

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Tuesday 7 May 2024 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor V Harte

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor C Bowsie
Councillor J Brennan	Councillor P Byrne
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor R Howell
Councillor J Jackson	Councillor G Kearns
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Rice	Councillor M Ruane
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale	

Officials in attendance: Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/084/2024

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Enright and Gibbons.

The Chairperson on behalf of Council expressed condolences on the sudden passing of Jennifer Fulton from Ulster Wildlife. Council worked closely with Jennifer and Ulster Wildlife as a project partner on a number of funded projects over the years and she would be sadly missed.

Condolences were expressed to Councillor Enright and his family following the passing of his mother in law.

The Chairperson congratulated Ryan Dornan from Loughinisland who had become the Northern Ireland under 16 Snooker Champion.

Congratulations to Tomás O'Ceallaigh from Mullaghbawn, a member of Ring of Gullion Comhaltas who won the prestigious Senior Fiddler of Oriel Competition at the weekend.

C/085/2024 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

C/086/2024 **ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 APRIL 2024**

Read: Action sheet arising from Council Meeting held on 8 April 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 8 April 2024 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Andrews.**

C/087/2024 **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 8 APRIL 2024**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 8 April 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 8 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Brennan.**

Councillor Lee-Surginor enquired whether the loss adjusters had completed their assessments with regard the Flood Scheme and if all applicants been notified of the outcome.

Mr Mallon advised it was anticipated the inspections would be completed within a week with reports to follow. Officers had engaged with applicants to the Hardship Fund and letters of offer had been issued to all those who were eligible for payments. Letters of offer were to be issued to the first tranche of applicants for the enhanced scheme with payments made once funding had been secured through DfE.

Members were advised a communications update would be issued to all applicants through the grants system to advise of the current position and progress with the scheme.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/088/2024 **MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 15 APRIL 2024**

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2024 (copy circulated).

ERT/040/2024: Tourism Strategy 2024-2029

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Councillor Jackson said it was with regret the DUP group could not support the proposed tourism strategy. He stated his Party had expressed a case for the need to highlight the biggest tourism attraction in the area, the Mourne Mountains and the rich history of Ulster Scots which made it distinctive from other areas.

Councillor Jackson said it was disappointing and unacceptable that the areas and culture that the DUP represented were ignored in the process.

Councillor Hanna voiced opposition to the use of Ireland's True Nature stating he felt it was inappropriate and did not identify the area any differently.

Councillor Hanlon pointed out the brand had been consulted on, market tested and was not just a decision for Councillors.

Having proposed the Tourism Strategy at the Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee, Councillor Feehan voiced support and proposed Council write to both the Economy Minister Conor Murphy and the Irish Minister for Tourism, Catherine Morton, requesting that they meet with a Cross-Party delegation of Councillors to advance the Council's stated objective of securing the inclusion of counties Armagh and Down in Ireland's Ancient East. Councillor Finn seconded the proposal.

Councillor Feehan confirmed he would therefore withdraw his motion as presented on item 14 of the Council agenda.

Councillor Bowsie stated his belief that the Tourism Strategy lacked cross community support, was politically charged and did not create the best promotion of the District. He spoke at length about how the Tourism Strategy created division and that the DUP had expressed strong opposition from the beginning to "Ireland's True Nature" and the selective culture and history associated with it in the strategy. He proposed an amendment for Ireland's True Nature to be replaced for branding that could gain cross-community support. This was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

Mr Mallon stated from an officer's perspective the Strategy presented had been developed in neutral format that did not support one side of the community or another and the branding was a separate piece of work that had been carried out in consultation with Members, members of the Tourism industry, the local tourism sector, had been market tested both locally and internationally and was presented to Members with a range of options.

The Chairperson advised that there would be a recorded vote (copy of which is appended to these minutes) on the proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Reilly for Ireland's True Nature to be replaced for branding that can gain cross-community support.

The results of the recorded vote were as follows:

FOR:	6
AGAINST:	31
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The proposal was LOST.

Agreed: The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 15 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Ruane.

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Finn Council write to both the Economy Minister Conor Murphy and the Irish Minister for Tourism, Catherine Morton, requesting that they meet with a Cross-Party delegation of Councillors in order to advance the Council's stated objective of securing the inclusion of counties Armagh and Down in Ireland's Ancient East.

C/089/2024 **MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 18 APRIL 2024**

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 April 2024 (copy circulated).

Councillor Reilly advised he was unable to attend the Committee meeting and proposed that Council commemorate the 80th anniversary of D-Day on 6 June 2024 in some way. Councillor Taylor seconded the proposal. Mrs Ward advised that this would be a matter for the Good Relations Forum and she would revert to Councillor Reilly directly.

SPR/057/2024: Notice of Motion, MMR Vaccinations

Councillor Devlin thanked the Communications and Marketing team for their work in raising awareness for the MMR Vaccination Campaign.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 18 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howell.**

C/090/2024 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 22 APRIL 2024**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 22 April 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 22 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy.**

C/091/2024 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 APRIL 2024**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 23 April 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Reilly.**

C/092/2024 **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues arising.

C/093/2024 **CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

Read: Report dated 7 May 2024 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council.

Appendix 6: Response from the Department of Infrastructure in relation to Newry Southern Relief Road

Councillor Feehan stated he strongly disagreed with the Infrastructure Minister's decision to proceed with a fixed bridge on the Southern Relief Road and spoke of Newry's maritime past and the history of the Canal being part of the town's DNA. He added that pressing ahead with the decision to close off access to the Canal for a range of ships and vessels would not only be a psychological blow for generations of Newry people but would be a short sighted, short term cost saving decision with long term consequences for the vitality of Newry Canal and the ability to invest in its regeneration in the long term.

Councillor Finn spoke in agreement with Councilor Feehan and how the decision taken was extremely disappointing and had been taken when there was no Minister in place. She proposed that Council write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request he meet with Council and explain why this decision was taken. Councillor Feehan seconded the proposal.

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Byrne to adjourn the meeting at this point.

Meeting adjourned at 7.02pm.

Meeting resumed at 7.15pm.

Councillor King stated this was a project that had been around for some time and Members were conscious not to delay transformation for Newry. He added it was disappointing that the decision had been taken at a time when the Assembly was down and no Minister in place.

Councillor King advised Sinn Féin had worked hard lobbying for a lifting bridge and were pleased that the current infrastructure Minister had carried out a review of the decision to try to ensure all options were exhausted. He stated significant financial constraints placed on the Executive due to Tory Government underfunding had meant a lifting bridge was not affordable. A key point for needing a lifting bridge was to ensure that Newry's canal was being utilised to its fullest and was therefore looked at as part of the larger regeneration project such as the development around Newry City Park and the new Greenway.

Councillor Reilly spoke in support of the Minister's agreement and said the Minister had made a very difficult decision and shown courage as everyone wanted the road in place as quickly as possible to take all the heavy traffic out of Newry town centre which would be beneficial to the health and well-being of the people of Newry.

Councillor Hanna said he felt it was unnecessary to bring Minister O'Dowd to Council to explain what he believed was a difficult but forward-thinking decision.

Councillor McAteer spoke of how the lifting bridge was policy of Council and that it should not move from that without any discussion on the decision taken.

Councillor Hanlon said she had no issue with any party writing to the Minister however she believed that scrutiny should come from the MLAs of the Assembly. She added it had been decided on the back of a review and the problem was that there was a serious issue with funding coming from the British Government.

Councillor Byrne responded that Council did have jurisdiction over Ministers as this was a Council City Deal Project and reminded Members that the last Infrastructure Minister had met with a delegation from Council in June 2022 to hear the views on this project to take it forward. He said it was therefore imperative that the Minister came to Council to outline the reasons for the decision taken.

A show of hands vote was requested on Councillor Finn's proposal that Council write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request he meet with Council and explain why this decision was taken to proceed with a fixed bridge, seconded by Councillor Feehan, the results of which were as follows:

FOR: 31
AGAINST: 5
ABSTENTIONS: 0

The proposal was declared CARRIED.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, Seconded by Councillor Feehan that Council write to the Minister for Infrastructure to request he meet with Council and explain why the decision was taken to proceed with a fixed bridge.

Appendix 3: Response from Department for Communities in relation to C/083/2024 Notice of Motion, Arts Sector Calls

In referring to the response received from the Communities Minister, Councillor Finn proposed Council write back requesting that Arts funding be kept on the agenda as it had been badly cut over the last 10 years. Councillor Devlin seconded the proposal.

Councillor Campbell spoke in agreement with Councillor Finn's proposal as he had worked for 17 years within Community Arts and knew the benefits of the arts across the community.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Devlin that Council write back to the Minister for Communities requesting that arts funding be kept on the agenda.

Appendix 4: Correspondence from Department for Communities, Head of Housing Investment in relation to protecting and enhancing the social housing funding.

Councillor Finnegan welcomed the correspondence from the Department for Communities and reiterated that social and affordable homes must be prioritised and that building more social, affordable homes was a priority and action was needed to demonstrate this and ensure that housing was delivered, especially for rural communities.

Appendix 5: Correspondence from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in relation to C/080/2024 Notice of Motion, Fisheries and Aquaculture Industries.

In welcoming the response from the Minister, Councillor Byrne enquired whether a letter had been sent to the Home Office and if not to ensure that the Home Office was contacted in the same manner as previously done with the issue of seasonal workers in the mushroom industry. Mrs Ward advised the letter had been sent however there had been no response as yet.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor K Murphy to note the correspondence report and appendices including the following:

Appendix 1 & 2: Correspondence from General Register Office in relation to Coronavirus Act 2020 (Registration of

Deaths and Still-Births) (Extension) (No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024.

Appendix 3: Correspondence from Department for Communities in relation to C/083/2024 Notice of Motion, Arts Sector Calls.

Appendix 4: Correspondence from Department for Communities, Head of Housing Investment in relation to protecting and enhancing the social housing funding.

Appendix 5: Correspondence from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in relation to C/080/2024 Fisheries and Aquaculture Industries.

Appendix 6: Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure in relation Newry Southern Relief Road.

Appendix 7: Correspondence from the NI Public Service Ombudsman in relation to changes in the investigation process and a leaflet on the service.

Appendix 8: Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to C/061/2024, Notice of Motion, Rail Service Belfast to Dublin.

Appendix 9: Correspondence from the Department of Health in relation to C/081/2024, Notice of Motion, Cancer Treatment Waiting Times.

Appendix 10: Correspondence from the Department of Finance in relation to C/081/2024, Notice of Motion, Cancer Treatment Waiting Times.

Appendix 11: Correspondence from the Department of Health in relation to C/040/2024, Emergency General Surgery at Daisy Hill Hospital.

C/094/2024

**NOTICE OF MOTION – MENTAL HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS
ACROSS NEWRY, MOURNE AND DOWN**

The following motion was received from Councillor Sharvin:

"This Council fully recognises and appreciates the work of mental health service providers within Newry, Mourne and Down. It is vitally important that the service providers are supported to sustain and grow for the future demand. This Council will write to the Health Minister Robin Swann calling for him to commit financial funding to enable new contracts being awarded and procurement exercises to be undertaken via the local Trusts."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Devlin.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Sharvin spoke of how the District was fortunate to have the best mental health service providers, supporting residents in the most difficult of circumstances and how the outstanding work of those organisations provided a life saver for many within the community. He stated it was vitally important that Council supported them at all times.

Councillor Sharvin went on to outline how local organisations were running year to year, month to month as funding cuts and further reduction of opportunity via the Department of Health and local Trusts had an impact. He made reference to how in recent weeks a local mental health charity faced an uncertain future as the Mental Health Support Fund launched in 2021 was ending with no communication or information on what financial support they would receive going forward.

Councillor Sharvin highlighted the majority of organisations reported their biggest financial income was fundraising and in the cost-of-living crisis this had been a challenge. He stated he had brought the motion to call on the Health Minister to appropriately fund mental health service providers in Newry, Mourne and Down and get serious about mental health for all.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Devlin spoke of the work of charities and organisations District wide and how often it went unnoticed unless you were the person or family member of someone in need. These organisations were plugging the hole of Trusts and central Government, and the hole was ever deepening.

In thanking Councillor Sharvin for bringing the motion, Councillor Hanlon paid tribute to the many mental health charities who supported the residents of the District. She spoke of how the Mental Health crisis continued to grow with increasing numbers of people waiting for mental health support and more people losing their lives as a result of alcohol and drug issues. Those struggling with mental health and addiction issues on a daily basis could not wait and the Minister and his officials needed to commit to the funding model as a matter of priority.

In concurring with the remarks made regarding service providers Councillor Truesdale said there was more depth to the problem that could not be solved in Council. She pointed out statutory mental services were funded by the Trust, and in the voluntary sector there were charities who applied for PHA contracts and charities who managed on grants and donations.

Councillor Truesdale proposed an amendment that the motion include the following: *and an action plan for engaging the voluntary and social enterprise sectors in its supply chain.*

Councillor Sharvin accepted the amendment.

Councillors Jackson and Reilly voiced their support for the motion.

Agreed: **It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Devlin that Council fully recognises and appreciates the work of mental health service providers within Newry, Mourne and Down. It is vitality important that the service providers are supported to sustain and grow for the future demand. This Council will write to the Health Minister Robin Swann calling for him to commit financial funding to enable new contracts being awarded and procurement exercises to be undertaken via the local Trusts and an action plan for engaging the voluntary and social enterprise sectors in its supply chain."**

C/095/2024

NOTICE OF MOTION – ROAD MAINTENANCE

The following motion was received from Councillor Byrne:

"This Council expresses extreme disappointment at the continued deterioration of our rural roads and recognises the impact it has on motorists and the executive budget through subsequent compensation claims. This Council supports the recommendations made in 2019 in

Jim Barton's Independent Review into the Funding Requirements for Structural Maintenance of the Northern Ireland road network. Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Finance asking both departments to outline the steps taken to implement the Barton recommendations to date and commit to a multi-year budget to properly address the maintenance of our roads."

The motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

In presenting the motion Councillor Byrne said people across the District were fed up with the poor state and the constant deterioration of roads year on year with rural communities particularly impacted negatively (rural roads made up 77% of the entire road network across the north, which was 20,000 out of 26,000 kilometres of roads and nearly 61% of those roads were unclassified and not fit for purpose). He spoke about pothole patching and the unsafe requirements and the rest of a road being left in disrepair due to operating on a limited service and referred to a report from the Northern Ireland Audit Office which recommended the gathering and reporting of statistics on road networks and how the figures over the last number of years painted a grim picture for the District.

Reference was made to a number of statistics including that in 2023 there were 100,487 defects across the whole of the north showed one in five of the defects were in within this Council area. In comparison to other Council areas in last four years up to 2023 there were 73,000 defects in Newry, Mourne and Down compared to Ards and North Down which was 16,000.

Councillor Byrne pointed out that the DFI had a statutory duty to maintain roads in a safe and serviceable condition. He said guidance and standards related to inspections and defects to keep in line with their statutory duty however those standards had been changed 12 times in a 3 year period. He questioned how could get consistency in inspections or fixing defects when the standards and the guidance had changed 12 times in 36 months.

In seconding the motion, Councillor McAteer said it was important to note that the Northern Ireland Audit Office made recommendations to assist the Department going forward and that needed to be listened to. He pointed out the real situation on the ground was being masked and the fact was there could be 20% savings with a 5 year programme committed budget.

Councillor McAteer made reference to another recommendation to engage with all stakeholders involved including local Councils and that the SDLP would encourage that taking a step further by devolving financing responsibilities for non-trunk roads to ensure a fair distribution and managed appropriately.

In speaking in support of the motion Councillor D Murphy stated the big issue for many was living under years of Tory austerity which had manifested itself in the North with regards to infrastructure, education, health etc. He stated all parties agreed that there was a massive underspend that could not be ignored and proposed the following amendment:

That Council write to the British Government requesting them to fulfil the demand from all parties That they adequately fund public services in the north.

Councillor Byrne agreed to accept Councillor D Murphy's amendment.

Councillors Hanna and Lee-Surginor voiced support for the motion on behalf of their Parties.

Agreed: **It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Council expresses extreme disappointment at the continued deterioration of our rural roads and recognises the impact it has on motorists and the executive budget through subsequent compensation claims. This Council supports the recommendations made in 2019 in Jim Barton's Independent Review into the Funding Requirements for Structural Maintenance of**

the Northern Ireland road network. Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure and Minister for Finance asking both departments to outline the steps taken to implement the Barton recommendations to date and commit to a multi-year budget to properly address the maintenance of our roads. Council write to the British Government requesting them to fulfil the demand from all parties That they adequately fund public services in the north.

C/096/2024

NOTICE OF MOTION – RIGHT TO FOOD

The following motion was received from Councillor Galbraith:

"This Council recognises the impact the scourge of food poverty is having on families right across this area, made worse by the cost of living emergency, and gives its formal backing to the Right To Food campaign, joining cities like Belfast, Derry and Liverpool in becoming a Right To Food City Council. We believe that this Executive and the British Government must prioritise food poverty, implementing a range of new measures including universal free school meals, support for community kitchens and enshrining the Right To Food for all through legislation. This Council will also write to the Minister for Communities, calling for immediate action on the implementation of an anti-poverty strategy."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Andrews.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Galbraith said he believed poverty was not inevitable, that poverty was a political choice and asked members to support the motion in recognising that access to food should be a basic human right for all and as a Council would continue to strive to respond to the hunger that exists within communities and called on Government to tackle the issue head on.

Councillor Galbraith said it was unacceptable that 1 in 5 children were experiencing poverty and that a large percentage of households were unable to afford the basic items. There was a responsibility for Council to tackle poverty and hold the Executive to account for failing to implement an anti-poverty strategy that would pull so many out of hardship and place the Right to Food as a priority for all.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Andrews thanked Councillor Galbraith for bringing the motion forward highlighting the impact food poverty was having on the suffering of many. Reference was made to the impact of Welfare reform and the cost-of-living crisis and how within a few weeks, schools would be closing for a lot of children who depend on a meal at school.

Councillor Andrews said Council needed to send a powerful message of solidarity that it was with the many people within the District who faced crisis and hardship and by becoming a Right to Food Council ensure that the proper funding and compassion from the government to give help.

Speaking in support of the motion, Councillor O'Hare commended the excellent work of local food banks and the work of the County Down Rural Community Network in setting up social supermarkets and the introduction of free school meal payments during holidays.

Councillor O'Hare made reference to a recent report from the NI Audit Office on child poverty which outlined in detail that one in five children was living in poverty. Children receiving free school meals were twice as likely to leave school with no GCSEs, and there were ongoing concerns about school attendance. All evidence showed that children who grow up in poverty were more likely to experience health inequalities, have lower levels of educational attainment and to experience poverty as adults.

Councillor O'Hare proposed an amendment to the motion to include the following:
to write to the Minister for Education also, as they have a role to play in tackling food poverty.

Councillor Galbraith accepted the amendment.

Councillors Lee-Surginor and Hanna voiced support for the motion on behalf of their Parties.

In supporting the motion Councillor Bowsie commended the work of local community groups and said he would like to see the Council working with churches and parish church organisations and work to support their food banks and the different grant schemes that they give out.

Agreed: **It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Galbraith, seconded by Councillor Andrews that Council recognises the impact the scourge of food poverty is having on families right across this area, made worse by the cost of living emergency, and gives its formal backing to the Right To Food campaign, joining cities like Belfast, Derry and Liverpool in becoming a Right To Food City Council.**
We believe that this Executive and the British Government must prioritise food poverty, implementing a range of new measures including universal free school meals, support for community kitchens and enshrining the Right To Food for all through legislation.
This Council will also write to the Minister for Communities, calling for immediate action on the implementation of an anti-poverty strategy and write to the Minister for Education also, as they have a role to play in tackling food poverty.

C/097/2024 **NOTICE OF MOTION – IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST**

Agreed: **The Motion was withdrawn by Councillor Feehan.**

C/098/2024 **NOTICE OF MOTION – DOG FOULING**

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Howie:

"That this Council will be focused on providing long term solutions around enforcement and communication campaigns with regard to dog fouling. Council officers will also look at best-practice in Councils who already operate a customer reporting hub such as BCC. This Council will use data provided by members of the public, elected members via a customer hub, hotspots will be identified and enforcement officers will know exactly areas of most need, this will then inform social media and posts by Council on areas experiencing high dog fouling, encouraging the public to become more aware of their responsibilities. Data may also be used to work out where bins are lacking in the district and inform their placement."

The motion was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

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

Notice of Motion received from Councillor Howell:

"That this Council acknowledges the grief, pain and trauma caused by the loss of a baby during pregnancy; recognises that the trauma felt is exacerbated by bereaved parents having to travel to England for a post-mortem due to the absence of a local perinatal and paediatric pathologist; further recognises the potential of an all-island paediatric pathology service so bereaved parents can access post-mortems on the island of Ireland; believes parents should have the option to have their child's memory recorded with an official certificate free of charge; and supports the intention of the Finance Minister to develop a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme for those parents that have lost a baby during a baby pregnancy before 24 weeks."

The motion was seconded by Councillor S Murphy.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Howell said there was not a Member in the chamber who had not been impacted or knew of a family who had been impacted by baby loss, a loss that brought indescribable grief which stayed with parents and families for the rest of their lives. Members were informed pregnancy loss affected approximately 1 in 4 pregnancies, and sadly, where this loss occurred prior to 24 weeks the lack of support and acknowledgement for that baby and their families was stark.

Councillor Howell spoke of how receiving the earth-shattering news that your baby had passed away was the worst news imaginable for many parents and spoke of her own personal loss when at 28 weeks pregnant, her little girl Blánaid in 2010 it felt like her world had ended.

Councillor Howell advised her Sinn Féin colleagues had tabled a motion in the Assembly calling for the official recognition of this loss by committing to deliver a baby loss certificate scheme for parents who lost a child before 24 weeks of pregnancy and to acknowledge the absence of a local perinatal and paediatric pathologist and further recognise the potential of an all-island paediatric pathology service.

Councillor Howell pointed out the devastation of loss was only further compounded when families faced the further heartbreak by having to take their child to Liverpool's Alder Hey Children's Hospital for post-mortem services and spoke of her own experience that if her family had wanted a postmortem carried out on Blánaid she would have to travel to Liverpool. She spoke of how to this day it was very hard to understand why they could not access the services here and how they still had so many unanswered questions.

Councillor Howell commended the Finance Minister who had committed to work towards the delivery of this certificate scheme and the Economy Minister who was working to expand Parental Bereavement Leave to include those who had lost a baby prior to 24 weeks.

In seconding the motion, Councillor S Murphy said it was important that the needs and wishes of those families that had been impacted by baby loss be put first, especially when it came to perinatal and paediatric pathology services. She spoke of families within her constituency who have had to endure being separated from their precious baby's and it was something they would never get over.

Councillor S Murphy commended the work of organisations who provided invaluable support to families through their loss e.g. SANDS, Cradle, Little Forget Me Nots, Aching Arms, and Tiny Life and how they brought a wealth of experience and expertise to help develop the compassionate care and support for bereaved parents. They had emphasised just how significant the implementation of a baby loss certificate scheme was in recognising the loss for families and facilitate the grieving process.

In speaking of his own personal experience with a family member and the loss of their baby, Councillor Lewis proposed the following amendment to omit further recognises to an all-Ireland: *seeks the reinstatement of a regional paediatric pathology service in Northern Ireland, whilst recognising the potential for mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation.*

Councillor Howell accepted the amendment.

Councillors Devlin and Truesdale voiced support for the motion on behalf of their Parties.

Agreed: **It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor S Murphy that this Council acknowledges the grief, pain and trauma caused by the loss of a baby during pregnancy; recognises that the trauma felt is exacerbated by bereaved parents having to travel to England for a post-mortem due to the absence of a local perinatal and paediatric pathologist; seeks the reinstatement of a regional paediatric pathology service in Northern Ireland, whilst recognising the potential for mutually beneficial cross-border cooperation; believes parents should have the option to have their child's memory recorded with an official certificate free of charge; and supports the intention of the Finance Minister to develop a Baby Loss Certificate Scheme for those parents that have lost a baby during a baby pregnancy before 24 weeks."**

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 8.28pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 3 June 2024.

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 07/05/2024 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre MEETING: Council Meeting

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Proposal of Councillor Bowsie, seconded by Councillor Reilly for Ireland's True Nature to be replaced for branding that can gain cross-community support

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews		1		
C Bowsie	1			
J Brennan		2		
P Byrne		3		
P Campbell		4		
W Clarke		5		
L Devlin		6		
C Enright				√
K Feehan		7		
D Finn		8		
A Finnegan		9		
C Galbraith		10		
M Gibbons				√
O Hanlon		11		
G Hanna	2			
V Harte		12		
R Howell		13		
T Howie		14		
J Jackson	3			
G Kearns		15		
C King		16		
M Larkin		17		
D Lee-Surginor		18		
A Lewis	4			
O Magennis		19		
A Mathers		20		
D McAteer		21		
L McEvoy		22		
S O'Hare		23		
D Murphy		24		
K Murphy		25		
S Murphy		26		
A Quinn		27		
H Reilly	5			
M Rice		28		
M Ruane		29		
G Sharvin		30		
D Taylor	6			
J Tinnelly				√
J Truesdale		31		
TOTALS	6	31	-	3