.70	-0.75	-0.75	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80	-0.80

Department Standard Rate = Gilt yield + 1.00%  
 National Wealth Fund (NWF) Rate = Gilt yield + 0.40%

**Appendix B - Existing Investment & Debt Portfolio Position**

	31/12/24 Actual portfolio £m	31/12/24 Average rate %
<b>External borrowing:</b>		
Government Loans Fund	58.3	
Local authorities	7.0	
<b>Total gross external debt</b>	<b>65.3</b>	<b>4.77%</b>
<b>Treasury investments:</b>		
Banks (unsecured)	-	
Money market funds	7.5	
<b>Total treasury investments</b>	<b>7.5</b>	<b>4.14%</b>
<b>Net debt</b>	<b>57.8</b>	

## Appendix C - Additional requirements of the Government Investment Guidance

**Specified investments:** The DoE Guidance defines specified investments as those:

- denominated in pound sterling,
- due to be repaid within 12 months of arrangement,
- not defined as capital expenditure by legislation, and
- invested with one of:
  - the UK Government,
  - a UK local authority, parish council or community council, or
  - a body or investment scheme of “high credit rating”, and
- where the principal sum to be repaid at maturity is the same as the initial sum invested, other than investments in the UK Government.

The Authority defines “high credit rating” organisations and securities as those having a credit rating of A- or higher that are domiciled in the UK or a foreign country with a sovereign rating of AA+ or higher. For money market funds and other pooled funds “high credit rating” is defined as those having a credit rating of A- or higher.

**Non-specified investments:** Any investment not meeting the definition of a specified investment is classed as non-specified. The Authority does not intend to make any investments denominated in foreign currencies, nor any that are defined as capital expenditure by legislation, such as unlisted bonds and shares. Non-specified investments will therefore be limited to long-term investments, i.e. those that are due to mature 12 months or longer from the date of arrangement; investments with bodies and schemes without high credit ratings; and investments where the principal sum to be repaid at maturity is not the same as the initial sum invested, for example corporate bonds. Limits on non-specified investments are shown in table C1 below.

Table C1: Non-specified investment limits

	Cash limit
Total long-term investments	£1m
Total investments without credit ratings or rated below A- (except UK Government and local authorities)	£2m
Total investments (except pooled funds) with institutions domiciled in foreign countries rated below AA+	£1m
Total investments where the principal amount varies (other than those with the UK Government)	£1m
Total non-specified investments	£5m

**Investment training:** The needs of the Authority’s treasury management staff for training in investment management are assessed annually, and additionally when the responsibilities of individual members of staff change.

Staff regularly attend training courses, seminars and conferences provided by Arlingclose and CIPFA. Relevant staff are also encouraged to study professional qualifications as appropriate.

**Investment advisers:** The Authority has appointed Arlingclose Limited as treasury management advisers and receives specific advice on investment, debt and capital finance issues.

**Investment of money borrowed in advance of need:** The Authority may, from time to time, borrow in advance of need, where this is expected to provide the best long-term value for money. Since amounts borrowed will be invested until spent, the Authority is aware that it will be exposed to the risk of loss of the borrowed sums, and the risk that investment and borrowing interest rates may change in the intervening period. These risks will be managed as part of the Authority's overall management of its treasury risks.

The total amount borrowed will not exceed the authorised borrowing limit of £157.5 million. The maximum period between borrowing and expenditure is expected to be two years, although the Authority is not required to link particular loans with particular items of expenditure.

## APPENDIX 6

### Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

#### Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025/26

Where the Council finances capital expenditure by debt, it must put aside resources to repay that debt in later years. The amount charged to the revenue budget for the repayment of debt is known as Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP), although there is no statutory minimum. The Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 requires the Council to have regard to the former Department of Environment's *Guidance on Minimum Revenue Provision* (the DoE Guidance) most recently issued in 2011.

The broad aim of the DoE Guidance is to ensure that capital expenditure is financed over a period that is either reasonably commensurate with that over which the capital expenditure provides benefits.

The DoE Guidance requires the Council to approve an Annual MRP Statement each year and provides a number of options for calculating a prudent amount of MRP, but does not preclude the use of other appropriate methods. The following statement incorporates options recommended in the Guidance as well as locally determined prudent methods.

MRP is calculated by reference to the capital financing requirement (CFR) which is the total amount of past capital expenditure that has yet to be permanently financed, noting that debt must be repaid and therefore can only be a temporary form of funding. The CFR is calculated from the Council's balance sheet in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy's *Prudential Code for Capital Expenditure in Local Authorities*, 2021 edition.

- For capital expenditure incurred before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012, MRP will be equal to the principal repayments of the associated borrowing.
- For capital expenditure incurred after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2012, MRP will be determined by charging the expenditure over the expected useful life of the relevant asset as the principal repayment on an annuity with an annual interest rate equal to the average relevant PWLB rate for the year of expenditure, starting in the year after the asset becomes operational. MRP on purchases of freehold land will be charged over 50 years. MRP on expenditure not related to fixed assets but which has been capitalised by regulation or direction will be charged over an appropriate period. Capital expenditure incurred during 2025/26 will not be subject to a MRP charge until 2026/27 or later.
- For assets acquired by leases or the Private Finance Initiative, MRP will be determined as being equal to the element of the rent or charge that goes to write down the balance sheet liability.
- Where former operating leases have been brought onto the balance sheet due to the adoption of the *IFRS 16 Leases* accounting standard, and the asset values have been adjusted for accruals, prepayments, premiums and/or incentives, then the annual MRP charges will be adjusted so that the overall charge for MRP over the life of the lease reflects the value of the right-of-use asset recognised on transition rather than the liability.



Based on the Authority's latest estimate of its capital financing requirement (CFR) on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025, the budget for MRP has been set as follows:

	31.03.2025 Estimated CFR £m	2025/26 Estimated MRP £m
Capital expenditure before 1.4.2012	9.0	1.1
Supported capital expenditure after 31.3.2012	106.0	4.6
Expenditure subject to DfC Capitalisation Direction	1.6	1.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>116.6</b>	<b>6.8</b>

### Capital receipts

Proceeds from the sale of capital assets are classed as capital receipts and are typically used to finance new capital expenditure. Where the Authority decides instead to use capital receipts to repay debt and hence reduce the CFR, the calculation of MRP will be adjusted as follows:

- Capital receipts arising from other assets which form an identified part of the Authority's MRP calculations will be used to reduce the MRP charge in respect of assets over their remaining useful lives, starting in the year after the receipt is applied.
- Any other capital receipts applied to repay debt will be used to reduce MRP in equal instalments starting in the year after receipt is applied.

**ACTION SHEET – COUNCIL MEETING – MONDAY 13 JANUARY 2025**

<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Actions taken/ Progress to date</b>	<b>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</b>
C/128/2024	<i>Minutes of Council Meeting held on 01.07.2024</i>	It was agreed item C/058/2024: Twinning Newry with City of Ramallah should remain on the action sheet.	Democratic Services	<b>Ongoing</b>	<i>N</i>
C/003/2025	Action Sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 02.12.2024	It was agreed to note the action sheet.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y
C/004/2025	Minutes of Council Meeting held on 02.12.2024	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y
C/005/2025	Minutes of Special Council Meeting held on 25.11.2024	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.  It was agreed to write to the new Southern Trust Chief Executive to request a meeting with Council.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>  <b>Letter sent</b>	Y  Y
C/006/2025	Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 09.12.2024	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y
C/007/2025	Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 12.12.2024	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y

<b>Minute Ref</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Actions taken/ Progress to date</b>	<b>Remove from Action Sheet Y/N</b>
C/008/2025	Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 16.12.2024	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y
C/009/2025	Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 18.12.2024	The minutes were agreed as an accurate record and adopted. <i>SE/138/2024: Repair of Cory's Comer, Drumaness Bus Shelter</i> An officer to revert back to Councillor Brennan directly. <i>SE/160/2024: Harbour Surveys</i> Mrs Murphy to revery back to Councillor Devlin regarding dates for the Working Group	Democratic Services Mrs S Murphy  Mrs S Murphy	<b>Noted</b>	Y
C/010/2025	Correspondence Report  Correspondence from Ards and North Down Borough Council: Nappy Collection Scheme	It was agreed to note the Correspondence report.  It was agreed that the matter of a Nappy Collection Scheme be referred to the S&E Committee for further discussion.	Democratic Services Mrs S Murphy	<b>Noted</b>	Y
C/011/2025	Notice of Motion: Newry, Mourne and Down District an Apartheid-Free Zone Declaration	It was that this Council endorses the recent findings of Amnesty International (December 2024), which conclude that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and upholding a system of apartheid. Council also condemns in the strongest possible terms the abhorrent war crimes committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023. In response to these grave violations of international law and human rights, this Council declares Newry, Mourne & Down	Democratic Services J Kelly C Mallon A Patterson	<b>Noted</b>	Y

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/012/2025	Notice of Motion – Sharing Financial Information with other Councils to tackle climate change	<p>District an Apartheid-Free Zone. By making this declaration, we commit to opposing all forms of apartheid and systemic oppression and to ensuring our policies and practices align with the principles of justice, equality, and human rights for all. This commitment is a stand of solidarity with oppressed communities worldwide and a step towards fostering a more just and equitable global society. Council also agrees to write to the UK Government to urge support for family visas for those caught up in the conflict in Gaza who want to reunite with their loved ones.</p> <p>Council notes its declaration of Climate Emergency in 2019 and the slow pace of progress in tackling this issue since then.</p> <p>Council commits to finding and sharing knowledge on best practice projects with other Councils to both tackle climate change and to benefit the financial situation Council and Ratepayer.</p> <p>Council notes that other Councils like West Suffolk, Dundee, Warrington and many others have generously shared detailed financial figures on best practice with Newry Mourne and Down District Council and other Councils across these islands.</p> <p>Our Council undertakes to adopt a policy of also generously sharing all knowledge on ways of reducing cost, increasing revenues and broadening the rates base with a view to helping other councils identify financial opportunities arising from tackling the Climate Crisis.</p>	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/013/2025	Notice of Motion – Residential Rehabilitation Service	<p><b>The Motion was referred to the Sustainability &amp; Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.</b></p> <p>It was agreed that this Council notes with grave concern the 2024 report from NISRA on drug-related and drug misuse deaths, which found a significant increase in the number of deaths attributed to drugs and alcohol. This Council further notes the intrinsic connection between isolation, social deprivation, poverty, addiction and mental health issues. This Council acknowledges with concern the NISRA figures which show that drug related deaths are highest among 25-34 year olds.</p> <p>This Council calls on the Minister for Health, in co-operation with the Executive Ministerial Committee for Public Health, to urgently implement the provisions aimed at harm prevention, harm reduction and tackling addiction within the Substance Use Strategy 2021-31, including plans to develop a residential rehabilitation service in a regionally strategic location; and further calls on the Executive to commit to providing appropriate subsequent resources in the 2025-26 Budget for the Department of Health.</p> <p>That Council agree to write to the Southern and South Eastern Health Trusts and the Department of Health requesting an audit of all addiction services available and how and when people can access.</p>	Mrs S Murphy	<p><b>Noted</b></p> <p><b>Letters sent</b></p> <p><b>Response received from the Minister of Health.</b></p>	Y

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
C/014/2025	Notice of Motion – Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19	It was agreed that this Council expresses its concern over the absence of legislation in Northern Ireland that provides legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with Special Educational Needs (SEN). This lack of statutory provision stands in contrast to existing protections in England and Wales, where legislation ensure that young people with SEN continue to receive the necessary support and resources to thrive in education, training and beyond. Council recognises that this legislative gap leaves many young people and their families in Northern Ireland without the assurances and protections afforded elsewhere in the UK. Council therefore will write to the Ministers for Communities, Economy, Education and Health requesting urgent action to enact the required legislation that will ensure legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with SEN.	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>  <b>Letters sent</b>  <b>Response from the Minister for the Economy received.</b>	Y
C/015/2025	Notice of Motion – 80 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of VE & VJ Day	"This Council, in 2025, recognises the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2 on 8th May in Europe (VE Day) and VJ Day, surrender of Japan, 14th August 1945. These two days are major events in the history of the world, and this Council establishes a task and finish working group to plan and prepare for this momentous year.  As a Council we recognise the significant sacrifice of millions of allied troops who gave their lives in the cause of freedom, and we commit to ensuring their achievements are recognised in an appropriate way.  We further propose that Council follow, as far as possible, the official VE Day and VJ Day programme	Democratic Services	<b>Noted</b>	Y

Minute Ref	Subject	Decision	Lead Officer	Actions taken/ Progress to date	Remove from Action Sheet Y/N
		<p>of events and Council officers bring back a report to the working group with costings for consideration."</p> <p><b>The Motion was referred to the Equality &amp; Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6</b></p>	C Moffett	<p><b>Motion to be raised at the next Council's Equality and Good Relations Reference Group meeting scheduled for 31 January 2025.</b></p>	
C/016/2025	Notice of Motion – Vital Role of Trees	<p>"This Council recognises the vital role of trees in enhancing the health and well-being of people and communities, addressing climate change, and supporting biodiversity; commits to raising awareness among residents about these benefits and to actively support efforts to plant and protect the right trees in the right places and for the right reasons, ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits trees provide; and, will commit to exploring how we can education and raise awareness of trees, the role they play in all our lives across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council."</p> <p><b>The Motion was referred to the Sustainability &amp; Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6</b></p>	Democratic Services	Noted	Y
END			Mrs S Murphy		

**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL****NMD/C/****Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 13 January 2025 at 6.00pm in  
Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

<b>In the Chair:</b>	Councillor P Byrne	
<b>In attendance in Chamber:</b>	Councillor C Bowsie Councillor P Campbell Councillor L Devlin Councillor K Feehan Councillor C Galbraith Councillor G Hanna Councillor T Howie Councillor G Kearns Councillor M Larkin Councillor A Lewis Councillor D McAteer Councillor D Murphy Councillor S Murphy Councillor M Ruane Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor J Brennan Councillor W Clarke Councillor C Enright Councillor D Finn Councillor O Hanlon Councillor V Harte Councillor J Jackson Councillor C King Councillor D Lee-Surginor Councillor A Mathers Councillor S O'Hare Councillor K Murphy Councillor H Reilly Councillor G Sharvin Councillor H Young
<b>In attendance via Teams:</b>	Councillor T Andrews Councillor R Howell Councillor A Quinn Councillor D Taylor	Councillor A Finnegan Councillor L McEvoy Councillor M Rice Councillor J Tinnelly
<b>Officials in attendance:</b>	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting) Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer	

**C/001/2025****APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

An apology was received from Councillor Magennis.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to wish Councillors and Staff a Happy New Year.

The Chairperson thanked the Democratic Services and Marketing departments for their work throughout his Christmas appeal and said it was humbling to meet so many incredible people working to support inclusion and diversity across the Council.



Congratulations were extended to Sarah Taggart whose services to scouting and the wider community in Downpatrick were recognised in the New Years Honours List. The Chairperson said it was no doubt a proud moment for Sarah, her family and the wider community.

Seamus McCabe of PIPS in Newry was congratulated on also receiving an award on the New Years Honours List for his long standing voluntary service to the community.

The Chairperson spoke of how on the world stage, local members of Kasana Dancers had secured multiple world titles at the recent Worlds Country Dance Championships in Florida. Congratulations were extended to Downpatrick's Milo Morrison who had become triple World Champion, Kilclief's Aisling Vaughan and Saul's Carragh Moore who had also won world titles at the event. He spoke of the incredible achievement from a very talented group and wished each of them continued success in the years ahead.

The Chairperson congratulated Newry's Nicole Hempink and Gavin McParland who had been selected for the 30 under 30 Climate Change Makers Programme, an initiative that played a pivotal role in nurturing the next generation of Climate Leaders across Northern Ireland.

Strangford Football Club were congratulated on winning the Bobby Dalzell Cup on St Stephens Day/Boxing Day.

On behalf of Council and along with Councillor Larkin, the Chairperson expressed condolences to the family and friends of Tiarnan Trainor, who had passed away following an accident in Killeavy at the age of 13. Thoughts and prayers were with his parents Conor and Majella, his sisters Aimee and Ellie-Mae, his extended family, friends and schoolmates at St Pauls HS, Bessbrook.

The Chairperson said thoughts and prayers were with the family and friends of John Toner from Newcastle who had passed away recently. Many knew John for his contribution to the Hospitality industry, not just within the District but right across Northern Ireland. He was a superb ambassador for tourism and others knew him for his love of the GAA and his beloved Bryansford, as well as his community commitment at a local level to the likes of MYMY and the Mourne Heritage Trust.

Condolences were extended to the family of Doctor William Edward Allen, husband of Allison Allen, the Chief Executive of NILGA.

**C/002/2025**

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/003/2025      ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2024**

**Agreed:**                      The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 2 December 2024 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O'Hare.

**C/004/2025      COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:**                         Minutes of Council Meeting held on 2 December 2024 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:**                      The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 2 December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.

**C/005/2025      SPECIAL COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2024**

**Read:**                         Minutes of Council Meeting held on 25 November 2024 (copy circulated).

In referring to the resignation of Dr O'Kane, the Southern Trust's Chief Executive, Councillor Finn proposed that Council write to the new Chief Executive to request a meeting with Council. Councillor Feehan seconded the proposal.

Councillor Finn spoke of how over the winter period there had been horrendous pressures on the Health Service and the importance of Council meeting with the new Chief Executive to discuss what was going to be in place moving forward.

**Agreed:**                      It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan to write to the new Southern Trust Chief Executive to request a meeting with Council.

**Agreed:**                      The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 25 November 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.

**COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION**

**C/006/2025      MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:**                         Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 9 December 2024 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:**                      The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 9 December 2024 were agreed

**as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.**

**C/007/2025                    MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 12 DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:** Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 12 December 2024 (copy circulated).

**Agreed:**                    **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 12 December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor McAteer.**

**C/008/2025                    MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:** Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 16 December 2024 (copy circulated).

In response for an update in relation to recruitment to the DEA's from Councillor Andrews, Mr Patterson advised that following approval from Council officers would proceed in looking at DEA membership and the recruitment process would follow on from that with an update provided to Members in due course.

Councillor Andrews enquired if recruitment would be open for former DEA members to reapply. Mr Patterson advised officers would examine all opportunities for recruitment for Members onto the forums and would provide information as they proceeded with that.

**Agreed:**                    **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 16 December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Jackson.**

**C/009/2025                    MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:** Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 18 December 2024 (copy circulated).

*SE/138/2024: Repair of Corry's Corner, Drumaness Bus Shelter*

In response for an update from Councillor Brennan as to when the repairs to the bus shelter would be carried out, Mrs Murphy advised an officer would revert to him directly on the matter.

*SE/153/2024: Amended Warrenpoint and Newcastle Public Convenience Opening Times*

Councillor Devlin welcomed the amended opening times particularly for the Downes Road, Newcastle given the investment Council had made there in terms of the play park facilities.

*SE/160/2024: Harbour Surveys*

Councillor Devlin made reference to Newcastle Harbour having been transferred from the ERT Directorate to the S&E Directorate and how a Working Group was to be established and enquired about when a timescale and terms of reference for the Working Group would be available.

Mrs Murphy advised she would revert to Councillor Devlin regarding dates for the Working Group.

A lengthy discussion then ensued during which Councillors Hanna, McAteer, Harte, Reilly, Andrews, Sharvin and Taylor referred to problems associated with bin collections over the Christmas period including confusion over dates for collection and bins not being collected according to rescheduled collection dates.

Mrs Murphy acknowledged that from the feedback received there was confusion regarding the alternative collection dates from some residents, however the format used had been the same used over the last number of years and suggested that with Christmas and Boxing Day falling mid-week and alternative collection dates being over different weekends that had caused confusion. She added that in terms of promoting the dates notification had gone out on Council's social media and published in eight of the local newspapers.

Members were advised that in terms of future communication Council would be reverting to placing stickers on bins and that would be for the alternative collection dates for Christmas 2025.

Mrs Murphy stated that overall in terms of the disruption, there had been confusion as to collection dates for some as well as impact from weather conditions and an increase in sickness absence. She advised all customers that had made contact with Council directly or through elected members had been contacted and given information on keeping bins out for catch up collections.

A number of Members referred to the platform for reporting missed bins online and commented that it was difficult to find on the Council's website.

Mrs Murphy advised Members of S&E and the Refuse and Cleansing Task Group were aware that officers had been working on an online form for the reporting of missed bins with a demonstration provided at the last refuse and Cleansing Workshop Meeting and the timeline given was that there would be a soft launch of the form. She advised there was more work to do around data protection notices and a formal launch would be carried out and well publicised through the Marketing team before the end of January.

**Agreed:** **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 18 December 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Finn.**

**Councillor Clarke left the meeting during the above item – 6.45pm.**

**C/010/2025****CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

Read: Report dated 13 January 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

*Correspondence received from Ards and North Down Borough Council: Nappy Collection Scheme*

Councillor Bowsie spoke of his surprise that 4% of residual waste was made-up of disposable nappies and that was 4% of waste that could be recycled with the 70% recycling target that was forthcoming.

Councillor Bowsie proposed Council write to the DAERA Minister in support of Ards and North Down Borough Council and call on the Department to work towards the establishment of a disposable nappy collection and recycling service in Northern Ireland. Councillor Hanna seconded the proposal.

Councillor Sharvin stated he had no issue with the proposal, however felt it was more appropriate for a report to go to the S&E Committee to understand the implications such a scheme would have for Council as it was not clear if any central government funding would be made available for this service to be provided and there was a need as a Council to understand what financial impact the provision of such a service would have.

Mrs Murphy advised Council was expecting a response back from DAERA in relation to the consultation on 'Rethinking our Responses: Measures for Climate Change & a Circular Economy' and in particular capacity in bins was part of the consultation document where it was considering what the options would be for larger households for nappies and other hygiene products. This was part of the consultation which was responded to by Council and may come out in terms of outcome within the consultation report.

Mrs Murphy further explained the Councils current policy for households that had larger capacities could apply for a larger bin and therefore a policy within Council and other councils to deal with this matter was already in place and Council was waiting to see what comes out of the consultation and what direction would be provided by the Department on this matter.

Councillors Hanlon, Howie and Taylor spoke in agreement that Council await a response from DAERA on the consultation and that it be presented to the S&E Committee for further consideration.

Mrs Murphy further clarified that in Council's consultation response to DAERA Newry, Mourne and Down District Council did not support multiple segregated waste streams and did support additional capacity for households that required it such as the instance where you have houses that have require nappy disposal. She advised Members that the matter could be taken back to the Cleansing and Refuse Task Group for further discussion and then to the S&E Committee for decision.

The Chief Executive pointed out that should Council respond as proposed by Councillor Bowsie that it would be suggesting to the Minister that Council was in agreement with a further waste stream which was against what was responded to in the consultation response.

The Chairperson put Councillor Bowsie's proposal, seconded by Councillor Hanna to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

**FOR:** 5  
**AGAINST:** 32  
**ABSTENTIONS:** 0

Councillor Bowsie's proposal was lost.

Councillor Sharvin proposed the matter of a Nappy Collection Scheme be referred to the S&E Committee for further discussion, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

The Chairperson put Councillor Sharvin's proposal, seconded by Councillor Hanlon to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

**FOR:** 32  
**AGAINST:** 0  
**ABSTENTIONS:** 5

Councillor Sharvin's proposal carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon that the matter of a Nappy Collection Scheme be referred to the S&E Committee for further discussion.**

*Correspondence from the Minister of Finance regarding NOM C/188/2024 – Gender Based Violence Against Women*

Councillor Truesdale welcomed the response received from the Minister of Finance which gave hope that Finance and Justice Departments could work together and bring forward some primary legislation.

*Correspondence from Planning Appeals Commission in relation to Regionally Significant Planning Application under Section 26 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 – Lands approximately 650m South West of 40 Mullaghgarraff Road, Hilltown, Newry in the townlands of Gruggandoo, Grugganskeagh and Mullaghgarve, BT34 5LT*

In response to a query from Councillor Tinnelly regarding Councils input into the public inquiry, Mr Mallon advised Council had neither supported or objected to it, but rather Council reached a position that it be subject to a public inquiry, and that no position was taken either way.

*Correspondence from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding Notice of Motion, C/187/2024 - Farmers Inheritance Tax*

Councillors Enright and Rice welcomed the response from the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor McAteer to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:**

- **Correspondence from Lady Chief Justice's Office and the Minister of Finance.**
- **Correspondence received from Ards & North Down Borough Council**
- **Correspondence received from Planning Appeals Commission**
- **Correspondence received from Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs**

Councillor Andrews left the meeting at this point – 7.08pm.

C/011/2025

**NOTICE OF MOTION – NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT  
AN APARTHEID-FREE ZONE DECLARATION**

The following Motion was received from Councillor King:

*"This Council endorses the recent findings of Amnesty International (December 2024), which conclude that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and upholding a system of apartheid. In response to these grave violations of international law and human rights, this Council declares Newry, Mourne & Down District an Apartheid-Free Zone. By making this declaration, we commit to opposing all forms of apartheid and systemic oppression and to ensuring our policies and practices align with the principles of justice, equality, and human rights for all. This commitment is a stand of solidarity with oppressed communities worldwide and a step towards fostering a more just and equitable global society."*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor King advised it was in direct response to Amnesty International's December 2024 report, which unequivocally concluded that Israel was committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and upholding a system of apartheid. Amnesty International documented acts such as killings, causing serious bodily or mental harm, and deliberately inflicting conditions calculated to bring about the physical destruction of Palestinians in Gaza. The report identified genocidal intent in policies, military offensives and dehumanizing statements by Israeli officials.

Councillor King stated that while the contents of the report were shocking, they were not entirely surprising. Amnesty International had previously highlighted Israel's oppressive policies. In February 2022, a report detailed how Israeli authorities enforced a system of oppression and domination against Palestinians across all areas under their control, amounting to apartheid.

Councillor King stated that by declaring the District an Apartheid-Free Zone, Council would align with the principles of justice, equality, and human rights for all. A clear message of solidarity would be sent to oppressed communities worldwide and contribute to the global effort to end systemic oppression. Furthermore, the motion was part of a wider effort to ensure that Council embraced ethical procurement practices.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Mathers wished to highlight the local activism taking place within the District and stated this activism was not just about showing solidarity it was about working toward significant change for those facing oppression.

Councillor Mathers advised he had attended a demonstration in Newry City which was very well-attended, with people from diverse backgrounds coming together in support of the Palestinian people and amongst that group of people were medical staff from Daisy Hill Hospital. He said declaring Newry, Mourne, Down and South Armagh an Apartheid-Free Zone was a critical step and would send a message that the community did not tolerate oppression in any form and committed Council to actively opposing systems of injustice wherever they exist.

Councillor Truesdale thanked Councillor King for bringing the Motion quoting words of the late President Carter who said,

'If you go to Palestine to see what's being done to the Palestinians their land completely taken away from them, all of their basic rights taken away from them, they have passes to go everywhere. I would say in many ways its worse than the treatment of black people in South Africa under apartheid, its worse.'

Councillor Truesdale said she always referenced children and currently according to Save the Children 14,100 children had been killed in Gaza, many more had died from hunger and disease, and nearly 20,000 were missing. She added that behind these appalling statistics were the stories of individual children buried under the rubble, cut off from their families, alone and afraid.

Councillor Truesdale proposed the following amendment for the Motion, seconded by Councillor Enright to read as follows:

*"This Council endorses the recent findings of Amnesty International (December 2024), which conclude that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and upholding a system of apartheid. **Council also condemns in the strongest possible terms the abhorrent war crimes committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023.** In response to these grave violations of international law and human rights, this Council declares Newry, Mourne & Down District an Apartheid-Free Zone. By making this declaration, we commit to opposing all forms of apartheid and systemic oppression and to ensuring our policies and practices align with the principles of justice, equality, and human rights for all. This commitment is a stand of solidarity with oppressed communities worldwide and a step towards fostering a more just and equitable global society. **Council also agrees to write to the UK Government to urge support for family visas for those caught up in the conflict in Gaza who want to reunite with their loved ones.**"*

Councillor King accepted Councillor Truesdale amendments.

Councillors Feehan and McAteer voiced support of the Motion.

Councillors Hanna, Taylor and Reilly spoke of their Party's opposition to the Motion.

The Chairperson put Councillor King's amended Motion, seconded by Councillor Mathers to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

<b>FOR:</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>AGAINST:</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>ABSTENTIONS:</b>	<b>0</b>

The Chairperson declared the Motion carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Mathers that this Council endorses the recent findings of Amnesty International (December 2024), which conclude that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and upholding a system of apartheid. Council also condemns in the strongest possible terms the abhorrent war crimes committed by Hamas on 7 October 2023. In response to these grave violations of international law and human rights, this Council declares Newry, Mourne & Down District an Apartheid-Free Zone. By making this declaration, we commit to opposing all forms of apartheid and systemic oppression and to ensuring our policies and practices align with the principles of justice, equality, and**



human rights for all. This commitment is a stand of solidarity with oppressed communities worldwide and a step towards fostering a more just and equitable global society. Council also agrees to write to the UK Government to urge support for family visas for those caught up in the conflict in Gaza who want to reunite with their loved ones.

**C/012/2015**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – SHARING FINANCIAL INFORMATION WITH OTHER COUNCILS TO TACKLE CLIMATE CHANGE**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Enright:

*"Council notes its declaration of Climate Emergency in 2019 and the slow pace of progress in tackling this issue since then.*

*Council commits to finding and sharing knowledge on best practice projects with other Councils to both tackle climate change and to benefit the financial situation Council and Ratepayer.*

*Council notes that other Councils like West Suffolk, Dundee, Warrington and many others have generously shared detailed financial figures on best practice with Newry Mourne and Down District Council and other Councils across these islands.*

*Our Council undertakes to adopt a policy of also generously sharing all knowledge on ways of reducing cost, increasing revenues and broadening the rates base with a view to helping other councils identify financial opportunities arising from tackling the Climate Crisis".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

**Agreed:                      The Motion was referred to the Sustainability & Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.**

**C/013/2025**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION SERVICE**

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Larkin:

*'This Council notes with grave concern the 2024 report from NISRA on drug-related and drug misuse deaths, which found a significant increase in the number of deaths attributed to drugs and alcohol. This Council further notes the intrinsic connection between isolation, social deprivation, poverty, addiction and mental health issues. This Council acknowledges with concern the NISRA figures which show that drug related deaths are highest among 25-34 year olds.*

*This Council calls on the Minister for Health, in co-operation with the Executive Ministerial Committee for Public Health, to urgently implement the provisions aimed at harm prevention, harm reduction and tackling addiction within the Substance Use Strategy 2021-31, including plans to develop a residential rehabilitation service in a regionally strategic location; and further calls on the Executive to commit to providing appropriate subsequent resources in the 2025-26 Budget for the Department of Health.'*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor D Murphy.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Larkin said he believed that across the chamber everyone would be in agreement that it was a necessary and worthwhile Motion that reflected conversations being had in many homes, workplaces, government institutions and

within health services. It was a conversation on a topic that was very concerning and that caused heartbreak and hardship for so many across the community.

Councillor Larkin advised he had brought the Motion with a personal story, a lived experience by a mother, Sinead who had joined Members in the chamber, along with Councillor McConville-Walker from Armagh City Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council and thanked her for the honour of being able to tell her story and that of her son Seán.

Councillor Larkin spoke of Sinead's oldest son, Seán who had everything to give and a life to live but sadly lost his life in June 2020, aged just 24. Seán, like so many young people, fell into a circle of drugs, one which he and his mother fought so hard for him to get out of over the years. There was nothing they did not try or would not have been willing try. Seán wanted his life back, he wanted people to listen to him and repeatedly told his mummy 'They're not listening'.

Councillor Larkin spoke of how he had met Seán a number of times, a quiet, polite and warm young man and knew his family. Sean was in a dark place and was seeking help, but that help was not forthcoming. Members were informed the 2021-31 Substance Use Strategy had 57 listed actions under 5 headings and these needed to be actioned to prevent the devastating loss of young citizens.

Councillor Larkin stated Members did not have to look too far within communities to see that drug abuse and mental health issues were causing serious difficulties for many individuals and families and implored everyone to embrace the Motion, to support it and to join in the campaign to see drug rehabilitation services developed here in the North.

The Chairperson commended Sinead on her strength and determination and Seán's story for positive change and thanked her coming to council and thanked Councillor Larkin for the Motion.

Councillor D Murphy commended Sinead and Councillor McConville-Walker on their sterling work stating it was unfortunate that for a number of years Mental Health services, particularly for young people, had been closed down by the Tories and any change was yet to be seen from Labour Government. He added that it is was due to a lack of funding and the Assembly could only do what it could do with the budget that it had.

Councillor D Murphy asked all of the parties to continue what they were doing and lobby the British Government to at least pay up to ensure that public services were being properly funded and that those services were available to young people in the north.

On behalf of SDLP, Councillor Devlin voiced support for the Motion commenting that very few families within the District and across the north were unaffected by alcohol and drug issues and urgent investment was vital.

Councillor Devlin made reference to the recent announcement of £12.4million of Peace Plus funding for cross-border addiction services and it was hoped that that money would be utilised in tandem and that the Executive would step in and deliver on this key area.

In voicing support for the Motion on behalf of her Party, Councillor Truesdale referred to when Órlaithí Flynn brought NISRA stats before the assembly in 2024 and said one thing we all had to keep educating was, 'addiction is a disease'. Diseases were treated every day why was addiction not treated the same? The definition was a person unable to control their use of a substance or engagement in a behaviour, even if it was harmful to them.

Councillor Truesdale spoke at length about her studies of addiction and trauma and how addiction reached into every aspect of person's life their families, their employer and the community. She recommended the work of Dr O'Sullivan, lecturer and author of a book called 'Poor'.

Councillor Reilly voiced support for the motion and proposed the following amendment to be included, seconded by Councillor Hanna:

"That Council agree to write to the Southern and South Eastern Health Trusts and the Department of Health requesting an audit of all addiction services available and how and when people can access".

Councillor Larkin accepted the amendment to the Motion.

Councillor Sharvin offered continued support to Sinead in her campaign to raise awareness and to have outcomes that will have a positive impact on society.

Councillor Taylor spoke of how the personal story that was outlined highlighted the real need for these services to be provided to ensure that no families experience what Sinead has had to endure with the loss of her son. He added it was vitally important that the necessary resources were provided to the Department of Health to ensure that they could proceed with such a proposal and move things forward in a positive way for families that require this service whenever a loved one is battling addiction.

The Chairperson declared the Motion unanimously carried.

**Agreed:** It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Larkin, seconded by Councillor D Murphy that this Council notes with grave concern the 2024 report from NISRA on drug-related and drug misuse deaths, which found a significant increase in the number of deaths attributed to drugs and alcohol. This Council further notes the intrinsic connection between isolation, social deprivation, poverty, addiction and mental health issues. This Council acknowledges with concern the NISRA figures which show that drug related deaths are highest among 25-34 year olds. This Council calls on the Minister for Health, in co-operation with the Executive Ministerial Committee for Public Health, to urgently implement the provisions aimed at harm prevention, harm reduction and tackling addiction within the Substance Use Strategy 2021-31, including plans to develop a residential rehabilitation service in a regionally strategic location; and further calls on the Executive to commit to providing appropriate subsequent resources in the 2025-26 Budget for the Department of Health. That Council agree to write to the Southern and South Eastern Health Trusts and the Department of Health requesting an audit of all addiction services available and how and when people can access.

Councillor McEvoy left the meeting at this point – 7.48pm.

**C/014/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – YOUNG PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OVER 19**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Howie:

*This Council expresses its concern over the absence of legislation in Northern Ireland that provides legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with Special Educational Needs (SEN). This lack of statutory provision stands in contrast to existing protections in England and Wales, where legislation ensure that young people with SEN continue to receive the necessary support and resources to thrive in education, training and beyond. Council recognises that this legislative gap leaves many young people and their families in Northern Ireland without the assurances and protections afforded elsewhere in the UK. Council therefore will write to the Ministers for Communities, Economy, Education and Health requesting urgent action to enact the required legislation that will ensure legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with SEN.'*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Howie acknowledged the incredible work of Caleb's Cause NI in the area and spoke of their relentless advocacy for young people with Special Educational Needs (SEN) being instrumental in bringing this urgent issue to the forefront. She encouraged Councillors and members of the public to follow their work on social media and support their efforts.

Councillor Howie advised young People with SEN in Northern Ireland faced a daunting challenge in that the support and legal protections they relied on abruptly end once they turn 19. This cliff-edge in provision not only disrupted their education and training but also diminished their potential to thrive as adults.

Members were advised that in stark contrast, England and Wales had implemented legislative frameworks, such as the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Additional Learning Needs Act 2018, that extended support to the age of 25. These measures recognised the ongoing needs of young people with SEN and ensured they were not left behind as they transitioned to adulthood, yet here in Northern Ireland, there was a lack of similar statutory provisions.

The legislative gap left young people and their families in an extremely vulnerable position as they were forced to rely on charities and third-sector organisations, which are overstretched and underfunded.

On behalf of the DUP, Councillor Hanna spoke in support of the Motion and spoke at length about the great work of Mourne Stimulus and thanked Council for their support on providing the use of facilities at a peppercorn rent.

Councillor Hanna spoke of how when 19 year olds with special education needs reached that age it was very difficult for them and support was needed look after the most vulnerable, vulnerable adults and young people in our community but that the biggest challenge was funding.

Councillor Hanlon thanked Councillor Howie for bringing the motion to Council confirming her Party commended the families who had led the campaign for change in legislation to ensure SEN provision for over 19s. She spoke of the importance of support coming from all levels of government in the North and how the Economy Minister had taken the lead on the departmental collaboration and to address the need for continued SEN provision for young people, a task force had been set up in the Department for Economy to look at the options so that all the departments can work together.

Councillor Hanlon said it was important to note that the business plan for the Department of Economy had included this into it, and it was now going to be also in the programme for government.

Councillor Finn on behalf of SDLP voiced support for the motion and mentioned the Gateway in Newry, an incredible organisation that nearly had their funding cut, which was so concerning that there were services in place for members of the community who need them and that they were being put at risk.

Councillors Hanna, Hanlon and Finn in their address each spoke of the cliff edge faced by people with special educational needs once they left school and the worry that created for their families about what their future was going to look like.

Councillor Taylor supported the Motion stating that post education support for young people with special education needs was an area of priority for the Ulster Unionist Party and as a local representative it was something he had made representations on behalf of families that who had found themselves in the situation where when their child was finishing their education they felt abandoned by the system.

Councillor Taylor stated that every one of those people deserved an opportunity to be able to live their best life and that may be through further education, support or training or some form of employment that's appropriate to their needs and the development of a strategy that provided that support going forward was key to that. Councillor Taylor said he hoped through a collaborative approach from the various departments within the Northern Ireland Executive that point could be reached sooner rather than later.

Councillor Howie thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

The Chairperson declared the Motion unanimously carried.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Truesdale that this Council expresses its concern over the absence of legislation in Northern Ireland that provides legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with Special Educational Needs (SEN). This lack of statutory provision stands in contrast to existing protections in England and Wales, where legislation ensure that young people with SEN continue to receive the necessary support and resources to thrive in education, training and beyond. Council recognises that this legislative gap leaves many young people and their families in Northern Ireland without the assurances and protections afforded elsewhere in the UK. Council therefore will write to the Ministers for Communities, Economy, Education and Health requesting urgent action to enact the required legislation that will ensure legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with SEN.**

#### **C/015/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF VE & VJ DAY**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Hanna:

*This Council, in 2025, recognises the 80th anniversary of the end of WW2 on 8th May in Europe (VE Day) and VJ Day, surrender of Japan, 14th August 1945. These two days are*

*major events in the history of the world, and this Council establishes a task and finish working group to plan and prepare for this momentous year.*

*As a Council we recognise the significant sacrifice of millions of allied troops who gave their lives in the cause of freedom, and we commit to ensuring their achievements are recognised in an appropriate way.*

*We further propose that Council follow, as far as possible, the official VE Day and VJ Day programme of events and Council officers bring back a report to the working group with costings for consideration.'*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

**Agreed:                    The Motion was referred to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6**

**C/016/2025    NOTICE OF MOTION – VITAL ROLE OF TREES**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

*"This Council recognises the vital role of trees in enhancing the health and well-being of people and communities, addressing climate change, and supporting biodiversity; commits to raising awareness among residents about these benefits and to actively support efforts to plant and protect the right trees in the right places and for the right reasons, ensuring that everyone can share in the benefits trees provide; and, will commit to exploring how we can education and raise awareness of trees, the role they play in all our lives across Newry, Mourne and Down District Council."*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Enright.

**Agreed:                    The Motion was referred to the Sustainability & Environment Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.05pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 February 2025.

**Signed:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chairperson**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**Chief Executive**

**NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting  
held on Monday 20 January 2025 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row**

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**Chairperson:** Councillor A Lewis**Committee Members  
in attendance:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor M Ruane

**Committee Members****in attendance via Teams:** Councillor C Galbraith Councillor S Murphy  
Councillor J Truesdale**Non-Committee Members****in attendance via Teams:** Councillor J Tinnelly**Officials in attendance:**

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism  
 Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration  
 Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism  
 Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
 Mrs S Kieran, Democratic Services Officer

**ERT/001/2025: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillor Gibbons.

**ERT/002/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Andrews declared an interest in Item 8 on the agenda – Peace Plus.

**ERT/003/2025: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM  
COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2024****Read:** Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2024 (**Copy circulated**)**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2024.**

**FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION****ERT/004/2025: BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL REGIONAL HUB**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Belfast Region City Deal Regional Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon presented the report stating the Council had conducted consultation and research which had identified a clear need for a Regional Hub. He said following engagement a concept note had been developed and forwarded to the Digital Advisory Board within City Deal for approval to commence the outline business case. He outlined the next stage would be to procure a consultant to develop an outline business case which was a requirement of City Deal projects.

Councillor Harte proposed to accept the officer's recommendation as contained within the report, this was seconded by Councillor Kearns.

Councillor Truesdale stated the Alliance Party were very supportive of economic growth and other benefits the regional innovation hub was projected to bring, however, their views in relation to the matter were well documented. She stated while they supported the need of a place to work for staff, they did not agree with the location, size and cost of the project. She noted Council had conducted consultation and research which demonstrated a clear need for a hub but this information had not been attached to the report and she would like to see the research. Councillor Truesdale requested a recorded vote on the matter.

In response to Councillor Truesdale, Mr Mallon recommended that a workshop be arranged for Members to discuss work carried out to date and to present what the proposed facility would deliver for the district.

In response to Mr Mallon, Councillor Truesdale confirmed she was opposed to the report and recommendations contained therein but welcomed the workshop.

Following some confusion within the chamber over the request for a recorded vote, Ms Taggart, Democratic Services Manager clarified that Councillor Harte had proposed to accept the officer's recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Kearns. She stated that Councillor Truesdale was not in support of the proposal therefore as there was not full agreement within the chamber, Members would be voting on the proposal to accept the officer's recommendation.

As there was not full agreement within the chamber the proposal was put to a recorded vote as requested by Councillor Truesdale, the results of which were as follows (copy appended to these minutes):

FOR:	12
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	2

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns, the following was agreed:**

- **To approve the attached business case**
- **To approve the procurement of consultancy support for the development of an outline**



**business case for a regional innovation hub within Newry Civic & Regional Hub**

- **To approve the appointment of consultancy support following the BRCD Digital Advisory Board Approval**

**ERT/005/2025: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 2**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Call 2. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report stating the second call for Financial Assistance for the Period 2025-2026 would commence for capital themes in March 2025. The closing date for Applications was April 2025 and letters of offers would be issued by July 2025.

Following queries from Councillors Andrews and Lee-Surginor, Mrs Smyth confirmed a range of workshops would take place for applicants.

**AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to proceed with Financial Assistance Call 2 Capital as detailed in the Officer's Report**

**ERT/006/2025: GEOPARK STRATEGY**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Geopark Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report stating approval was being sought for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark Strategy 2025-2033.

Councillor Truesdale thanked the Council for the report and queried how many people were directly employed by the Council for Geopark work. She asked what 'rangering mechanisms' as referred to in the strategy entailed and whether there would be QR codes on boards for information.

In response to Councillor Truesdale, Mrs Smyth confirmed Council employed an AONB and Geopark Team of four staff who undertook the duties and activities associated with the Geopark, she confirmed recruitment was currently underway for additional staff and these positions would be funded through the NIEA programme.

In relation to 'rangering mechanisms', Mrs Smyth confirmed the NIEA funded Youth Ranger Programmes. Mr Mallon confirmed in the past there had been funding for rangers delivered through the Mourne Heritage Trust which both Council and NIEA had supported.

Mr Mallon confirmed the use of QR codes for interpretation was being investigated across all Council tourism facilities and forest parks.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the Geopark Strategy.**

**ERT/007/2025: LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Labour Market Partnership Additional Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report and stated Council had received an offer for additional funding from the Department for the Economy via Department for Communities to deliver a level 3 Diploma in childcare on behalf of NMD Labour Market Partnership.

Councillor Hanlon stated the challenges in the childcare sector currently were well documented and Sinn Féin had recently taken a Notice of Motion regarding the issue of childcare. She welcomed the Labour Market Partnership developing this programme and enabling people in the childcare sector to upskill.

Councillor Truesdale queried whether it had been the Department of Economy, the Council or SERC who decided that childcare should be targeted. She stated that childcare workers were mostly women and girls who were notoriously undervalued and underpaid and that there was a huge need for the system, both public and private, to be overhauled. She stated it was disappointing to see childcare chosen again when women were capable of doing lots of different things, stating that the initiative seemed to have been devised by people within the industry rather than those that would need to do 20+ hours work per week by undertaking the Diploma on top of the work they were currently undertaking.

In response to Councillor Truesdale, Mrs Smyth confirmed the Labour Market Partnership was made up of a range of partners from businesses, colleges and the community and voluntary sector. She said they had developed an action plan and childcare was identified as a key theme.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, the following was agreed:**

- **To note Council's acceptance of additional funding from Dept for Economy via Dept for Communities for an Upskilling for Growth Course Level 3 Diploma in Childcare on behalf of NMD Labour Market Partnership**
- **To approve that Council appoint SERC through an SLA to deliver the Level 3 diploma in Childcare on behalf of NMD Labour Market Partnership**

**ERT/008/2025: PEACEPLUS**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding PEACE Plus. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Quinn, the following was agreed:**

- To approve the minutes of PEACE Plus Partnership on 24 October 2024, attached at Appendix 1.
- To establish a Project Partnership and update the Partnership Board in line with that required for each of the pillars to ensure representation is current and no duplication with the Partnership Board.
- To approve the attached business case for the procurement of Appendix 2 (Strand 1.1 Transforming and Reimagining Project) and Appendix 3 (Strand 1.4 Community Navigation Programme and Strand 1.5 Co-designed Cross Community Place Making Plans)

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

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, 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 Ruane, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

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

**ERT/009/2025: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BASIC ELIGIBILITY**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Basic Eligibility. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the recommendations of the Officer's Report.

**ERT/010/2025: ULSTER FLEADH**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Ulster Fleadh. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to support the organisation noted in the Officer’s Report through an SLA arrangement for the hosting of the Ulster Fleadh in Warrenpoint in 2025 as outlined within the Officer’s Report.  
 It was also agreed that officers would meet with the organisation to discuss the application and that they be invited to make a presentation to Committee.

**FOR NOTING**

**ERT/011/2025: INSPIRING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CONFERENCE**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Inspiring Sustainable Tourism Conference. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note that Council will collaborate with and sponsor the Sustainable Tourism Network to ring the 2026 Inspiring Sustainable Tourism annual conference to Newry, Mourne and Down. This will help showcase the destination and raise awareness of the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.37pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 February 2025.

**Signed: Councillor A Lewis**  
**Chairperson**  
**Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee**

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**Signed: Conor Mallon**  
**Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism**

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**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**RECORDED VOTE**

DATE: 20/01/2025 VENUE: Monaghan Row, Newry MEETING: ERT 2024-25

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Belfast Region City Deal Regional Hub - Proposed by Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns to accept the officer's recommendation.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	X			
W Clarke	X			
K Feehan	X			
C Galbraith	X			
M Gibbons				X
O Hanlon	X			
G Hanna	X			
V Harte	X			
G Kearns	X			
D Lee-Surginor			X	
A Lewis	X			
S Murphy	X			
A Quinn	X			
M Ruane	X			
J Truesdale			X	
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>

**NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL****Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 23 January 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre****In the Chair:** Councillor T Howie**In Attendance in Chamber:**Councillor C Bowsie  
Councillor C King  
Councillor D McAteerCouncillor O Hanlon  
Councillor A Mathers  
Councillor G Sharvin**Committee Members in Attendance via Teams:**Councillor P Byrne  
Councillor S O'Hare  
Councillor D TaylorCouncillor W Clarke  
Councillor A Quinn**Officials in Attendance in Chamber:**Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive  
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services  
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism  
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities  
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer**Officials in Attendance Via Teams:**Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration (Acting)**SPR/001/2025:****APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Enright, Reilly and Rice, and from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability &amp; Environment.

**SPR/002/2025:****DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Sharvin declared an interest in item 4: IT Strategy 2030, and item 6: Proposed Renewal of Lease of Lands at Saul, Downpatrick.

**SPR/003/2025:****ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 12 DECEMBER 2024****Read:**Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 12 December 2024 **(Copy circulated)****AGREED:****On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the**

**action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources  
Committee meeting of 12 December 2024.**

**FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION**

Having declared an interest, Councillor Sharvin left the room at this stage – 6.05pm

**SPR/004/2025:                    IT STRATEGY 2030**

**Read:**                                Report from Ms V Keegan, Assistant Director of Digital & Communications, regarding IT Strategy 2030. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Ringland outlined that the new IT Strategy had been developed to provide a clear road map for how technology would support and drive the Council's IT investment to help integrate technology into day-to-day services, with security and service continuity being key components of the strategy. He highlighted that the IT Strategy supported Council's digital transformation strategy and would be overseen by a robust governance framework that was aligned with the audit recommendations from the previous IT Strategy.

**AGREED:**                                **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to approve the draft IT Strategy 2030.**

**SPR/005/2025:                    DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION STRATEGY 2030**

**Read:**                                Report from Ms V Keegan, Assistant Director of Digital & Communications, regarding IT Strategy 2030. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Keegan outlined the new Digital Transformation Strategy which set out a high-level approach as to how Council would use digital technologies and innovative practices to enhance service delivery and support the longer-term transformation agenda. She confirmed that this would be delivered alongside a robust governance framework to ensure effective oversight and resource management during the implementation.

**AGREED:**                                **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to approve the draft Digital Transformation Strategy 2030.**

Cllr McAteer joined the meeting during the above discussion – 6.09pm

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

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

**SPR/006/2025: PROPOSED LEASE OF LANDS AT SAUL, DOWNPATRICK**

**Read:** Report from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding Proposed renewal of Lease of Lands at Saul, Downpatrick. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to lease the lands outlined in red on the map attached to the Officer's Report with the party noted in the report for a period of 10 years subject to a peppercorn rent.

Cllr Sharvin rejoined the meeting at this stage – 6.14pm

**SPR/007/2025: PROPOSED RENEWAL OF LICENSE AT AUGHNAGUN, MAYOBRIDGE**

**Read:** Report from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding Proposed Renewal of License at Aughnagun, MayoBridge. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to enter into three, one-year license agreements in respect of lands as shown hatched red on the map attached to the Officer's Report with the party noted in the report at no cost, subject to Departmental Consent.

**SPR/008/2025: PROPOSED LEASE OF LANDS AT BESSBROOK**

**Read:** Report from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration, regarding the Proposed Lease of Lands at Bessbrook. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to enter into a lease with the group noted in the Officer's Report in respect of the lands as outlined in red on the map attached for a term of 25 years at a peppercorn rent, subject to Departmental Consent.



**SPR/009/2025:****REQUEST FOR PURCHASE OF LAND****Read:**

Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding a Request for Purchase of Land. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to the sale of lands outlined in red on the attached map to the party detailed within the Officer's Report for the value determined by Council's valuer. The sale will be subject to the inclusion of a buy back clause and the interested party paying Council's legal and valuation costs.**

**SPR/010/2025:****AHC CAPITAL PROJECTS****Read:**

Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding a AHC Capital Projects. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to progress to the procurement and appointment of an Integrated Consultancy Team to progress the capital projects as detailed within the Officer's Report to RIBA Stage 3: Developed Design and Submission of planning applications.**

**SPR/011/2025:****PUBLIC REALM DOWNPATRICK UPDATE****Read:**

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding a Public Realm Downpatrick Update. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to request budget from the Capital Plan for 2024/25 to support the completion of one business plan submission as outlined within the Officer's Report**

**SPR/012/2025:****CASTLEWELLAN FOREST PARK****Read:**

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration, regarding Castlewella Forest Park. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, the following was agreed:**

- To proceed with the installation of gas infrastructure into Castlewellan Forest Park with the organisation as outlined within the Officer's Report.
- To proceed with the installation of internet connectivity / Fibre with the organisation as outlined within the Officer's Report.
- To proceed with the NIE connection and to increase the size of the cable.
- That Officer's investigate and liaise with NIE regarding the upgrade of the electricity supply infrastructure to ensure adequate loading to facilitate any future development, with a further report to be presented at Committee for approval.

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

**SPR/013/2025:**

**IT STRATEGY 2016 PROGRESS REVIEW**

**Read:**

Report from Ms V Keegan, Assistant Director Digital & Communications, regarding IT Strategy 2016 Progress Review. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to note the contents of the Officer's Report**

**SPR/014/2025:**

**STRATEGIC FINANCE WORKING GROUP ACTION SHEET MEETINGS HELD 3<sup>RD</sup> AND 17<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:**

Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheets of Meetings held 3<sup>rd</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> December 2024 and 15 January 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed to note action sheets.**

**SPR/015/2025:**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

**Read:**

Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration, regarding a Planning Department Update. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly outlined the contents of the Report and highlighted that the NILGA statistics contained within the Report included information up to September 2024, while the internal analysis statistics accounted for activity up to period ending 20 January 2025.

Councillor Bowsie commended the hard work of the staff within the Planning Department as evidenced by the improving statistics and raised some queries as below:

- Was there a projected timeline with regard to the LDP and consideration of Conservation Areas as important local heritage was being destroyed in the interim.
- What statistics were available with regard to the number of breaches being pursued and what impact did the backlog of planning applications have on these.
- What additional statistics could be made available with regard to staffing levels, staff retention and reasons for staff leaving their posts and was it possible to compare these with the rest of the Province.
- Caution should be shown with regard to performance improvement actions as they could potentially be demoralising which could have a negative impact on staff morale and retention rates.

Mr McGilly acknowledged the points raised and addressed Councillor Bowsie's queries as follows:

- The LDP was due to be agreed by the Planning Committee, Council and the Department within this upcoming year.
- Conservation Areas were currently considered in line with the Local Development Plan and would be reviewed under the Local Policies stage in due course.
- The enforcement statistics indicated that all enforcement cases were being pursued but were unfortunately hampered by resource challenges and the complexity of some cases. He stressed that 147 cases had been closed, while in the same period an additional 144 had been opened.
- No statistics were published with regard to other Council's staffing level, but this information was shared through discussions with other Councils.
- Performance improvement actions were handled with positivity and discretion, and all staff were involved in any discussions.

Councillor Hanlon stated that the main complaint she received from agents was the delay between application validation and allocation. She welcomed the ongoing recruitment but queried how any tangible outcomes would be visible to applicants. She recognised that poor applications caused delays, further welcoming the validations checklists that were to be tabled at a future Planning Committee meeting stating that these should help cut down on unnecessary delays in the processing of applications.

#### **Councillor Taylor left the meeting at this stage – 6.57pm**

Councillor Hanlon further queried when the LDP would be tabled for agreement, noting that it would affect everything across the District and stated that Council should be doing everything it could to address the concerns of the public regarding this.

Mr McGilly drew Members attention to the statistics from June 24 – September 24 within the report, noting in particular the significant increase in the number of applications being processed. He stated that while there were still a number of applications awaiting allocation, this had decreased significantly from the previous year. He outlined that reported processing times would increase as the Department began processing applications that had been in the system for some time.

Mr McGilly highlighted the issues with regard to statutory consultations, stressing there was a resource issue across the board in relation to planning applications. He outlined a pilot that Council had recently undertaken with NI Water and NI Environmental Agency (NIEA) which he hoped would decrease consultation times.

Councillor Sharvin stated that the Planning Department staff had been very responsive and continued to respond extremely well to queries. He queried the number of vacant posts that existed at present, what the interest in positions that had been advertised was, and whether there was anything that Council could do to make the positions more attractive.

Mr McGilly noted that there were two Planning Officer positions that were awaiting a start date, and a further recruitment was underway for 3 Planning Assistant positions, advising there had been a large number of applications for each position and reserve lists were utilised regularly.

Councillor Sharvin queried whether there had been any positive change from the strategic engagements with statutory consultees and queried whether any improvement had been noted following engagement sessions with agents to discuss application quality.

Mr McGilly stated that there were challenges across the board when it came to Planning applications, noting that delays were not always as a result of internal processes, highlighting again the resource issues faced by statutory consultees and the delay this had on applications. He advised that the Application Validation Checklists would be utilised by the Planning Department to attempt to gather all the relevant information up-front and would also establish time limits on agents responding to queries for further information.

Councillor Sharvin noted that every refused application on the weekly delegated list was called in and queried if there was a responsibility on all Members to assess if a call in had valid and credible planning reasons, rather than simply calling in every application as requested.

Councillor McAteer noted his support for the Planning Department stating that he felt progress had been made and further commended the pilots with NI Water and NIEA. He queried if it was possible for the Planning Department to have a surplus of staff to account for absences, such as maternity leave, to allow for the Department to remain on track with processing applications.

Councillor McAteer further queried the number of opportunities that applicants were given to resubmit information on poor quality applications as it slowed processing times. He further stressed his dismay at the time senior planners spent processing objections and felt that this could be limited somehow.

Mr Mallon confirmed that it had been agreed at Committee before Christmas to approve three new positions to complement the existing staff, noting that reserve lists were never utilised for long as they were exhausted quickly with the appointment of new staff. He noted his hope that the benefits of new staff and the pilot schemes would be visible in the coming months.

Mr Mallon addressed Councillor McAteer's comments in relation to poor quality applications and objections, stressing that they were two different issues. He confirmed that the planning process had to ensure that each objection was addressed and was something the Department of Infrastructure (DFI) was aware of. In relation to statutory consultees, he confirmed that DFI produced annual reports on statutory consultations, noting that an updated report should be available soon for officers and members to consider.

Councillor Hanlon requested clarity around the call in process, confirming that she processed every call in form to be considered by the Planning Call-In Panel as she felt she was unable to consider an application in line with planning policies.

Mr Mallon confirmed that it was the remit of members of the Planning Call in Panel to consider each called in application.

Councillor Hanlon then requested clarity from Councillor McAteer regarding the hiring of women and any subsequent maternity leave requirements, and whether he was stating that Council should not hire women in case of absence.

Councillor McAteer stated that he was alluding to maternity leave as an example of absence but apologised for any offence caused and withdrew his comments.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

**SPR/016/2025:** **STATUTORY REPORTING: SECTION 75 POLICY SCREENING REPORT – QUARTERLY REPORT FOR PERIOD OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2024**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding Statutory Reporting: Section 75 Policy Screen Report – Quarterly Report for Period October – December 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the Section 75 Policy Screening Report – Quarterly Report for period October – December 2024.**

**SPR/017/2025:** **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IN LOCAL COUNCILS' DIVERSITY AMBASSADOR NETWORK**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Moffett, Head of Corporate Policy, regarding Equality and Diversity in Local Councils' Diversity Ambassador Network. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the correspondence from the LGSC Equality & Diversity Group regarding the establishment of a Diversity Ambassador Network.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.16pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 February 2025.

**Signed:** **Councillor Tierna Howie**  
**Chairperson**

**Signed:**

**Josephine Kelly**  
**Director of Corporate Services**

**NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL****Ref: AHC/2025**

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**Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on  
Monday 27 January 2025 at 6.00pm in the Mourne Room,  
Downshire Civic Centre**

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**Chairperson:** Councillor C Galbraith**In attendance  
in Chamber:**

Councillor L Devlin	Councillor D Finn
Councillor A Lewis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor H Young	

**Committee Members in****attendance (via Teams):** Councillor M Gibbons      Councillor O Magennis**Officials in Chamber:** Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities  
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living  
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development  
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer**Officials via Teams:** Mrs M Flynn, Head of Engagement (Acting)**AHC/001/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Finnegan, Howell, Jackson, Lee-Surginor and McEvoy.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to praise NIE engineers, Council staff and wider agencies including community and sports organisations for their continued efforts in supporting those impacted by the storm.

The Chairperson advised Financial Assistance was open for Call 1 and encouraged all eligible groups to reach out to DEA Officers if they required guidance.

**AHC/002/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**AHC/003/2025: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 16 DECEMBER 2024**

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 16 December 2024. **(Copy circulated)**.

**AGREED:** It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 16 December 2024.

**AHC/004/2025: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report dated 27 January 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Devlin, to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheets attached for:

- Newry DEA Forum Meeting held on 3 December 2024.
- Slieve Croob DEA Forum Meeting held on 10 December 2024.
- Downpatrick DEA Forum Meeting held on 10 December 2024.

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

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 5 to 7, which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 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) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.



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

**AHC/005/2025: RECOGNITION OF ACHIEVEMENT FOR HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETES**

Read: Report dated 27 January 2025 from Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director, Healthy Living, regarding recognition of achievement for high performance levels in sport, criteria and processing procedures. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy, to approve the updated Criteria and Processing Procedures for the Sports Development: Recognition of Achievement for High Performance Levels in Sport.**

**AHC/006/2025: DIGI-HUB PROJECT**

Read: Report dated 27 January 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding East Border Region Application to 2.4 Peaceplus, small towns and villages, Mini Digi Hub Project. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Mathers, that Council confirm the site for the funded project as detailed within the officer's report with the Managing Authority in order to secure the funding available.**

**AHC/007/2025: NMDDC GOOD RELATIONS ACTION PLAN 2025/26**

Read: Report dated 27 January 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding the draft NMDDC Good Relations Action Plan for 2025/26. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Devlin, to note the officer's report and the attached draft of the NMDDC Good Relations Action Plan for 2025/26.**

**FOR NOTING**

**AHC/008/2025: SOCIAL INCLUSION UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report dated 27 January 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on the Council's ongoing social inclusion work, highlighting key developments and emerging issues. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Young took the opportunity to acknowledge and recognise the fantastic work of the Newry, Mourne and Down Ethnic Minority Support Centre.

**AGREED:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, to note the officer's report.**

**AHC/009/2025: ENDING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS UPDATE REPORT**

Read: Report dated 27 January 2025 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development regarding an update on the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls Initiative. **(Copy circulated)**

In welcoming funding to help education on ending violence against women and girls, Councillor K Murphy enquired if activities under Tier 2 funding for more extensive and longer running projects and education courses and workshops would be provided to secondary schools.

Mrs Flynn responded by advising the financial assistance calls and grants were open to organisations to apply to Council for funding and in terms of work that might take place within youth groups, education centres and community settings would be dependent on the applications received.

Members were advised officers were working very closely with Women's Aid and other organisations to encourage applications and it was hoped that part of that would form the basis of an outreach programme into schools, youth groups and community groups.

Mrs Robb advised there was a bespoke event with the Education Authority planned for February and asked Members to encourage groups within the community to apply for funding.

Councillor Finn enquired about the amount of applications received by Council and what Councillors could do to ensure groups were aware of the availability of funding.

Mr Patterson confirmed funding opened on 13 January 2025 and that information sessions were being rolled out, he spoke of the importance of getting as much information out there as possible and working with Members as Elected Representatives was welcomed.

**AGREED:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Finn, to note the officer's report.**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.29pm.

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 February 2025.

Signed: Councillor Galbraith  
Chairperson

Signed: Andrew Patterson  
Director Active and Healthy Communities

**NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Ref: SE/2025

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**Minutes of Sustainability & Environment Committee Meeting held on  
Wednesday 29 January 2025 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber,  
Monaghan Row, Newry**

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**Chair:** Councillor G Kearns**In attendance in  
Chamber:**

Councillor P Campbell	Councillor C Enright
Councillor V Harte	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor M Larkin	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor H Young	

**Committee Members in  
Attendance online:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor D Finn
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**Officials in Chamber:**

Mrs S Murphy, Director Sustainability and Environment  
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability  
Mrs S Trainor, Assistant Director Environment  
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**SE/001/2025:****APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Feehan and Magennis.

**SE/002/2025:****DECLARATIONS OF "CONFLICTS OF INTEREST"**

There were no declarations of interest.

**SE/003/2025:****ACTION SHEET: SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 DECEMBER 2024**

Read:

Action Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 18 December 2024. **(Copy circulated)****AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by  
Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to note the Action  
Sheet of the Sustainability and Environment  
Committee Meeting held on 18 December 2024.**

**FOR DECISION****SE/004/2025:****ELECTRICAL SAFETY STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE TENANCIES REGULATIONS (NORTHERN IRELAND) 2024**

Read: Report from Ms S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 (**Copy circulated**)

Ms Trainor outlined the key points of the report regarding the Electrical Safety Standards under the Private Tenancy Regulations Northern Ireland, which had been implemented in November 2024.

Councillor Taylor queried whether any resources had been provided by the Department for Communities and whether Council had any estimations regarding resource and financial implications for the introduction of the Electrical Safety Standards.

Ms Trainor stated that the changes involved co-ordinated group work across Northern Ireland and nothing had been raised to indicate risk or resource intensity but that she would revert to Committee regarding this.

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Enright, the following was agreed:**

- **To note the new legislative powers to be enforced by Councils in relation to the private rented sector under the Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024**
- **To agree the proposed level of £1000 for the fixed penalty fine for offences created under the Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024.**

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

**On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Larkin, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 8-13, 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 Harte, seconded by Councillor Taylor, it was agreed to come out of closed session.**

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

**RESTRICTED – FOR DECISION****SE/005/2025: BUSINESS CASE – CAMERAS IN COUNCIL VEHICLES**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability, regarding a Business Case for Cameras in Council Vehicles. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to approve the Business Case to procure recordable camera systems for Council fleet as outlined in Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report.**

**SE/006/2025: BUSINESS CASE – ENERGY CONTRACTS**

Read: Report from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director, Sustainability and Environment, regarding a Business Case for Energy Contracts **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Taylor, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to proceed with a joint procurement exercise with other NI Councils for electricity and natural gas contracts commencing in May 2025.**

**SE/007/2025: FEMININE HYGIENE CORPORATE CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director, Sustainability and Environment, regarding Feminine Hygiene Corporate Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Young, it was agreed to approve the extension of the Feminine Hygiene services corporate contract as detailed in the Officer's Report.**

**SE/008/2025: RESIDUAL WASTE CONTRACTS**

Read: Report from Ms S Murphy, Director: Sustainability & Environment, regarding Residual Waste Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Larkin, it was agreed to approve the procurement and appointment of an Economist to develop an Economic Appraisal for a Residual Waste Contract.**

**SE/009/2025:****MIXED DRY RECYCLABLES CONTRACT**

Read:

Report from Ms S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Mixed Dry Recyclables Contract **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to approve the following:**

- **The extension of the contract for the receipt and processing of Mixed Dry Recyclables with the organisation noted in the Officer's Report**
- **The extension of the current haulage contract with the organisation noted in the Officer's Report**

**Both to be extended from 1 April 2025 to 30 September 2025, subject to the approval of the arc21 Joint Committee.**

**SE/010/2025:****DIRECT AWARD CONTRACTS**

Read:

Report from Ms S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Direct Award Contracts. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Young, seconded by Councillor Campbell, it was agreed to approve the Direct Award Contract as detailed at Appendix 1 of the Officer's Report.**

**FOR NOTING - ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014****SE/011/2025:****TREE SURGERY UPDATE**

Read:

Report from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability regarding Tree Surgery Update. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Taylor, it was agreed to note the following:**

- **The extensive work being undertaken by Council Grounds Maintenance section from a landscape development and daily management perspective and additional impacts following severe weather events.**
- **That business cases will be brought to future committee meetings regarding additional future resource requirements for Grounds Maintenance.**

**SE/012/2025:****BUSINESS CASE – CONTRACT FOR ASBESTOS CONTROL MEASURES**

Read: Report from Mr Conor Sage, Assistant Director: Sustainability regarding Business Case – Contract for Asbestos Control Measures. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Taylor, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.**

#### **FOR NOTING**

**SE/013/2025:** **LANDLORD REGISTRATION SCHEME**

Read: Report from Ms S Trainor, Assistant Director: Environment, regarding Landlord Registration Scheme. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Jackson, it was agreed to note the contents of the report and the update provided.**

Following a query from Councillor Jackson regarding Christmas illuminations, the Chairperson advised that queries for items not on the agenda should be directed to the relevant officer following the meeting.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6.30pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 February 2025

**Signed:** **Councillor Geraldine Kearns**  
**Chairperson**

**Signed:** **Mrs Sinead Murphy**  
**Director of Sustainability & Environment**

<b>Report to:</b>	Council
<b>Date of Meeting:</b>	3 February 2025
<b>Subject:</b>	Correspondence to Council
<b>Reporting Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
<b>Contact Officer (Including Job Title):</b>	Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

Confirm how this Report should be treated by placing an x in either:-

<b>For decision</b>	<b>x</b>	<b>For noting only</b>	
<b>1.0</b>			<b>Purpose and Background</b>
1.1			To provide an update on correspondence received for attention of Council.
<b>2.0</b>			<b>Key issues</b>
2.1			This paper refers to correspondence to be brought to the attention of Council. Items are referred to in 3.0 below.
<b>3.0</b>			<b>Recommendations</b>
			That Council considers and notes the following correspondence:
3.1			<b>Correspondence from Northern Ireland Housing Council</b>  Council received correspondence from Northern Ireland Council regarding Minutes from meetings held in September, October and November 2024.
3.2			<b>Correspondence from Minister for the Economy</b>  Council received a response from the Minister for the Economy in relation to Notice of Motion, Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19.
3.3			<b>Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure</b>  Council received correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to Newry Southern Relief Road Intention to make Vesting Order and Intention to make Statutory Orders.
3.4			<b>Correspondence from Minister of Health</b>  Council received a response from the Minister of Health in relation to Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service.
3.5			<b>Correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council</b>  Council received correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council regarding Notice of Motion, Gender Based Violence Against Women.



3.6	<p><b>Correspondence from Chief Executive of South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust</b></p> <p>Council received a response from the Minister of Health in relation to Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service.</p>
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Resource implications</b>
4.1	Not applicable.
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Due regard to equality of opportunity and regard to good relations (complete the relevant sections)</b>
5.1	<p><b><i>General proposal with no clearly defined impact upon, or connection to, specific equality and good relations outcomes</i></b></p> <p>It is not anticipated the proposal will have an adverse impact upon equality of opportunity or good relations <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>
5.2	<p><b><i>Proposal relates to the introduction of a strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or sensitive or contentious decision</i></b></p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) has been equality screened <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>The policy (strategy, policy initiative or practice and / or decision) will be subject to equality screening prior to implementation <input type="checkbox"/></p>
5.3	<p><b><i>Proposal initiating consultation</i></b></p> <p>Consultation will seek the views of those directly affected by the proposal, address barriers for particular Section 75 equality categories to participate and allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be 12 weeks <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Consultation period will be less than 12 weeks (rationale to be provided) <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p><i>Rationale:</i></p>
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Due regard to Rural Needs (please tick all that apply)</b>
6.1	<p>Proposal relates to developing, adopting, implementing or revising a policy / strategy / plan / designing and/or delivering a public service</p> <p>Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p>

	<p>If yes, please complete the following:</p> <p>Rural Needs Impact Assessment completed <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If no, please complete the following:</p> <p>The policy / strategy / plan / public service is not influenced by rural needs <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<b>7.0</b>	<b>Appendices</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>Background Documents</b>
	<b>None</b>



**Minutes of the 510<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at 10.30 in Craigavon Civic Centre, Craigavon**

**Present:**

Ald Amanda Grehan  
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Cllr Aoife Finnegan  
Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald  
Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council (Chair)  
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council  
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council  
Fermanagh & Omagh District Council  
Mid Ulster District Council

**Virtual:**

Cllr Mark Cooper  
Ald Stephen McIlveen  
Heloise Brown  
Keiran Devlin

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Ards & North Down Borough Council  
Department for Communities  
Department for Communities

**In Attendance – NIHE:**

Catherine McFarland  
John Gowdy  
Jenny Williamson  
Kelly Cameron

Director of Finance, Audit & Assurance, NIHE  
Senior Planning & Performance Manager, NIHE  
Business Manager  
Secretary, Housing Council

**Apologies:**

Cllr Sean McGlinchey  
David Polley

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  
Department for Communities

1.	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.</p> <p>Several Members felt that in the absence of the Chair and Vice Chair, the stand-in Chair should have been appointed by Members at the Meeting and not nominated before the meeting.</p>	
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2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations.</p>	
=3.	<p><b>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024</b></p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Mary O'Dowd and Seconded by Cllr Deirdre Varsani.</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p>4.1 <b>Meeting with the CEO of NIFHA</b></p> <p>It was noted that Seamus Leheny, Chief Executive of NIFHA had accepted an invitation to give a presentation at the November meeting.</p> <p>4.2 <b>Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</b></p> <p>Members undertook to provide further questions they wish to be put forward to the Minister for Communities and this will be discussed at the next 'In Committee' session, prior to setting up a meeting.</p> <p>4.3 <b>Housing Executive Board Membership</b></p> <p>It was noted that the Housing Council had still not received application forms for the three vacancies from the Housing Council to the NIHE Board. Several Members expressed their disappointed at the delay in this process.</p> <p>Heloise Brown confirmed that it is the intention following the competition process the appointments should be made by 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	
5	<p><b>Department for Communities Housing Top Issues</b></p> <p>The report was noted.</p>	
6.	<p><b>Presentation on the Housing Executive's Budget 2024/25</b></p> <p>Catherine McFarland, the Housing Executive's Director of Finance, Audit &amp; Assurance gave a detailed update on the Housing Executive's Budget 2024/25.</p> <p>An overview was given on the Housing Executive's Landlord Services and Regional Services on the key responsibilities, funding model and positions. Members also noted the key financial challenges for the current year and year 2025/2026.</p>	

	<p>Members acknowledged the continuing financial challenges year on year and the detrimental impact it has on maintaining and investing in stock and services provided.</p> <p>Several Members referred to the lack of support for some of the most challenging and vulnerable people with mental health problems causing anti social behaviour and in-turn that leads to higher levels of homelessness and asked what is the level of discretion, Housing Executive staff have in dealing with those with extreme complex needs.</p> <p>Cllr Fitzgerald sought confirmation on the opening hours of Housing Executive local offices.</p> <p>It was agreed that an update on will be given to a future Meeting and to address supporting services that are not always targeting the most vulnerable. The Housing Council as a body could address and consider ways to improve the situation.</p> <p>Cllr Varsani referred to managing the budget in different ways and suggested investing in derelict properties, particularly as there is pressure on the water and sewage systems where there are difficulties in newbuild schemes due to the lack of infrastructure.</p> <p>Assurance was given that all options are explored in order to increase housing supply. The DfC confirmed that the Housing Supply Strategy will be presented to the Northern Ireland Assembly in the nearer future.</p> <p>Members supported the regeneration to town centre living by investing in properties over shops and drive forward the economy.</p> <p>The DfC confirmed that a report had been carried out on Living over the shops (LOTS scheme) and its findings showed that this was an ineffective way of resources and not value for money, to bring these properties back into use.</p> <p>Cllr Cooper referred to the JANS Modular Housing Review is a body with key members of local council, politicians and the Housing Executive on the capability and capacity to provide Modular housing solutions within the affordable / social sector, and beyond. Cllr Cooper undertook to provide further details for Members attendance.</p> <p>Referring to the length of time for a response letter from the British Government in relation to the 2024/25 budget, the Secretary undertook to follow up on a response.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Catherine McFarland for a very useful presentation.</p>	<p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p> <p>M Cooper /Secretary</p> <p>Secretary</p>
7.	<p><b>Presentation on the Housing Executive's Draft Corporate Strategy</b></p> <p>John Gowdy, Senior Planning &amp; Performance Manager from the Housing Executive gave an overview on the current position of the Housing Executive's draft Corporate Strategy.</p>	

	<p>The strategy outlines the Housing Executive's plans and priorities over the 3 year period 2022/23 – 2024/25 period and includes a 3 Year High Level Action Plan.</p> <p>Members noted that subject to DfC approval, the document will commence a 12 week public consultation and it is planned that the final Corporate Strategy will be in place for 1 April 2025.</p> <p>Cllr O'Dowd who had recently visited the newbuild scheme in Sunningdale, Belfast highly commended the scheme.</p> <p>In response to Cllr Fitzgerald question in relation to engagement with Irish Travellers, it was confirmed that the Housing Executive have a specific Team that deal with Irish Travellers and sites and there is a Travellers Forum which meets regularly. There is a Traveller Needs Assessment which is carried out to analysis the needs every few years.</p> <p>Mark Cooper referred to the model used in Finland and keen to look at this model and explore this more in-depth. He stated that Finland has a population of 5,5 million people, in 1985 their homelessness crisis was 20,000 and by 2023, they had a reduction of -83% and currently have 429 homelessness.</p> <p>Cllr Varsani referred to the Housing Executive's maintenance programme for grass cutting, pavements etc. in estates, but unfortunately now no one seems to take responsibility for maintaining grounds maintenance, solutions are required for pride in our estates.</p> <p>The Chair thanked John Gowdy for his informative presentation.</p>	
8.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p>	
8.1	<p><b>Members Queries - Universal Credit</b></p> <p>Information noted.</p>	
9.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> November at 10.00 am in the Housing Centre, Belfast.</p>	

Meeting ended 12.15 pm.



**Minutes of the 512<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at 10.30 in Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey**

**Present:**

Cllr Mark Cooper  
 Cllr Aaron Skinner  
 Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council  
 Mid & East Antrim Borough Council  
 Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council

**Virtual:**

Cllr Aoife Finnegan  
 Ald Stephen McIlveen  
 Keith Kerrigan  
 Grainia Long  
 Jonny Bleasie

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council  
 Ards & North Down Borough Council  
 Derry City & Strabane District Council  
 Chief Executive, NIHE  
 Head of Communications, NIHE

**In Attendance:**

Seamus Leheny  
 Jenny Williamson  
 Kelly Cameron

CEO, NIFHA  
 Business Manager  
 Secretary, Housing Council

**Apologies:**

Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald  
 Ald Amanda Grehan

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council  
 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

1.	<p><b>Welcome</b></p> <p>The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting.</p> <p>It was noted that Deirdre Varsani had tried to join the meeting via the Teams link, but due to technical difficulties was unable to join.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>There were no declarations.</p>	

3.	<p><b>Report on the Housing Executive's Board deliberations</b></p> <p>Alderman Keith Kerrigan gave a brief report on the Housing Executive's Board deliberations from the meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> October. The Chair thanked Alderman Kerrigan for a comprehensive update and appreciated his work and commitment he is the only Housing Council Member currently sitting on the Board.</p>	
4.	<p><b>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 10<sup>th</sup> October 2024</b></p> <p>Proposed by Cllr Mary O'Dowd and Seconded by Cllr Aoife Finnegan.</p> <p>The Minutes were approved.</p>	
5.	<p><b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b></p> <p>5.1 <b>Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</b></p> <p>Arrangements will be made for the Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to attend a future meeting early in the New Year. Several Members still have to submit their questions.</p> <p>A response letter had been received from the Minister in relation to 2024/25 budget, was noted.</p> <p>5.2 <b>Housing Executive Board Membership</b></p> <p>It was noted that Members have received applications forms this week for the three vacancies from the Housing Council to the NIHE Board. Applications to be submitted by noon on Wednesday 27 November 2024.</p> <p>5.3 <b>Letter to Rachel Reeves, Chancellor of the Exchequer</b></p> <p>As requested, a reminder letter to the British Government in relation to the 2024/25 budget has been sent, as reply is still awaited.</p> <p>The Chair noted that he had been recently contacted by the Department for Communities to inform him that it wasn't the correct protocol to directly send a letter to the British Government and should go through local Government. In future, advice will be sought from the DfC on the protocol.</p> <p>5.4 <b>Non attendance at meetings</b></p> <p>In accordance with the Housing Council Standing Orders 2 (4) If a Member fails to attend 3 consecutive meetings of the Housing Council and Committees, the Members Local Council shall be notified</p> <p>Members agreed that letters to be sent to Belfast City Council for their representative's non-attendance at meetings.</p>	<p><b>Secretary</b></p>



	<p>It was noted that the representative for Causeway Coast &amp; Glens also has not attended any meetings since his appointment but was supposed to join the meeting via Teams, due to technical issues he may have had problem joining, the Secretary to confirm whether or not it was his intention to join and therefore the letter would be waived.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	
6	<p><b>HOUSING EXECUTIVE EMERGING ISSUES &amp; STRATEGIC ITEMS</b></p> <p>Grainia Long gave an update on the following issues:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Progress against Business Plan objectives on track. Of total KPIs, 79 green, 7 amber, 1 red as of end of Quarter 2 (September 2024);</li> <li>• Budget and Monitoring Round update;</li> <li>• Good progress on Task and Finish Group re Accommodation Solutions;</li> <li>• Annual round of Housing Investment Plan meetings almost complete, across all 11 Councils; setting out scale and nature of our investment locally;</li> <li>• Prioritisation of new build schemes following additional £20m for new build social housing; engagement with housing association sector, developers etc. Engagement with NIW re capacity constraints and impacts;</li> <li>• In Belfast, work ongoing to identify alternative accommodation for Welcome Organisation and steps underway to ensure robust SWEP arrangements for Winter 2024;</li> <li>• Approval by Board in October of new retrofit/EWI programme for 950 homes;</li> </ul> <p>Referring to shortages of staff, Cllr O'Dowd referenced a staff member at her local Housing Executive office who was 'being moved around within different roles in the office' and was unhappy, she requested more information on the situation.</p> <p>The Chair reminded Members that it wasn't appropriate to go into local issues.</p> <p>Several Members commended their local Housing Executive staff on their work and commitment.</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presentation to be arranged for a future meeting on the Retrofit programme, including the pros and cons of the scheme; a breakdown by Council areas where these schemes are and the proposed planned schemes.</li> </ul>	Secretary

<p>6.</p>	<p><b>Seamus Leheny, Chief Executive of Northern Ireland Federation for Housing Associations (NIFHA)</b></p> <p>Seamus Leheny gave Members a presentation on work of Housing Associations and the future delivery of housing services in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>It was noted that the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations, formed in 1977, is the representative body for NI's 20 registered housing associations.</p> <p>To ensure Housing Associations can succeed, NIFHA works with government to develop housing policy which is best placed to support social and affordable housing, while promoting best practice and innovation right across the housing sector.</p> <p>Housing Associations provide social and affordable housing across Northern Ireland, from family homes to supported living, as well as housing solutions for those who want to buy homes (through Co-ownership).</p> <p><b>Agreed:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a breakdown of Housing Association social housing dwellings per council area which includes type of residence (general needs and sheltered housing);</li> <li>• S Leheny to confirm an approximate figure for Housing Associations to build a 2-bedroom unit to include the cost of land, construction, fittings etc;</li> <li>• A breakdown of Total Cost Indicators for each council area. It was noted that TCI rates are set by Dept for Finance and Dept of Communities and HA's must build to within these budgets to avail of the Housing Association Grant (HAG);</li> <li>• S Leheny to review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (Nov 2015) between the Housing Council and NIFHA and comeback thereon.</li> </ul> <p>S Leheny welcomed the opportunity to working more closely with the Housing Council going forward.</p> <p>The Chair thanked Mr Leheny for his informative presentation and welcomed the prospect to grow the working relationship between both organisations.</p>	<p>S Leheny</p> <p>S Leheny</p> <p>S Leheny</p> <p>S Leheny</p>
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p>	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p><b>Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) All Ireland Awards 2025</b></p> <p>Members were reminded that it had been agreed that the Housing Council would sponsor some Organisational Awards, the first one the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) All Ireland 'Housing Hero' Individual Award in 2025 Award.</p>	

7.2	<p>Members agreed to proceed with the sponsor.</p> <p>Members noted that the Awards Ceremony will be held in Titanic Belfast on the 21st February 2025 and the package includes a table of up to 10 guests. The Chair requested that Members put the date in their diaries and further information will be provided nearer the time.</p> <p><b>Housing Executive Local office opening times</b></p> <p>Member noted the information provided.</p>	All
8.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> December at 10.30 am in Corrs Corner, Newtownabbey.</p> <p>The Chair emphasised that following the meeting, arrangements have been made for a Christmas Lunch and asked if Members could try to attend this meeting in person, but if this was not possible to let this Secretary know, in order to avoid any unnecessary costs.</p>	Secretary

Meeting ended 12.15 pm.



**Minutes of the 509<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Northern Ireland Housing Council held on Thursday, 12<sup>th</sup> September 2024 at 10.30 in the Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast**

**Present:**

Cllr Mark Cooper  
Cllr Aaron Skinner  
Cllr Mary O'Dowd

Ald Keith Kerrigan  
Ald Amanda Grehan  
Cllr Deirdre Varsani

Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council  
Mid-East Antrim Borough Council  
Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council  
Derry & Strabane District Council  
Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council  
Mid Ulster District Council

**Virtual:**

Cllr Anne Marie Fitzgerald  
Ald Stephen McIlveen

Fermanagh & Omagh District Council  
Ards & North Down Borough Council

**In Attendance – NIHE:**

Grainia Long  
Gillian Greer  
Maria McLaughlin  
Kelly Cameron

Chief Executive  
Assistant Director, Housing Benefit  
Executive Assistant Chair & CX's Office  
Secretary, Housing Council

**Apologies:**

Cllr Sean McGlinchey  
Cllr Aoife Finnegan

Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council  
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

1.	<b>Welcome</b>  The Chair welcomed Members to the meeting, in particular to Councillor Deirdre Varsani, Mid Ulster District Council to her first meeting since her appointment.	
2.	<b>Declarations of Interest</b>  Cllr Varsani advised that her son works for a Housing Association.	
3.	<b>Draft Minutes – Housing Council Meeting held on Thursday, 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024</b>  Proposed by Cllr Mary O'Dowd and Seconded by Ald Amanda Grehan. The Minutes were approved.	

4.	<b>Matters Arising from the Minutes</b>	
4.1	<p><b>Meeting with the CEO of NIFHA</b></p> <p>It was noted that arrangements will be made to invite the CEO of NIFHA to a future meeting.</p> <p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session, the Chair advised that a previous Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Housing Council and Housing associations had been drawn up and would be circulated and revised at a future meeting.</p>	KC
4.2	<p><b>Invitation to the new Minister of Communities</b></p> <p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session arrangements would be made for the new Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to attend a future meeting.</p> <p>The Chair added that it was discussed at the 'In-Committee' session and Members are to forward questions they wish put the Minister to the Secretary.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	KC
4.2	<p>As discussed at the 'In Committee' session arrangements would be made for the new Minister for Communities, Gordon Lyons to attend a future meeting.</p> <p>The Chair added that it was discussed at the 'In-Committee' session and Members are to forward questions they wish put the Minister to the Secretary.</p> <p>All other matters arising will be dealt with through the agenda.</p>	All/KC
5.0	<b>VERBAL UPDATE ON EMERGING ISSUES &amp; STRATEGIC ITEMS</b>	
	<p>Grainia Long gave Members an update on emerging issues and strategic items as follows.</p>	
5.1	<p><b>Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most</b></p> <p>It was noted there is a strong focus, in the document, on housing practice and that cross cutting is a priority. The PFG will deliver a housing supply strategy and it is critical that they are committed to delivering this. The Housing Executive has been feeding into this and G Long would provide an update on this if required.</p> <p>G Long added that she would put a presentation together on what the Programme for Government might mean for housing.</p>	KC
5.2	<p><b>Impact of Draft 2024/25 Budget</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EQIA response</b> - the proposed budget cuts pose significant risk for strategic programmes and services and will lead directly to cuts in service delivery, as early as October 2024.</li> <li>• <b>Homelessness</b> - insufficient budget to meet statutory obligations; wraparound support and prevention will be greatly reduced. The increasing numbers of people awarded refugee status must be supported.</li> <li>• <b>Waiting lists</b> - will be longer and stays in expensive temporary accommodation will increase further (already at critical levels).</li> </ul>	KC

- **SHDP** - only able to deliver up to 600 new homes, largest projected reduction in a generation; when housing need is at its most acute.
- **Construction sector** - reduction in new build will take approx. £80-£90m out of the sector, causing 'shock,' which will take time to recover from.
- **Affordable Warmth Scheme** – reduced by £6.8m will mean 53% fewer households (1,465) being able to access this scheme.
- **Supporting People** – indicative £80.7m allocation will prevent full roll out of the SP Strategy and the Providers Innovation Fund.
- **Fundamental Review of Allocations** – will face uncertainty as there is no budget set aside to implement any recommendations.
- **Staff costs** – reduction in allocation will negatively impact NIHE's ability to provide homelessness services, specifically in the Housing Solutions Team. (NIHE out-of-hours service will also be adversely affected).
- **Emergency planning** – no funding for contingency and emergency planning i.e. extreme weather events experienced recently.

### 5.3 **Emerging Issues by Exception:**

- Progress against Business Plan objectives on track; 80 out of 87 KPIs green, 7 amber. Main underperformance is in relation to disabled adaptations for NIHE stock; continue to struggle to secure contractors.
- Busy summer; several major issues to deal with, including rise in number of race hate incidents- currently at 143. Coordinated approach in response, across the organisation and with statutory and other partners.
- Housing Solutions Task and Finish Group (aimed at increasing our supply of temporary accommodation) continues to progress; more than 80 additional units added to portfolio since April. First use of HMOs in August, further coming on stream in September. Notice periods from Mears continues to be less than 28 in majority of cases.
- Annual round of Housing Investment Plan meetings underway, across all 11 Councils; setting out scale and nature of our investment locally.
- Prioritisation of new build schemes following additional £20m for new build social housing; engagement with housing association sector, developers etc.
- Major programme of work on leasehold to identify and provide solutions for leaseholders unable to afford major works
- Progress across the DLO in relation to reducing backlog in COTs and repairs, reduction in relet times: voids at 0.44%.

### 5.4 **Draft Ten Year Mission and Corporate Strategy – Pre-consultation stage**

G Long advised that the Board has reviewed the document, which is now at pre-consultation stage, and which will be submitted to the Minister on Monday 16 September 2024. She felt it would be useful for the Housing Council to see it also and undertook to check with the Minister's office that the Housing Council can see the document while he is reviewing it. The document would be circulated once permission has been received.



The system went live in NI for new claims in September 2017 and some claimants have moved naturally to UC, due to a change in their circumstances.

- **Move to UC**

On 16 October, the move to UC went live for customers in receipt of Tax Credits only and the final stage of UC implementation, known as Move to UC involves the managed migration of those people who remain in receipt of legacy benefits. Current planning assumption is that approximately 14,000 Housing Benefit customers will receive a migration letter in this financial year

- **Planned Rollout**

From May 2024 the planned rollout will begin with Tax Credits with Housing Benefit followed by Tax Credits with Income Support, ESA (Income Related) with Child Tax Credits, Pension Age Tax Credits and Tax Credits with JSA (Income-Based).

- **Next Steps**

Customers will receive a Migration Notice from DfC and they will have three months from the date of the Migration Notice to claim Universal Credit. At that point in time the Housing Benefit team will receive what is known as a "Stop Notice" from DfC Move to UC Team.

If they change their mind within one month of their Housing Benefit claim stopping, their UC claim will be backdated, and they will remain eligible for Transitional Protection. All customers will receive an additional two weeks rent as part of the stopping HB process, this payment excludes rates.

- **Impact on Housing Executive**

In total, approximately 54,000 HB customers will move to UC. Housing Benefit caseload will reduce to approximately 75,000 customers. Approximately 36,000 Housing Executive tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit will Move to UC.

- **Delivery Readiness**

Processes have been in place since September 2017 with a new team in place to oversee the Move to UC Programme. The Housing Executive is confident that the new structure will work well and enable them to effectively cope with the additional volume of Stop Notices they will receive.

- **Considerations**

This is a collaborative piece of work that DfC will take the lead on, in partnership with Housing Benefit and any communications must be led by DfC. This is their programme, and risks would be introduced if the Housing Executive ran their own communications campaign. There are processes in place to deal with legacy benefit customers who do not apply within their migration window.



	<p>Discussion took place as follows:</p> <p>Cllr O'Dowd asked about pension tax credit for pensioners with HB and those with disabilities and mental health issues. The Assistant Director, Housing Benefit advised that this is a bespoke customer base and relates to pensioners who are still working. In total there are 110,000 people moving to UC and, of that 1,000 are pensioners who are still working and will be managed through the process. Those with disabilities and mental health issues, who are in receipt of support allowance will have support through their journey to UC.</p> <p>The Assistant Director, Housing Benefit undertook to clarify the following questions:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If Universal Credit is to be paid directly to the Housing Executive as the landlord</li> <li>• Discretionary support – is there a timeline for paying back the financial support</li> </ul> <p>The Chair thanked G Greer for her presentation.</p>	G Greer
7.	<p><b>Any other business</b></p> <p>7.1 <b>Visit to Sunningdale, Belfast</b></p> <p>Members noted that a visit to the newbuild scheme in Sunningdale, Belfast has been arranged for 24<sup>th</sup> September. Members were encouraged to attend the visit and see at first-hand the design, standards and net zero of the scheme.</p> <p>7.2 <b>Meadowbrook, Craigavon</b></p> <p>Cllr O'Dowd confirmed there were issues with the Contractor on the Meadowbrook site. It was noted that there are only 1 or 2 contractors who are skilled to do this retrofit work in Northern Ireland. J Blease undertook to follow this up.</p> <p>7.3 <b>Infrastructure Issues</b></p> <p>Cllr Varsani added that there are two completed projects in her area, Dungannon, which can't open due to infrastructure issues particularly in relation to the public sewer system.</p> <p>In response to Cllr Varsani's request that all Councils should do a scoping exercise to put forward land, the Chair believes an exercise is being done at present by all agencies.</p> <p>The Chair advised that NI Water, as well as the DfI Minister, should be invited back to a meeting to give an update on where they are now. It was agreed that all Councils should be asked for their plans and, when all plans are received, a letter should be issued to the DfI Minister with an update.</p>	JB          KC

7.4	<p><b>Members received the following responses, for their information:-</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Repair Grants</b></li> <li>• <b>Fuel Poverty in Northern Ireland</b></li> <li>• <b>Areas of ERDF and 400 programme retrofit</b></li> <li>• <b>Promoting the NI Energy Advice Service</b></li> <li>• <b>Housing Council response to EQIA budget 2024/25</b></li> </ul>	
7.5	<p><b>NIFHA Conference in Lough Erne Enniskillen from 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> October 2024</b></p> <p>The Chair advised that, if any Member wishes to attend the NIFHA conference, they should contact the Secretary.</p>	
7.6	<p><b>In-Committee</b></p> <p>The Chair asked Officers to leave the meeting as he wanted to reconvene the In-Committee Session (12.18 pm)</p>	
8.	<p><b>Date of Next Meeting</b></p> <p>The next meeting would be held on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> October at 10.30 am in the Craigavon Civic Centre.</p>	

Meeting ended 12.31pm

**From the Office of the Minister  
CONOR MURPHY MLA**



Marie Ward  
Newry, Mourne & District Council  
[democratic.services@nmandd.org](mailto:democratic.services@nmandd.org)

Adelaide House  
39-49 Adelaide Street  
Belfast  
BT2 8FD  
02890 529333  
[Private.Office@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:Private.Office@economy-ni.gov.uk)

**Our ref: COR-0036-2025**

**27 January 2025**

Marie, a chara

### **Notice of Motion – Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19**

I write with reference to your correspondence of 22 January 2025 to Minister Lyons outlining the Council's motion in support of action for legislation to provide legal protection and support for young people over the age of 19 with SEN. As Minister with responsibility for Post 19 Education, your correspondence has been passed to me to respond.

Improving support for people with special educational needs is a priority in my Department's business plan and in the Executive's draft Programme for Government.

I am committed to ensuring that every young person can access opportunities to fulfil their potential. Therefore, I have tasked my officials with scoping the existing provision and providing me with options to improve access and outcomes for our young people with special educational needs, and this includes considering the legislative protections.

These are complex and cross-cutting issues, and I can assure the Council that my officials are undertaking extensive desk research working closely with all the other relevant Departments. They are also speaking to stakeholders across the other jurisdictions, as well as engaging with parents, young people, schools, colleges, training providers, voluntary and community sector and other representative bodies.

In order to develop the best solution, it is essential that adequate time is taken to fully understand the landscape in terms of existing policy, provision and legislation, as well as the gaps, challenges and the potential options.

I expect to receive advice from my officials in the Spring, at which point I will outline my intended next steps.

Is mise le meas

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Conor Murphy', written in a cursive style.

**CONOR MURPHY MLA**  
**Minister for the Economy**

*Fro Democratic Services***Major Projects South**

104

**Southern Division**

Ms Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry Mourne and Down District Council  
Newry Office  
Monaghan Row  
Newry  
BT35 8DJ

Marlborough House  
Central Way  
BT64 1AD  
Tel: 0300 200 7892  
Email:  
[southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)  
Your Reference:  
Our Reference: IN1-18-13304  
Date: 02/01/2025

**RECORDED DELIVERY**

Dear Sir/Madam

**NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD –  
COMPOSITE NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE STATUTORY ORDERS**

I enclose a copy of a Composite Notice of Intention to Make Statutory Orders for the above road scheme. The Notice is given in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972, and Roads (NI) Order 1993. It is not intended to cause any practical alteration to the existing arrangements, other than such modifications as may be found necessary in the course of the roadworks.

A 'Route Plan' for the overall scheme and maps associated with the Statutory Orders can be viewed via the following link:

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/newrysouthernrelief-road-overview>

Yours sincerely



**Cyril (Sid) Stevenson**  
Project Manager  
Major Projects South

## **NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD**

### **Environmental Impact Assessment: Notice of Publication**

The Department for Infrastructure hereby gives notice in accordance with Article 67A(3) and (9) of the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993 that it has prepared an Environmental Impact Assessment Report on the effects of the proposed construction of the Newry Southern Relief Road.

The general effect of the project will be the construction of approximately 4 kilometres of new carriageway to provide a strategic link between the A1/N1 Belfast to Dublin corridor and the A2 Warrenpoint Road, bypassing Newry City Centre.

The aim of this project is to provide an alternative route for strategic traffic that avoids Newry City centre.

In addition to earthworks and drainage, landscaping will be carried out to improve the appearance of the road and lessen the visual impact of the proposed scheme.

## **TRUNK ROAD ORDER**

### **The Trunk Road T4 (Newry Southern Relief) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

The Department for Infrastructure hereby gives notice in accordance with the provisions of Schedule 8 to the 1993 Order that it proposes to make an Order under Article 14(1) and 68(1), (3) and (5) of that Order.

The proposed Order will provide that 6370 metres of new and upgraded road (including 3 new and 2 upgraded roundabouts) as described in Part 1 of the Schedule shall be part of the Lisburn-Newry-Land Frontier Trunk Road T4.

The Order also provides for the stopping-up of certain roads to road traffic as per parts II, III and IV of the Schedule and the abandonment of certain roads as per part V of the Schedule.

## **BRIDGE ORDERS**

### **The Newry River Bridge Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

The Department gives notice of its intention to make a Statutory Rule entitled The Newry River Bridge Order (Northern Ireland) 2025.

The proposed Order will provide for the construction of a road bridge over the navigable waters of the Newry River, Newry in association with the Newry Southern Relief scheme.

### **The Newry Canal Bridge Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

The Department gives notice of its intention to make a Statutory Rule entitled The Newry Canal Bridge (Northern Ireland) Order 2025.

The proposed Order will provide for the construction of a road bridge over the navigable waters of the Newry Canal, Newry, in association with the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme.

#### **The Newry River (Extinguishment of Certain Public Rights of Navigation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

The Department gives notice of its intention to make a Statutory Rule entitled The Newry River (Extinguishment of Certain Public Rights of Navigation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025.

The proposed Order seeks to provide for the extinguishment of any public rights of navigation over the navigable waters specified in Article 6 and seeks to provide for the proposed extinguishment of any public rights of navigation over the navigable waters specified in Article 2 of the proposed Order, in association with the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme.

#### **The Newry River Foot/Cycle Bridge (Northern Ireland) Order 2025**

The Department gives notice of its intention to make a Statutory Rule entitled The Newry River Foot/Cycle Bridge (Northern Ireland) Order 2025.

The proposed Order will provide for the construction of a foot/cycle bridge over the navigable waters of the Newry River, in association with the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme.

#### **The Newry Ship Canal (Temporary Extinguishment of Certain Public Rights of Navigation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025**

The Department gives notice of its intention to make a statutory rule entitled The Newry Ship Canal (Temporary Extinguishment of Certain Public Rights of Navigation) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025

The proposed Order provides for the temporary extinguishment of the public rights of navigation over the navigable waters, in association with the Newry Southern Relief Road scheme.

### **NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A VESTING ORDER**

#### **Newry Southern Relief Road**

The Department proposes to make an order vesting certain lands in the townlands of Ballynacraig, Cloghoge and Commons, County Down and Cloghoge, Drumalane, Ellisholding and Fathom Lower, County Armagh, in the Department under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993.

The Department proposes to acquire the land for the construction of approximately 4 kilometres of new carriageway to provide a strategic link between the A1/N1 Belfast to Dublin corridor and the A2 Warrenpoint Road, bypassing Newry City Centre.

All documents and maps relating to the scheme may be inspected, by appointment from 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025, during office opening hours at offices of the Department – Southern Division, Marlborough House, Central Way, Craigavon BT64 1AD, Newry, Mourne and Down Section Office, 3 Springhill Road, Carnbane Industrial Estate, Newry BT35 6EF, Headquarters, James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA, Newry Leisure Centre, Cecil Street, Newry, BT35 6AU, Newry and Mourne Museum, Bagenal's Castle, Castle Street, Newry BT34 2BY and at Newry City Library, 79 Hill Street, Newry, BT34 1DG or online at

<https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/articles/newry-southern-relief-road-overview>.

An electronic copy may also be obtained by emailing [southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk).

Any person who wishes to express an opinion on the environmental impact assessment report or to object to the making of the trunk road order, the bridge orders or the proposed vesting order being made must, on or before the 4<sup>th</sup> of March 2025, write to the Director of Major Projects, Department for Infrastructure, James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA or email [southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk), stating their opinion and or the grounds of their objection to the proposed orders. The Department will take into consideration any representations made in support of or against the project, before deciding whether or not to proceed with or without modifications.

Information you provide in your response, including personal information, could be published or disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

For information regarding the Departmental Privacy Notice following the introduction of GDPR please go to the following link <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/gdpr-privacy-notices-dfi-business-areas> or phone the Data Protection Office on 028 90540540. For further details on confidentiality and FOIA/EIR please refer to [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk).



## Major Projects South



### Southern Division

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
O'Hagan House  
Monaghan Row  
Newry  
BT35 8DJ

Marlborough House  
Central Way  
BT64 1AD  
Tel: 0300 200 7892  
Email:  
[southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk)  
Your Reference:  
Our Refence: IN1-18-13304  
Date: 02/01/2025

### RECORDED DELIVERY

Dear Mr/Mrs

#### **NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD – NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A VESTING ORDER**

As already explained to you, the Department proposes to carry out the above scheme which necessitates the acquisition of some land in which you have an interest.

In pursuance of the provisions of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and the Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993, I enclose a formal notice of the Departments intention to make a Vesting Order together with map(s) specifying the land which the Department proposes to acquire from you.

A Composite Notice will be published during the weeks commencing 6<sup>th</sup> January 2025 and 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 in the issues of the following publications:

Irish News, Newsletter, Belfast Telegraph, Belfast Gazette, Ulster Star, Newry Reporter, Mourne Observer and Newry Democrat.

Copies of the Notices can be viewed online from 21<sup>st</sup> of January 2025 at <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/topics/road-improvements/newry-southern-relief-road>.

A Staffed Orders Exhibition Day for landowners only will be held at Newry Leisure Centre, Cecil Street, Newry BT35 6AU, on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025 between the hours of 11.00am and 8.00pm. A Public Orders Exhibition Day will also be held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 between the hours of 10.00am and 9.00pm.

Yours sincerely

**Cyril (Sid) Stevenson**



## Major Projects South

Project Manager  
Major Projects South

**ENC** Notice of intention to make a Vesting Order, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0421, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0306, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0333, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0334, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0337, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0340, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0360, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0591, DFI\_NSRR-ACM-LLO-SW\_Z\_Z\_Z-DR-ZZ-0612

**DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE**  
**NOTICE OF INTENTION TO MAKE A VESTING ORDER**  
**NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD**

The Department for Infrastructure ("the Department") gives you notice that it proposes to make an order vesting certain lands in the Department under the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 1972 and The Roads (Northern Ireland) Order 1993. The land is described in the schedule to this notice and marked on the accompanying map.

The Department proposes to acquire the land for the construction of approximately 4 kilometres of new carriageway to provide a strategic link between the A1/N1 Belfast to Dublin corridor and the A2 Warrenpoint Road, bypassing Newry City Centre.

If you wish to object to the proposed vesting order being made, you must write to the Director of Major Projects, Department for Infrastructure, James House, 2-4 Cromac Avenue, Belfast, BT7 2JA or by emailing [southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk](mailto:southern.sri@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk) before 4<sup>th</sup> March 2025, giving your reasons.

Information you provide in your response, including personal information, could be published or disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIR).

For information regarding the Departmental Privacy Notice following the introduction of GDPR please go to the following link <https://www.infrastructure-ni.gov.uk/publications/gdpr-privacy-notice-DFI-business-areas> or phone the Data Protection Office on 028 90540540. For further details on confidentiality and FOIA/EIR please refer to [www.ico.org.uk](http://www.ico.org.uk)

Signed ..... *DJ Miller* .....  
Authorised Officer

(Date) ..... 02/01/2025 .....

Newry Southern Relief Road

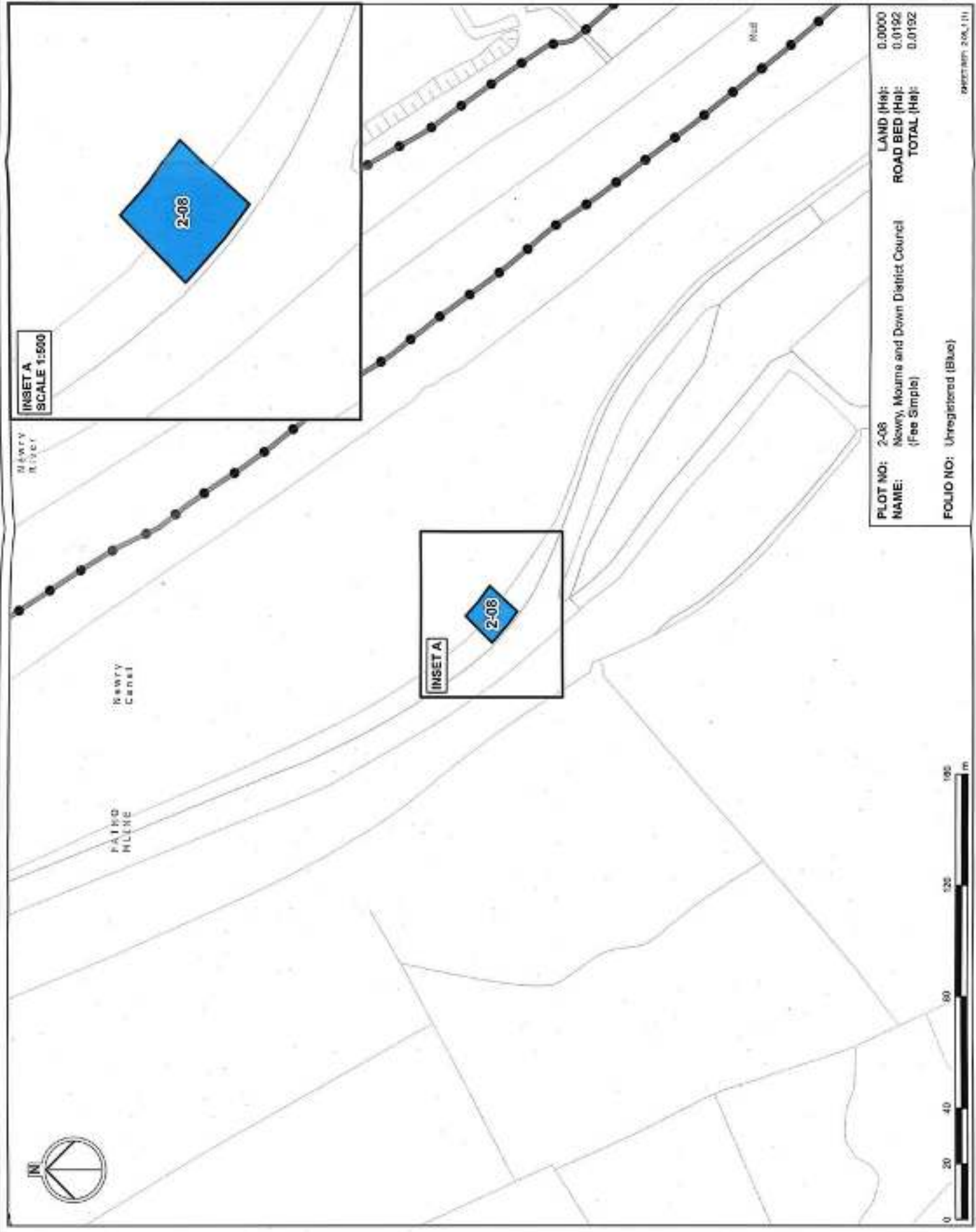


BUSH GRID REF: J 3467 3412  
CANAL POINT: 320467, 323472  
TOTAL LAM: 7  
FUTURE LOWER



SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION

SCHEME WIDE  
LAND PLAN  
INDIVIDUAL VO PLOT  
PLOT No 2-08



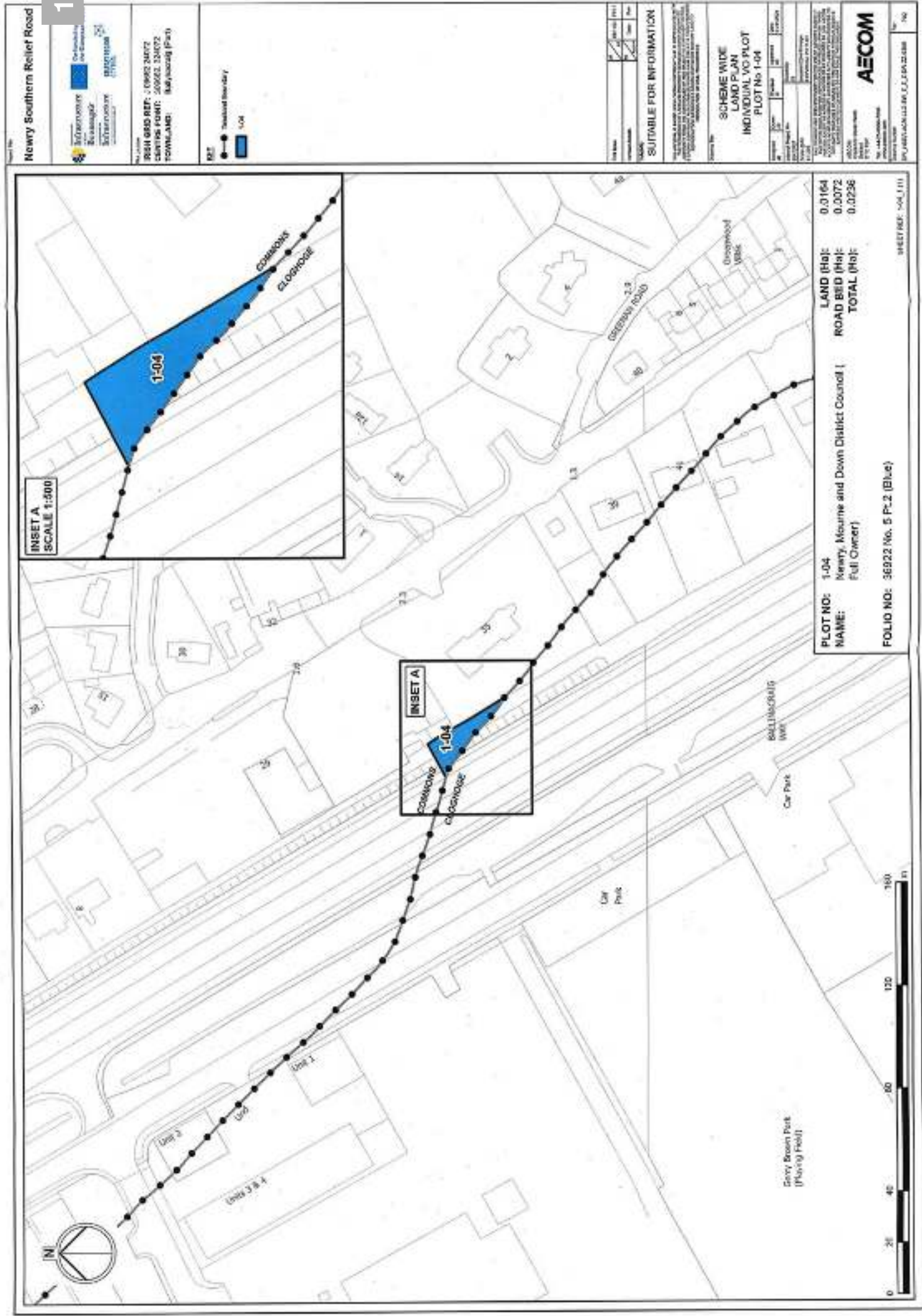
INSET A  
SCALE 1:500

INSET A

PLOT NO:	2-08	LAND (Ha):	0.0000
NAME:	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (Fee Simple)	ROAD BED (Ha):	0.0192
FOLIO NO:	Unregistered (Blue)	TOTAL (Ha):	0.0192



PROJECT NO: 20A, 111



Newry Southern Relief Road

BSH GRID REF: J 0962 3472  
 CURVES POINT: 50662 33472  
 TOWNLAND: Sallymacrae (P-0)

RBZ  
 ● Unshaded Boundary  
 ■ 1-04

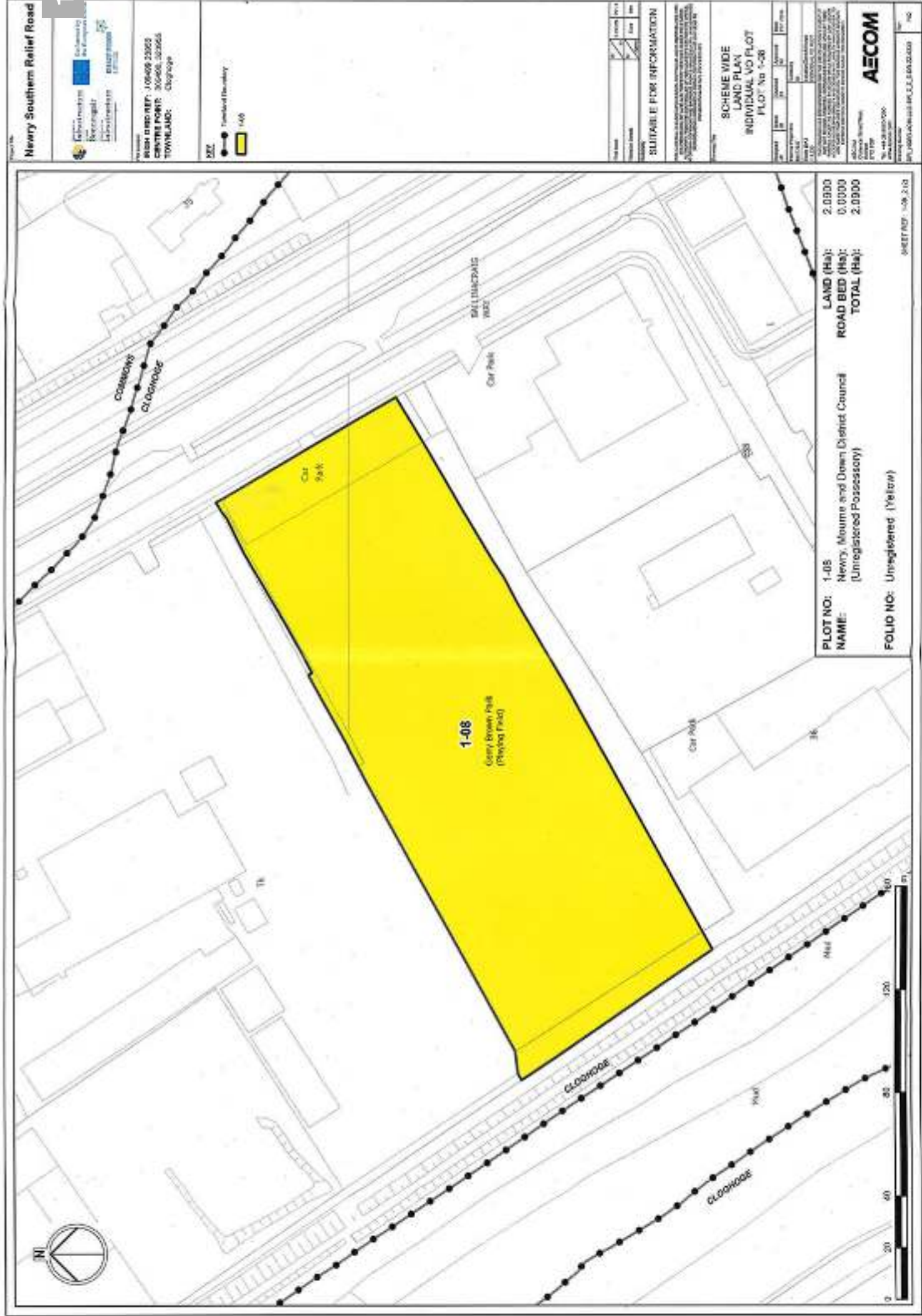
SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION

NO	DATE	BY	FOR

SCHEME WIDE  
 LAND PLAN  
 INDIVIDUAL VC PLOT  
 PLOT No 1-04

AECOM  
 No. 144-1000-000  
 PROJECT NO. 144-1000-000  
 SHEET NO. 144-1000-000-000  
 SHEET REF: 144-1000-000-000

PLOT NO:	1-04	LAND (Ha):	0.0164
NAME:	Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (Full Owner)	ROAD BED (Ha):	0.0072
		TOTAL (Ha):	0.0236
FOLIO NO:	36922 No. 5 Pt.2 (Blue)		



<b>PLOT NO:</b> 1-08	<b>LAND (Ha):</b> 2.0900
<b>NAME:</b> Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (Unregistered Possessory)	<b>ROAD BED (Ha):</b> 0.0000
	<b>TOTAL (Ha):</b> 2.0900
<b>FOLIO NO:</b> Unregistered (Yellow)	

**Newry Southern Relief Road**

ROAD REF: J06409 23003  
 CENTRE POINT: 305400, 302655  
 TOWNLAND: Cloughoge

1-08  
 Standard Boundary  
 1-08

Plot Area	Area (sq m)	Area (Ha)
1-08	20900	2.0900

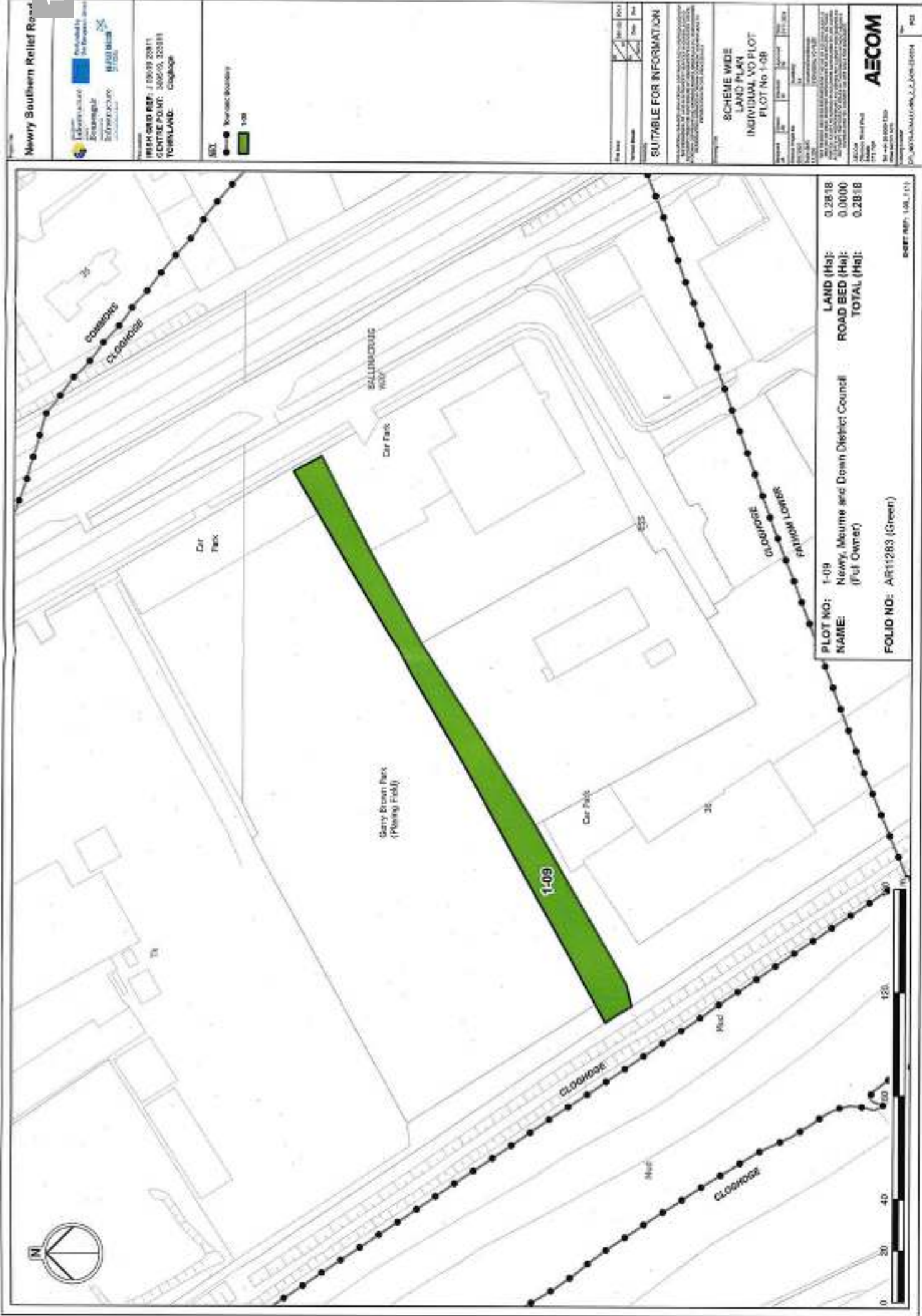
**SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION**

This plan is for information only and does not constitute a contract. It is subject to the terms and conditions of the relevant planning application. The information is provided as a guide only and should not be relied upon for legal purposes.

**SCHEME WIDE LAND PLAN**  
**INDIVIDUAL NO PLOT**  
**PLOT No 1-08**

**AECOM**  
 100, 101, 102, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 111, 112, 113, 114, 115, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150, 151, 152, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 183, 184, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 200

SHEET NO: 09, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100





<b>PLOT NO:</b> 1-10	<b>LAND (Ha):</b> 0.1830
<b>NAME:</b> Newry, Mourne and Down District Council (Full Owner of Leasehold Estate)	<b>ROAD BED (Ha):</b> 0.0000
<b>FOLIO NO:</b> 21638 No.1 (Blue)	<b>TOTAL (Ha):</b> 0.1830

**NEWRY SOUTHERN RELIEF ROAD**

RISH ORD REF: J10000 22087  
 CIVILS PD-N: 36385 02587  
 TOWNLAND: Cloghoge

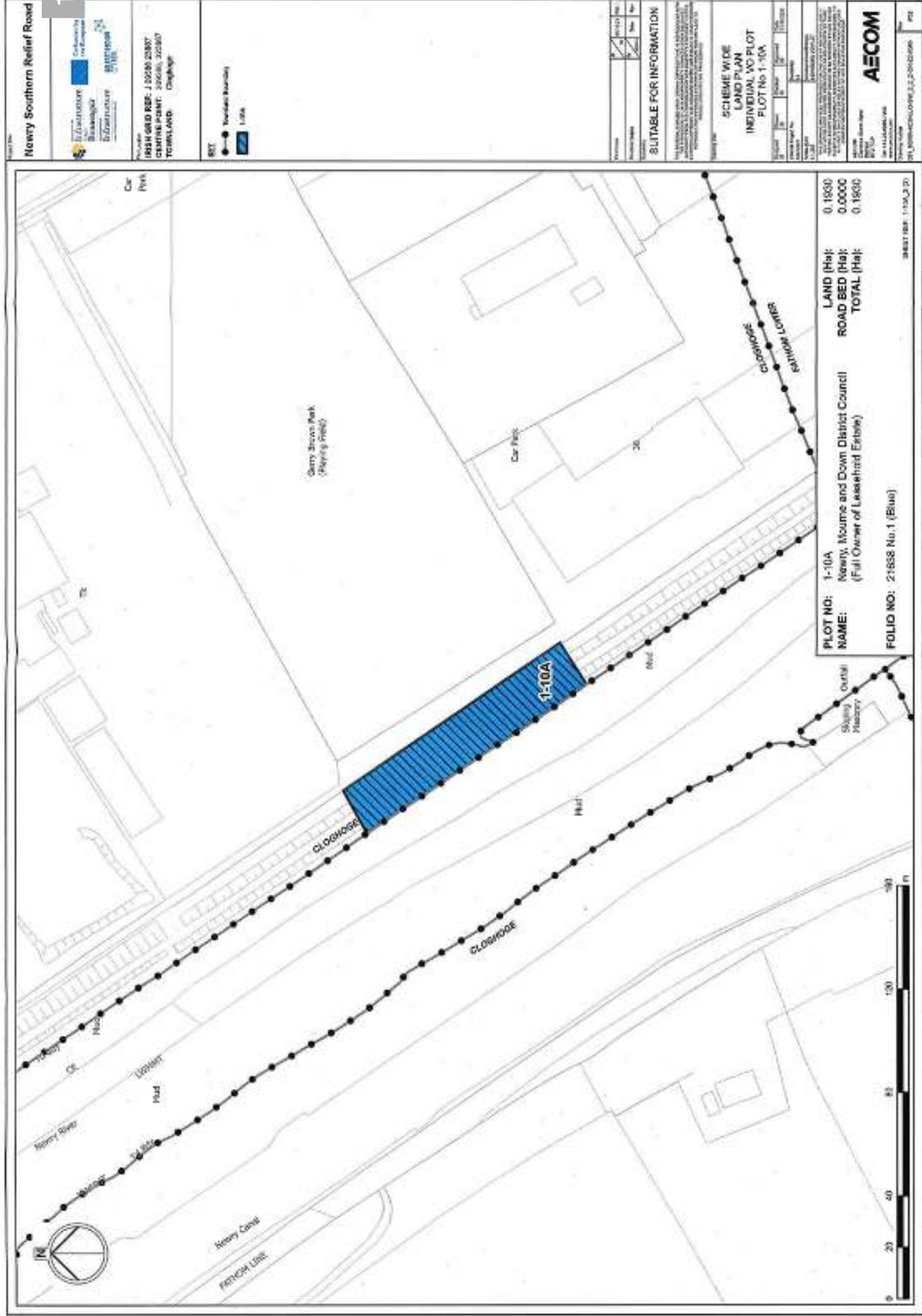
**KEY**  
 ●●● Townland Boundary  
 ■ 1:40  
 ■ 1:40A

**SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION**  
 THIS PLAN IS A PRELIMINARY DESIGN AND IS NOT TO BE USED FOR CONSTRUCTION OR AS A BASIS FOR ANY OTHER DESIGN OR CONTRACT. THE CLIENT ACCEPTS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED AND THE DESIGN. THE DESIGNER ACCEPTS FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE DESIGN AND THE ACCURACY OF THE INFORMATION PROVIDED. THE DESIGNER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR ANY CONSEQUENCES ARISING FROM THE USE OF THIS PLAN.

**SCHEME INFO**  
 LAND PLAN  
 INDIVIDUAL VO PLOT  
 PLOT No 1-10

AECOM  
 100, Canal Street, Newry, Co. Down, BT41 3AB, UK  
 Tel: +44 (0)191 661 1000  
 Email: newry@aecom.com





**PLOT NO:** 1-10A  
**NAME:** Newry, Moume and Down District Council (Full Owner of Leasehold Estate)

LAND (Ha):	0.1830
ROAD BED (Ha):	0.0000
<b>TOTAL (Ha):</b>	<b>0.1830</b>

**FOLIO NO:** 21658 No.1 (Blue)

SCALE: 1:100 (2D)

**Newry Southern Relief Road**

**SCHEME WIDE LAND PLAN INDIVIDUAL NO PLOT PLOT NO 1-10A**

**AECOM**

**SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION**

**PROJ. NO.:** 12/12/17/001  
**DATE:** 12/12/17  
**REV. NO.:** 1  
**REV. DATE:** 12/12/17

**PREPARED BY:** [Name]  
**CHECKED BY:** [Name]  
**APPROVED BY:** [Name]

**PROJECT LOCATION:** Newry, County Down, Northern Ireland

**CLIENT:** Newry, Moume and Down District Council

**CONTACT:** [Name], [Address], [Phone], [Email]

**SCALE:** 1:100 (2D)

**DATE:** 12/12/17

**REV. NO.:** 1

**REV. DATE:** 12/12/17

**PROJ. NO.:** 12/12/17/001

**DATE:** 12/12/17

**REV. NO.:** 1

**REV. DATE:** 12/12/17

**PROJ. NO.:** 12/12/17/001

**DATE:** 12/12/17

**REV. NO.:** 1

**REV. DATE:** 12/12/17

**Newry Southern Relief Road**



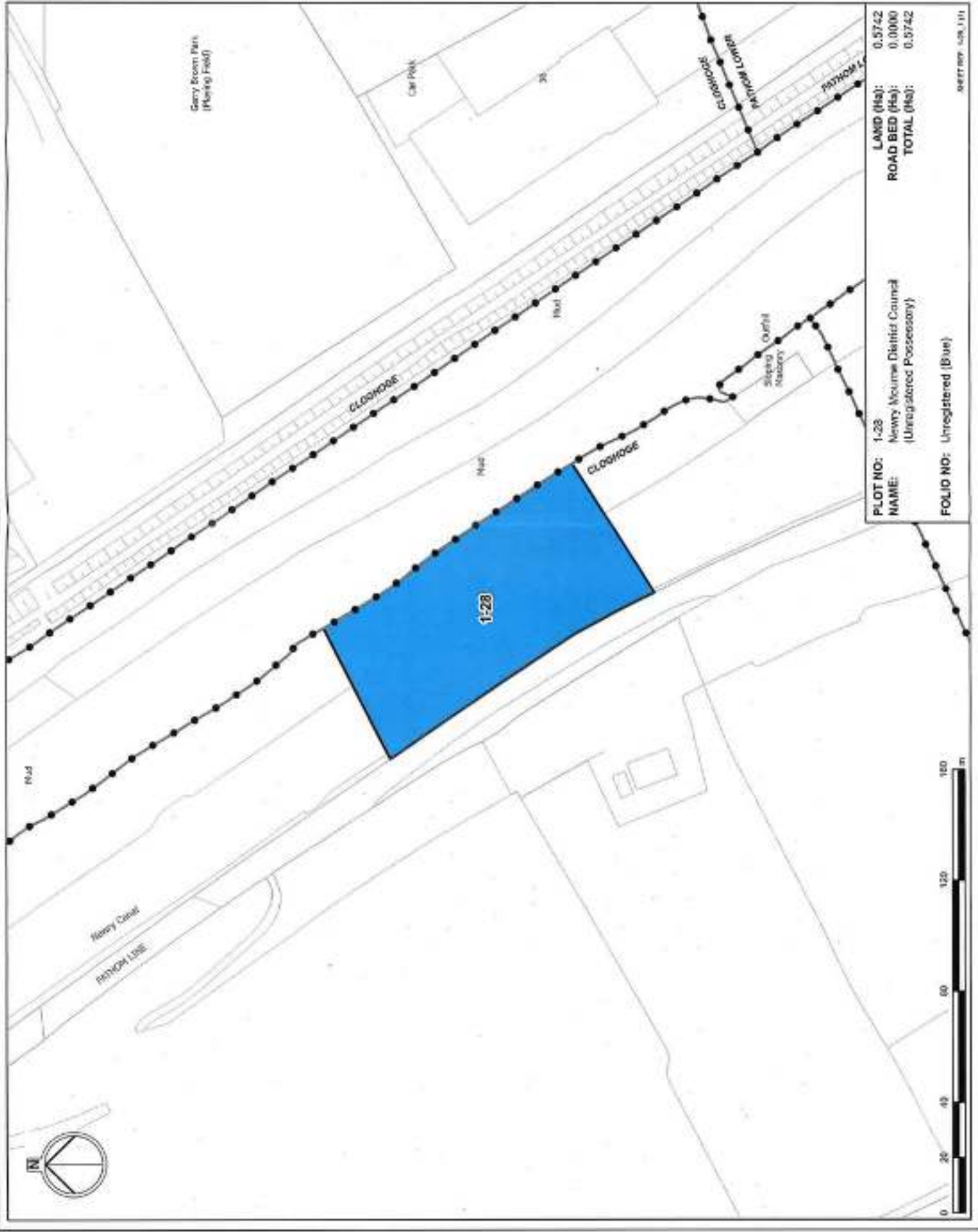
BASH DESIGN REF: J-082017-28042  
 CENTRE POINT: 388300, 323642  
 TOWNLAND: Cloghoge

**KEY**  


**SUITS FOR INFORMATION**  
 (Table with columns for Plot No., Area (Ha), and Status)

**SCHEME WIDE LAND PLAN**  
 INDIVIDUAL VO PLOT  
 PLOT No 1-28

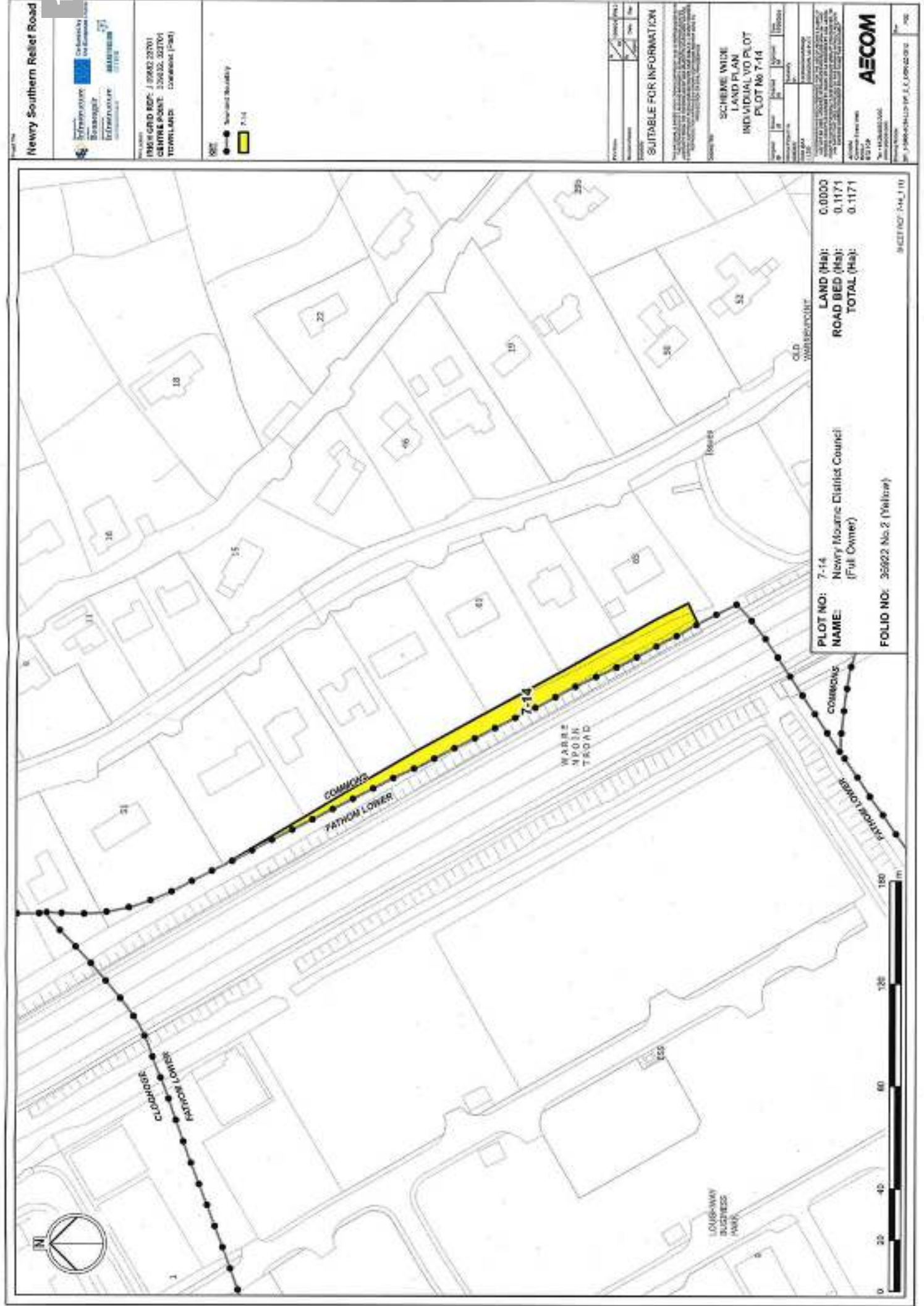
**AECOM**  
 10, LAURENCE ROAD, NEWRY, CO. DUBLIN, IRELAND  
 TEL: 01856 874200  
 FAX: 01856 874201



<b>PLOT NO:</b> 1-28	<b>LAND (Ha):</b> 0.5742
<b>NAME:</b> Newry Mourne District Council (Unregistered Possessory)	<b>ROAD BED (Ha):</b> 0.0000
<b>FOLIO NO:</b> Unregistered (Blue)	<b>TOTAL (Ha):</b> 0.5742

SHEET NO: 1-28, 1/11





<b>PLOT NO:</b> 7-14	<b>LAND (Ha):</b> 0.0000
<b>NAME:</b> Newry Mourne District Council (Full Owner)	<b>ROAD BED (Ha):</b> 0.1171
<b>FOLIO NO:</b> 36922 No.2 (Yellow)	<b>TOTAL (Ha):</b> 0.1171

**Newry Southern Relief Road**

PROJECT NO: J 2062 20701  
 CENTRE POINT: 20632, 503701  
 TOWNLAND: COMMONS (P&I)

Scale: 1:14  
 Date: 7-14

**SUITABLE FOR INFORMATION**

**SCHEME NAME:**  
 LAND PLAN  
 INDIVIDUAL PLOT  
 PLOT No 7-14

**AECOM**  
 11th Floor  
 100, North Wall Quay  
 Dublin 1, Ireland  
 Tel: +353 1 454 4000  
 Fax: +353 1 454 4001  
 Email: aecom@aecom.com

## FROM THE MINISTER OF HEALTH



Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council  
[democratice.services@nmandd.org](mailto:democratice.services@nmandd.org)

Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
BELFAST, BT4 3SQ  
Tel: 028 9052 2556  
Email: [private.office@health-ni.gov.uk](mailto:private.office@health-ni.gov.uk)

Your Ref:

Our Ref: COR-0096-2025

Date: 23 January 2025

Dear Marie

Thank you for your letter of 22 January 2025, and similar correspondence to the First and deputy First Ministers, forwarding on the Council's Notice of Motion with regards to the provision of a Residential Rehabilitation Service. I am responding in relation to both letters.

I wish to assure you that I, and my Department, share Council Members' concerns about the levels of harms that can be caused by substance use, and we acknowledge the very real and long-lasting impact on individuals, on families and on communities. There is no doubt that the harm associated from the use of alcohol and other drugs is one of the key public health challenges facing Northern Ireland. I am also very conscious of the links with areas of deprivation, mental health, suicide and self-harm, relationship breakdown, debt, crime, domestic and sexual violence.

My Department leads on the NI Executive's 10-year Substance Use Strategy "Preventing Harm, Empowering Recovery". As your motion alludes to, full implementation of the strategy will require additional resources and in the current challenging financial climate, it is unlikely that we will be able to do all that needs done within the timescales we would like. However, significant progress is being made across a number of critical areas.

As part of the delivery of the strategy's outcomes, the Public Health Agency and the Strategic Planning & Performance Group have co-produced a new outcomes-focused strategic service delivery plan to replace the current Alcohol & Drug Services Commissioning Framework, covering all tiers of service provision. I launched the Substance Use Strategic Commissioning & Implementation 2024-28 last November. The Plan outlines a number of

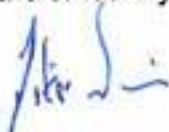
key strategic priority areas and associated actions for the short, medium and longer term over a four-year period. An Independent Review of Inpatient Tier 4 Detoxification & Residential Rehabilitation Services across Northern Ireland was also published at this time – the recommendations relating to the Tier 4 Review can be found at:

<https://consultations2.nidirect.gov.uk/hsc/independent-review-of-tier-4-detoxification-and-re/>

This Review was commissioned to understand whether current service provision meets population need and will meet future demand. Its recommendations are currently subject to a 12-week public consultation open until 19 February 2025. A number of these recommendations support the development of a Regional Specialist Assessment, Treatment and Recovery Service Network. This will include enhanced community detoxification services, community services to support people to achieve a state of readiness for recovery, and to maintain recovery, improved pathways for people throughout these services, a multi-disciplinary approach in current elective detoxification hospital services, and a regional evidence-based service specification for residential rehabilitation services.

I would like to thank Members for their interest and ongoing support in this important matter.

Yours sincerely



**Mike Nesbitt MLA**  
**Minister of Health**

Alison McCullagh  
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh  
District Council  
Comhairle Ceantair  
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

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Our Ref: Council/January 2025/15.2

Date: 28 January 2025

Email: [fiona.dillon@fermanaghomagh.com](mailto:fiona.dillon@fermanaghomagh.com)

Ms Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry, Mourne & Down District Council  
Monaghan Row  
NEWRY  
BT35 8DL

Dear Marie,

**Re: Notice of Motion – Gender Based Violence Against Women**

At the Council meeting held on 14 January 2025, Members noted your correspondence dated 16 December 2025 and asked me to write to you to confirm Fermanagh and Omagh District Council's support for the Motion. Members would also request a copy of any responses your Council receives from Government Departments in relation to the Motion.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alison McCullagh".

**Alison McCullagh**  
Chief Executive

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**Chairman**  
Jonathan Patton

**Chief Executive**  
Roisin Coulter

31 January 2025

Marie Ward  
Chief Executive  
Newry, Mourne and Down District Council  
Downshire Civic Centre  
Downshire Estate, Ardglass Road  
Downpatrick BT30 6GQ

Dear Marie

RE: NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN COUNCIL NOTICE OF MOTION REGARDING RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION FOR PEOPLE WITH ADDICTION TO DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

Firstly, I would like to extend my sympathy and that of all our Services to Sinead Boyle and her family on the loss of her son Sean in such distressing circumstances.

Please find attached response to the request for an audit of current provision of support to people with Drugs and Alcohol addiction served by the South Eastern Trust.

The Trust appreciates the opportunity presented by Council to share a summary of the wide range of services provided to patients and service users with drugs and alcohol addiction problems and including a broad overview of how these services are accessed. Please note that the Trust also operates in collaboration with a broad network of Community and Voluntary sector providers in this area and values this vital contribution.

In addition and of further note, South Eastern Trust provides healthcare to all prisons in Northern Ireland. Within the prison population, there is an over representation of people with both mental health and addictions issues, often co-existing. The stability that prison brings to those people who often live chaotic lifestyles outside, is supported by Healthcare in Prison with a population health approach to addressing health inequalities.

Yours sincerely



**ROISIN COULTER**  
Chief Executive

c.c. Helen Moore, Director SET  
Rachel Gibbs, Director, SET  
Kiera Lavery, Assistant Director, SET  
Jackie Carr, Assistant Director, SET  
Fiona Dagg, Assistant Director, SET

South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, Trust Headquarters, Ulster Hospital, Upper Newtownards Road, Dundonald,  
Belfast BT16 1RH – Tel: (028) 9055 3141 – [www.setrust.hscni.net](http://www.setrust.hscni.net)



**SOUTH EASTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST RESPONSE TO  
NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL 31 JANUARY 2025  
DRUGS AND ADDICTION SERVICES**

Please find below the list of Addiction Services provided to Adults and Children across South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust.

A link to the Trust website also provides information and useful telephone numbers:  
[Community Addiction Services - South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust](#)

The Public health Agency (PHA) also have a helpful directory of services in SE Trust area which includes addiction services and can be accessed via following link:  
[SouthEastern Area Card 02.23 final.pdf](#)

Note: Services can be accessed via a range of methods including via Primary Care (GP), and other health and social care professionals.

<b>Service:</b>	<b>Brief Details:</b>
<b>1. INPATIENTS ADDICTION WARD</b>	Ward 15, Downshire Hospital, Substance use treatment and detox.
<b>2. COMMUNITY ADDICTION SERVICES</b>	Step 3 treatment and aftercare of patients with substance misuse and dependency issues.
<b>3. SUBSTANCE MISUSE LIAISON TEAM/SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICES</b>	Timely and high quality triage, assessment and brief interventions for adults presenting to Acute hospitals – wards and ED.
<b>4. HEALTHCARE IN PRISON CLINICAL ADDICTION TEAM</b>	Tier 2 and 3 services to people in prison.
<b>5. COMMUNITY BASED ADDICTIONS TREATMENT SERVICE</b>	Intense, medically led intervention for serious dependence including specialist substitute prescribing.
<b>6. RESIDENTIAL TREATMENT</b>	Note: Regionally there are three units providing treatment for adults who require detoxification under medical supervision (e.g. Ward 15 at point 1), and two units provided by the voluntary sector providing non-medical treatment.
<b>7. PHA REGIONALLY COMMISSIONED SUBSTANCE MISUSE SERVICES</b>	Across all HSC Trusts, these services are delivered to adults and young people who require support as a result of drug and alcohol misuse.
<b>8. COMMUNITY BASED SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE SUBSTANCE MISUSE DIFFICULTIES</b>	Step 2 treatment for young people including structured family support.

<b>9. DRUG AND ALCOHOL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE (DAMHS)</b>	Step 3 treatment for young people with drug and/or alcohol issues and co-morbid mental health issues.
<b>10. ADULT STEP 2 SERVICES</b>	Treatment includes brief interventions and family support.
<b>11. LOW THRESHOLD SERVICES</b>	Adopts a harm reduction approach and aimed at people who have a history of disengagement and vulnerability.
<b>12. THERAPEUTIC SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES AFFECTED BY PARENTAL SUBSTANCE MISUSE</b>	Providing therapeutic interventions and support to children affected by parental substance misuse.
<b>13. TARGETED PREVENTION SERVICES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE</b>	Delivering age-appropriate drug and alcohol life skills/harm reduction programmes for young people.
<b>14. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SERVICES</b>	Services for young people aged 11 – 25 years providing information about personal health and wellbeing issues (including drugs and alcohol).
<b>15. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SERVICES</b>	A range of training courses to support the implementation of the Drug and Alcohol Commissioning Framework.
<b>16. SOUTH EASTERN DRUG AND ALCOHOL COORDINATION TEAMS (SEDACT)</b>	Collaborative work with statutory and community agencies with an interest in, or need to, address drug and alcohol issues in the Trust area.
<b>17. SHARRP</b>	School-based intervention focusing on alcohol.
<b>18. STEPS TO COPE/ HIDDEN HARM</b>	Early intervention for young people aged 11-25 who have been impacted by parental substance use and mental health problems.
<b>19. SUBSTANCE MISUSE LIAISON WORKER (CHILDREN'S SERVICES)</b>	Provides training and support to staff teams and 1-1 work with young people in residential care and leaving care
<b>20. DAISY (DRUGS AND ALCOHOL INTERVENTION SERVICE FOR YOUTH)</b>	Information and advice on the effects of alcohol and drugs as well as 1-1 work with young people to reduce harm caused by substance use.
<b>21. COMMUNITY VOLUNTARY SERVICE (CVS) PROVIDED PHAROS</b>	Support to families where there is parental substance misuse/ hidden harm.