

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Ref: AHC/2024

**Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on
Monday 19 August 2024 at 6.00pm in the Mourne Room,
Downshire Civic Centre**

Chairperson: Councillor C Galbraith

In attendance in Chamber: Councillor L Devlin Councillor D Finn
Councillor A Finnegan Councillor R Howell
Councillor J Jackson Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Lewis Councillor O Magennis
Councillor A Mathers Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor D Murphy Councillor K Murphy
Councillor H Young

Also in Chamber: Councillor T Andrews

Officials in Chamber: Mr A Patterson, Director, Active and Healthy Communities
Mr H Korkou, Assistant Director, Healthy Living (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

Also in the Chamber: Mr D Cusin, Department of Education
Mr D Heaney, Department of Education

AHC/065/2024: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr H Korkou to the meeting as acting Assistant Director, Healthy Living.

Members were advised Mr D Cusin and Mr D Heaney from the Department of Education were present at the meeting and would be delivering a presentation.

AHC/066/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**AHC/067/2024: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM ACTIVE & HEALTHY
COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2024**

Read: Action sheet of the Active & Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 17 June 2024. **(Copy circulated).**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Lewis, to note the Action Sheet of the Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on Monday 17 June 2024.**

AHC/068/2024: ATTENDANCE MATTERS – DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mr Patterson welcomed the delegation from the Department of Education who had agreed to attend the Committee Meeting following on from a presentation to the Community Planning Partnership Board on the Department's important work regarding school attendance rates and the need for a whole community based approach.

Mr Cusin from the Tackling Educational Disadvantage Team, Department of Education took Members through a presentation entitled 'Attendance Matters.' (Copy attached to these minutes)

The Chairperson thanked Mr Cusin for the presentation and invited questions and comments from Members as follows:

- There was understanding regarding the importance of attendance at school.
- There were benefits to not put pressure on young children to do GCSEs etc as school was not for everyone. Youth workers had been pushed out in the past and it was asked why was it now important to have youth workers as part of the solution.
- Concern at figures including that for local secondary school level and school refusers and how that had increased post pandemic. Reference had been made to the Scottish model and in terms of re-energising and getting people back into the system again. Was there going to be elements of that Scottish model included within the consultation and strategy that was to be released?
- Schools required advice and support particularly school managers and senior management teams as it was a very difficult thing to address, manage and support.
- It was vitally important parents knew that from a very young age, from preschool and health visitor input, that attendance for children at school was so important not just from an educational perspective but also social and emotional. It was an issue that the Department of Health had a role to play.
- Were there any plans for direct support and advice for parents who were struggling with managing attendance e.g. A helpline.
- In referring to the RAISE programme it was important that Councillors were fully informed of tools and options available to enable appropriate support to be provided to constituents.
- In terms of the programme for government what sort of outcomes would the Department like to see in terms of attendance?
- Financial pressures on families had an impact on attendance e.g. this time of year with the cost of uniforms and the cost of holidays with vast savings to be made by going during term time.

Mr Cusin and Mr Heaney responded to queries as follows:

- Youth workers had a vital role to play. There was an appreciation that school was not for everyone and it was important that all services should wrap around a particular child to find an education that was going to meet their needs and there was no issue with vocational qualifications and apprenticeships etc.
- It was important to have a range of professionals and options to support children.
- Reference was made to a partnership between Monkstown Boxing Club and Abbey Community College and how it had worked effectively in providing ways of learning and that programmes such as a youth leadership type were an important part of the solution.
- Scotland and particularly Glasgow showed an outline of what relational practice looked like with leaders in Glasgow being able to reduce expulsions to almost zero with significant reductions in suspensions due to their keenness to understand what was driving misbehaviour or poor behaviour amongst children at both the primary and post primary.

- Taking time for teachers and other professionals to understand what trauma there was within the children's lives and what was causing misbehaviour and to understand better what could be done to support them. That would be reflected within the strategy with a much more relational focused.
- It would always be a challenge, particularly for parents without the confidence or who may have had a poor experience of education themselves. There was support through the education welfare service and the Department would want to see that improving as time went on.
- Reference was made the RAISE programme which offered the opportunity for place based solutions to be identified and supported financially. This was a new risk based intervention programme which would be coming to schools. This was funded through the Shared Island Fund and would be helpful in terms of how to support parents more effectively.
- In terms of the RAISE programme, engagement with schools and organisations across 15 different areas would commence from September 2024 onwards to discuss a strategic plan for the areas.
- A copy of the presentation on the RAISE programme would be circulated to Members for their information with an offer to provide a focused presentation should Members wish.
- In relation to the programme for government it was more challenging as that was led by the Executive Office but increasingly collaboration was being talked about across departments with local councils.

Agreed: A copy of the presentation on the RAISE Programme to be circulated to Members.

AHC/069/2023: DISTRICT ELECTORAL AREA (DEA) FORUMS UPDATE REPORT

Read: Report dated 19 August 2024 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development presented by Mr A Patterson regarding an update on District Electoral Area (DEA) Forums. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, to note the report and approve the actions in the action sheets attached for:

- **The Mournes DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 23 July 2024.**
- **Slieve Croob DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 18 June 2024**
- **Rowallane DEA Forum Private Meeting held on 16 May 2024.**

AHC/070/2023: LEISURE CLOSURE ARRANGEMENTS 2024/25

Read: Report dated 19 August 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Leisure Closure Arrangements 2024/25. **(Copy circulated)**

In response for an update in relation to the reopening of Newry Swimming Pool from Councillors Mathers and Finn, Mr Patterson advised he would bring a detailed update to Members in September.

Mr Patterson advised he had been on site and there was a lot of work ongoing with tiles removed and the process of retiling commencing soon. There would be a number of meetings with the contractor over coming weeks. Mr Patterson further advised he

would be meeting with club representatives from swimming clubs and school groups to establish how Council could support them.

Councillor Finn touched on the importance of keeping people informed of the timeline to which Mr Patterson confirmed he would provide updates on a public basis also.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Magennis, to approve the leisure closure arrangements for 2024/2025 period.

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

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Howell, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on items 7 and 8, 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 Howell, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

AHC/071/2023: **LEASING OF COUNCIL LAND AT CARRIGENAGH ROAD, KILKEEL**

Read: Report dated 19 August 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding Leasing of Council Land at Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, to approve to progress the Council lands and facility at Carrigenagh Road, Kilkeel, though the Council's Sport and Community Leasing Policy.

RESTRICTED – FOR NOTING

AHC/072/2024 **DELIVERY PARTNER FOR BE ACTIVE FOR LIFE PROGRAMMES**

Read: Report dated 19 August 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding the Delivery Partner for Be Active for Life Programmes. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, to note the contents of the report.

FOR NOTING

**AHC/073/2024: POLICING & COMMUNITY SAFETY PARTNERSHIP (PCSP),
NEWRY NEIGHBOURHOOD RENEWAL PARTNERSHIP (NRP)**

Read: Report dated 19 August 2024 from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director, Community Development providing an update on the ongoing work of the Policing & Community Safety Partnership and the Newry and Downpatrick Neighbourhood Renewal Partnership.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, to note the report and the following:

- **Minutes of Policing Committee & PCSP Meeting held on 28 May 2024, approved at the Policing Committee & PCSP Meeting on 30 July 2024.**
- **Minutes of Newry NRP Meeting held on 22 May 2024, approved at the Newry NRP Meeting on 26 June 2024.**

AHC/074/2024: CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 19 August 2024 from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding Correspondence to Council. **(Copy circulated)**

Appendix 4: Response from Minister of Finance re: Funding for the Community/Voluntary Sector

Councillor Finnegan welcomed the response from the Minister of Finance and that she was going to correspond with the British government as this was a matter that needed to be addressed every year because of the importance of the Community/Voluntary sector. Councillor Finnegan added that she looked forward to the response from the Minister for Communities.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor McEvoy, to note the report and appendices, including the following:

- Appendix 1: Correspondence from Council to the Minister for Health**
- Appendix 2: Response received from Minister for Health**
- Appendix 3: Correspondence from Council to Minister for Finance**
- Appendix 4: Response received from Minister of Finance**

There being no further business the meeting ended at 7.00pm.

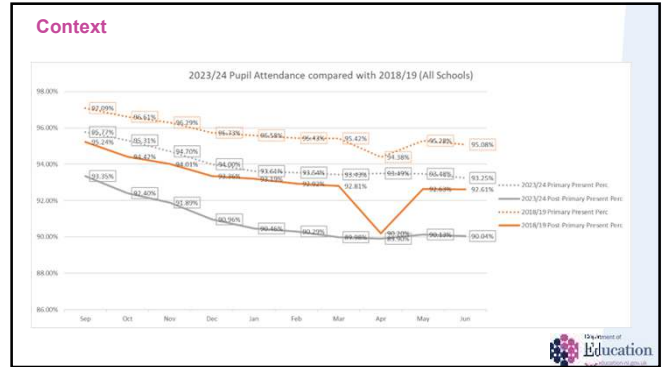
For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 2nd September 2024.

Signed: Councillor Galbraith
Chairperson

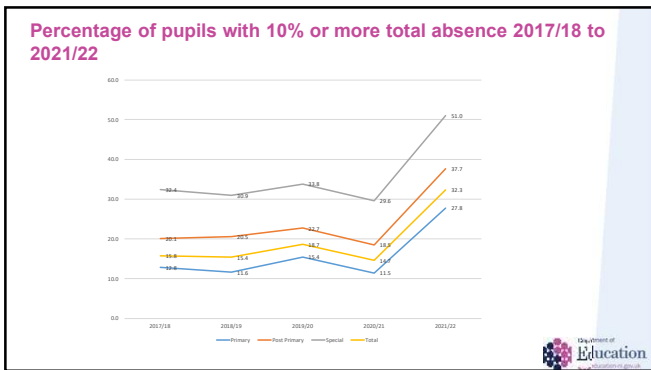
Signed: Andrew Patterson
Director Active and Healthy Communities



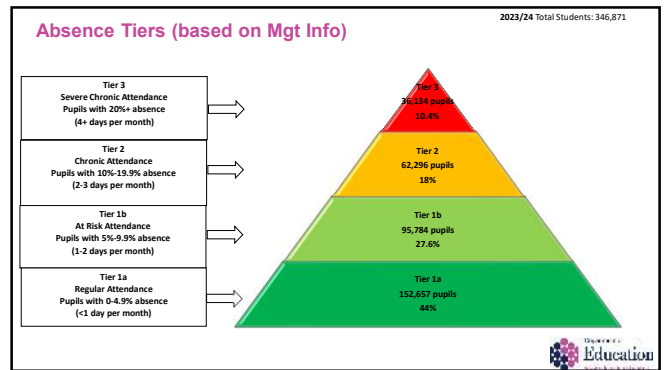
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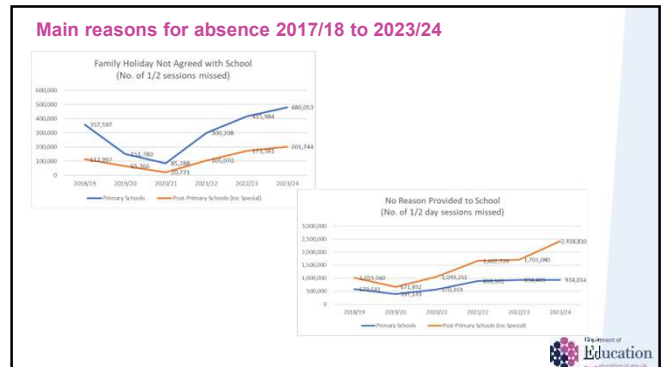
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Attendance and Absence Averages by FSME Band

Pupil Absence Data by Free School Meal Bands - September 2023 to June 2024

| FSM Band | Primary Schools - September to June 2024 (Cumulative) | | | | Post Primary Schools - September to June 2024 (Cumulative) | | | | Special Schools - September to June 2024 (Cumulative) | | | |
|---------------|---|-------------|----------------------|------------------------|--|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|---|--------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| | % Present | % Absent | % Authorized Absence | % Unauthorized Absence | % Present | % Absent | % Authorized Absence | % Unauthorized Absence | % Present | % Absent | % Authorized Absence | % Unauthorized Absence |
| 0:00 - 9:59 | 95.2% | 4.8% | 3.3% | 1.5% | 89.7% | 10.3% | 6.2% | 4.1% | 93.7% | 6.3% | 4.5% | 1.8% |
| 10:00 - 19:59 | 91.8% | 8.2% | 3.9% | 4.3% | 84.4% | 15.6% | 7.7% | 8.9% | 90.7% | 9.3% | 5.1% | 4.2% |
| 20:00 - 29:59 | 92.1% | 7.9% | 4.3% | 3.6% | 84.0% | 16.0% | 7.3% | 8.7% | 90.7% | 9.3% | 5.1% | 4.2% |
| 30:00 - 39:59 | 89.7% | 10.3% | 4.9% | 5.4% | 80.0% | 20.0% | 9.0% | 11.0% | 88.4% | 11.6% | 7.0% | 4.6% |
| 40:00 - 49:59 | 89.8% | 10.2% | 5.1% | 5.1% | 80.0% | 20.0% | 9.0% | 11.0% | 88.4% | 11.6% | 7.0% | 4.6% |
| 50:00+ | 88.8% | 11.2% | 6.2% | 5.0% | 75.0% | 25.0% | 10.0% | 15.0% | 85.9% | 14.1% | 8.1% | 6.0% |
| Total | 90.3% | 9.7% | 4.3% | 5.0% | 80.0% | 20.0% | 9.0% | 11.0% | 88.9% | 11.1% | 7.1% | 4.0% |

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Challenges

Children and Young People / Families

- Seemingly changing attitudes to attendance
- Changing context – increased emotional health and wellbeing challenges (including Emotionally Based School Avoidance (EBSA))
- Parents / families / TIP / ACEs

Schools / Teachers / System

- Sense of frustration on the part of schools
- Suspensions and Expulsions
- Children being unofficially "off-rolled"
- Safeguarding and Child Protection
- Industrial Action – teaching staff (now ended) and Education Welfare Service (ongoing)
- Funding Challenges



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What works?

- Leadership
- Close educational engagement with parents
- Tailored education programmes
- Creating a positive environment – Relational practice
- Removing barriers to learning
- Strategic monitoring, reporting and evaluating
- Incentives and disincentives



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What we are doing

Attendance Matters Strategy

- Miss school, Miss out strategy has been rewritten in post COVID world
- Consult on the Strategy

Self Evaluation and Practical Guide (issued to schools for Sept 24)

- Developed in conjunction with the Education Authority

Promoting Good Practice – launched 7th June 2024

- Knockmore Primary Attendance Pilot (example)
- <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/attendance-hero>



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What we are doing

- Relational Practice
- Nurture
- Addressing Bullying
- Promoting Good Practice



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Opportunities

- EWS Review
- Social worker in schools; Home School Liaison Coordinator (HSLC); School Nurse
- End to End Review of School Improvement: Supporting Children and Young People/ Removing Barriers Workstream. Links between suspensions and expulsions; behaviour; EHE and Restorative Practice – creating a greater emphasis on Relational Practice
- BoG raising the profile of pupil attendance within each school
- Collaborative working (with other depts)
- Wrap around support around the child
- Local (place-based) solutions / RAISE Programme
- Councils/ Employers / FE colleges / Youth workers
- Curriculum Delivery



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Thank you.

Happy to take questions.



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