

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 5 August 2024 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Byrne	Councillor P Campbell
Councillor W Clarke	Councillor L Devlin
Councillor C Enright	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor C Galbraith	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor T Howie	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor C King	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor D Murphy
Councillor K Murphy	Councillor S Murphy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Tinnelly
Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young

Officials in attendance: 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/125/2024

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Bowsie, Howell, Kearns, Magennis, McAteer and Rice, Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive and Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability and Environment.

The Chairperson congratulated the following:

- Armagh Senior men footballers on winning the All-Ireland. Members were informed Council was working with Armagh City, Banbridge & Craigavon Borough Council to mark their fantastic achievement and Councillors would be kept updated on plans.
- Armagh Under-16 ladies footballers on becoming All-Ireland Champions.
- Armagh Minor men's team, LGFA ladies footballers and Senior Camogie team for their successes in the All-Ireland, beaten by narrow margins in the finals.

Councillor Magennis was thanked for requesting these acknowledgements also.

The Chairperson congratulated Down Senior men footballers on winning the Tailteann Cup and wished them all the best in the All-Ireland next year advising that contact had been made with the Down County Board on marking their success also.

Thanks were extended to all the soccer clubs across the District for their participation in the Chairperson's Be Active Cup. Conor Haughey, Francis Quinn and all staff involved in organising the successful tournament were thanked for their work. Ballynahinch Olympic were congratulated on winning the tournament after beating Cleary Celtic in the final and Councillors Harte, Mathers and Sharvin were thanked for their attendance at the final.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to acknowledge the fantastic work taking place across the District in Irish Summer Schools advising he had visited summer schools in Camlough, Kilkeel and Cullyhanna where over 400 kids were taking part in activities, learning and promoting the Irish language.

The Chairperson wished to recognise the work going on across the District to promote inclusion including the following:

- Accessibility to bowling greens improved through the launch of new bowling ramps in partnership with Department for Communities.
- Inclusive beaches programme on Cranfield beach in partnership with the Mae Murray Foundation to improve access to the beach and sea for people with disabilities.
- The Chairperson had visited two groups in South Armagh doing amazing work with kids with autism and special needs, Amazing Abilities in Silverbridge and Snap Kids in Forkhill. The Chairperson's theme for the year was inclusion and he advised he would continue to work with, meet and promote the fantastic work being done by groups across the District regarding inclusion.

Congratulations were extended to Cuan Mhuire and the Rural Health Partnership on their nominations for the Pride of Place Awards 2024. The Chairperson advised he had hosted two judges from Pride of Place to showcase the work being done by both groups and thanked Councillors Harte and Mathers for helping to promote the good work at Cuan Mhuire and Councillor Declan Murphy for promoting the work carried out by the Rural Health Partnership.

The Chairperson congratulated all the community groups who received Green Flag and Heritage awards at a recent ceremony in Lisburn and acknowledged the key note speech by Dr William Bird on the health benefits from green spaces. The Chairperson advised he had invited Dr Bird to give a presentation to Council through the Active and Healthy Communities Committee. Congratulations were extended to the Council green flag winners including:

- Kilbroney Park
- Castlewellan Forest Park
- Newry Canal (Heritage)
- Slieve Gullion Forest Park
- Warrenpoint Municipal Park (Heritage)

The Chairperson spoke of the hugely successful Classic Bike Festival Ireland event which took place in Bishopscourt Racetrack. He congratulated the organisers of the event which had been part funded by Council and was a welcome boost to the tourism and hospitality sector.

Congratulations were extended to the following with acknowledgement to Councillor Finnegan for requesting it:

- An Bonnán Buí who took home 8 gold medals at the Ulster Fleadh in Dromore.
- Turlough McMahon in his solo competitions winning under 12 harp, harp solo airs and accompaniment competitions.
- Iarla McMahon on winning 5 competitions: Senior Uilleann pipes, Tin Whistle, Tin whistle slow airs, duet with Tomás O'Cealligh and Trio with Tomás and Niamh Kelly. The two boys would now compete in the All Ireland Fleadh in Wexford and Council wished them well.
- Oriel and Colla Ceili bands took bronze and silver respectively and would also play at the Senior Ceili Bands competition in Wexford and Council wished them the best of luck.

The Chairperson spoke of the sadness in seeing the devastation caused by the fire at Greenbank a number of weeks ago and stated he hoped businesses could get back on their feet and reopen as soon as possible. Along with Councillor Selina Murphy, the Chairperson thanked the Council and emergency services for their response.

Congratulations were extended to Killough and Ardglass on hosting fantastic community festivals. The Chairperson advised he had visited Ardglass last weekend to launch the 'fish with friends' recipe book put together by the community through good relations funding and thanked Deputy Chairperson Councillor Lee-Surginor for the fantastic cooking demonstration provided.

Condolences were extended to the family of John Kearney who sadly passed away. John had worked in the Council's refuse collection for many years and the thoughts and prayers of everyone at Council were with his family at this sad time.

Condolences were extended to the family of Malcom McMahon from Warrenpoint who recently passed away. Malcom had worked in the recycling centre at Warrenpoint and the thoughts of everyone at Council were with his family at this sad time.

The Chairperson took the opportunity to remind Councillors of two upcoming events:

- Pride in Newry from 26 to 31 August 2024 with a range of events organised by the LGBT women and it was hoped as many Councillors as possible would attend. The Chairperson spoke of its importance and how this year there were two LGBTQIA+ members in the Chair and Deputy Chair of Council who would be together leading the parade through Newry.
- The Council Civic Awards were taking place on 27 September 2024 in the Canal Court Hotel and was an opportunity for every Councillor to nominate a group or person who should be recognised for a civic award. He advised that Democratic Services would be in touch with Members in due course.

The Chairperson reminded Members that anyone who wanted to raise something under Chairperson's remarks should send it to him and he would put their names to it.

Members were advised two emergency motions had been received and would be dealt with later in the meeting. He advised in order to hear the motions it would require a qualified majority vote to be achieved.

C/126/2024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/127/2024 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2024

C/058/2024: Twinning Newry with City of Ramallah

In response for an update from Councillor Feehan, Mr Mallon confirmed there had been no response received to date from the correspondence issued to the Mayor of Ramallah.

It was agreed at the request of Councillor Feehan that this item remain on the action sheet.

Councillor Enright queried why an action in relation to meeting with representatives from the Catholic Church, Newcastle regarding parking arrangements over the Irish Open had been omitted from the action sheet and Council Minutes.

At the request of the Chairperson, Democratic Services checked the transcript and it was later clarified that this action had not been raised at the Council Meeting but had been brought up at

the Sustainability and Environment Committee in June 2024, ratified at Council on 1 July 2024. Councillor Enright was advised a meeting was being set up with Church officials.

Agreed: **The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 1 July 2024 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Enright.**

It was agreed item C/058/2024: Twinning Newry with City of Ramallah should remain on the action sheet.

C/128/2024 **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 1 JULY 2024**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 1 July 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 1 July 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Enright, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.**

C/129/2024 **CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

Read: Report dated 5 August 2024 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council.

Appendix 1: Correspondence from DFI Roads in relation to proposed reduction in speed limit on Newry Road, Warrenpoint

The Chairperson requested a copy of the correspondence be forwarded to the Crotlieve Councillors for their information.

Appendix 2: Correspondence from Minister for Infrastructure in relation to proposed low bridge, Newry Southern Relief Road

In response for clarity from Councillor Finn and the Chairperson, Ms Taggart confirmed no specific timeframe had been given to the Minister to meet with Council and that in previous correspondence the Minister had outlined he was happy to meet with Council.

Councillor Finn proposed that Council write back to the Minister for Infrastructure requesting that he meet with Council, and if he was unavailable then a delegation from Council could go to meet him. The proposal was seconded by Councillor Devlin.

The Chairperson said it was important for Council to know the timeframe for the project and if the Minister could not come to meet then Council should meet with an official.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Devlin to note the correspondence report and appendices including the following:**

Appendix 1: Correspondence from DFI Roads in relation to a proposed reduction in speed limit on Newry Road, Warrenpoint.

Appendix 2: Correspondence from Minister O'Dowd regarding proposed low bridge, Newry Southern Relief Road.

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Devlin that Council write back to the Minister

for Infrastructure to follow up on a timeframe for the project and requesting that he meet with Council, and if not that Council go to meet him.

C/130/2024

NOTICE OF MOTION – COMMUNICATION BOARDS IN PARKS AND OPEN SPACES

The following Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

“That this council recognises the importance of ensuring that our parks and open spaces are inclusive and accessible to those with speech, language, and communication needs and that it recognises the positive role of communication boards in achieving this. That it commits to working with relevant organisations to bring back a report regarding communication boards considering, but not limited to, the following points:

- *How communication boards would integrate with the required existing signage;*
- *Identifying possible locations for the communication boards, such as a specific Tier of park; and*
- *An indicative budget.”*

The motion was seconded by Councillor Howie.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Active & Healthy Communities Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6.

EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Chairperson advised two emergency Notice of Motions had been received, the wording of which had been emailed to all Councillors and to enable them to be heard, it would be necessary to suspend Standing Orders 16.1.1 for which a qualified majority vote was required. (80% of Members present and voting).

It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor to suspend Standing Order 16.1.1 at this point of the meeting to allow the tabling of the emergency notices of motion received by the Chairperson from Councillors Andrews and Hanlon.

The Chairperson put the matter to a recorded a vote, the results of which were as follows: (copy attached)

FOR:	34
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	0

It was agreed by a qualified majority vote to suspend Standing Orders 16.1.1 (copy attached)

C/131/2024: EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION, RECENT SCENES OF VIOLENCE

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Andrews:

“Newry Mourne and Down District Council, in light of the distressing scenes of violence that have unfolded in Belfast and other locations over the past few days unequivocally condemns these actions.

We recognise the significant impact these events have had on our community and call for immediate measures to hold those responsible accountable.

We reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity and unity, reaching out to and welcoming all individuals who have made and continue to make our District their home .

Despite the actions of a cruel minority, we stand together as a community that embraces diversity and solidarity”

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor.

Councillor Andrews thanked the Chairperson and Members for agreeing to the Emergency Motion being heard and began by saying the thoughts and prayers of all were with the families, friends and community of the three young children who tragically lost their lives in Southport last week.

Councillor Andrews spoke at length of the widespread carnage and destruction to businesses, homes and properties witnessed in Belfast over the past number of days, as well as frontline services coming under fire and being targeted and subjected to missiles and abuse.

He pointed out that the scenes on tv screens and social media platforms in cities like Belfast and other towns being targeted by thugs who did not care about those that had lost their lives but used as an excuse to engage in thuggery, mayhem and wilful destruction. He spoke of how out of all that had happened the kindness of so many had shone through with residents, communities, churches and other organisations going out of their way to help.

Councillor Andrews said the Motion called on immediate action and more resources to be made available to bring those to account for their actions and who deserved the full rigour of the law to be enforced including those using social media to platform their hatred and inciting others.

Members were reminded that what had been witnessed was the actions of a small minority who did not represent the huge majority of people within the District who were fully inclusive and welcomed everyone who had made and continued to make the District their home. He summed up by saying it was important to show commitment as a community and District and stand together in embracing diversity, solidarity and friendship for all.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Lee-Surginor stated he whole heartedly agreed with Councillor Andrews and spoke against the disturbing scenes of violence and disorder of the Streets in Belfast and parts of Great Britain which police were treating as hate crimes. He asked that all colleagues from all parties strongly condemn all forms of violence, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia and to reiterate a commitment together to share peaceful and inclusive society throughout Northern Ireland and standing united as one.

Councillor Hanlon spoke at length in support of the Motion and on behalf of Sinn Féin offered ongoing support and solidarity to the ethnic minority community. She stated there was no place in society for racism or the attacks on minority communities which took place at the weekend. Councillor Hanlon pointed out the police, the justice system and politicians needed to do their job but more than that, people had to ask themselves, what could they do as good neighbours, as fellow parents, as members of community groups, other faiths or no faith.

Councillor Hanlon pointed out co-operation between the PSNI and An Garda Síochána was essential so that those responsible for causing and orchestrating the racist violence would face the full force of the law and as elected representatives and a society everyone must work together to deliver a shared, peaceful and inclusive society.

Councillor Jackson voiced support for the Motion on behalf of DUP grouping who recognised in any democratic society there was a right to protest but protest must be both peaceful and lawful. He added his party supported peaceful protest and people within communities who had concerns should be able to have discussions about issues that they face, whether that be

concerns about immigration policy or any other. However, there was no justification or excuse for violence as nothing was solved by attacking people or property.

Councillor Taylor condemned the violence that occurred stating it was totally unacceptable and no one should have to endure that. In any democracy people had a right to protest but with that right, was a responsibility for it to be done in a completely peaceful manner.

Councillor Taylor paid tribute to the police and other emergency services that were always at the forefront of protecting people.

In summing up Councillor Andrews thanked Members for their unanimous support and that his thoughts and prayers would be with the people in in Southport who over the coming days were preparing to lay young children to rest.

The Chairperson confirmed the Motion was unanimously approved.

Agreed: **It was unanimously agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor that Newry Mourne and Down District Council, in light of the distressing scenes of violence that had unfolded in Belfast and other locations over the past few days unequivocally condemned these actions. We recognise the significant impact these events have had on our community and call for immediate measures to hold those responsible accountable. We reaffirm our commitment to inclusivity and unity, reaching out to and welcoming all individuals who have made and continue to make our District their home. Despite the actions of a cruel minority, we stand together as a community that embraces diversity and solidarity.**

C/132/2024: EMERGENCY NOTICE OF MOTION, SHIMNA HOUSE, WARD 15

The following Emergency Motion was received from Councillor Hanlon:

“This Council notes with concern that services at Shimna House (Ward 15) at the Downshire Hospital may be at risk.

This Council supports the retention of services at Shimna House Downpatrick and acknowledges the work of the management and staff who provide essential services regionally to support those with alcohol and drug addictions and to support their journey to recovery. We agree to write to Minister for Health and CEO of The South Eastern Trust to note NMD Council’s support for full retention of services and trust they will fully commit to ensuring this facility remains open”.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Campbell.

In presenting the emergency motion, Councillor Hanlon thanked the Chairperson for accepting the Motion and Members for voting for it to be heard stating it was a really important issue not only for Downpatrick and the wider area, but for the region.

Members were advised Shimna House was a regional facility and in recent days the Sinn Féin team had been contacted by family and friends of service users concerned that services at Ward 15, Shimna House were under threat. They along with staff, needed steadfast assurances from the Department of Health and the South Eastern Trust that these services were not at risk.

Councillor Hanlon advised she had had the privilege of visiting the facility and it had been a very humbling experience seeing first-hand the highest level of care that staff and Friends of Ward 15 provided to the most vulnerable in society. It provided a calm shelter at a time when service users and their families were in turmoil, with the support needed to battle through the lows of addictions and allow them a pathway to hope.

Members were reminded that with increasing numbers of people waiting on mental health support and with so many families across the island affected by addiction and other mental health issues, it was clear more investment into local services was needed to ensure we were equipped to deal with the crisis.

Councillor Hanlon pointed out it was vital that necessary action was taken to retain these services that were a lifeline for so many in Downpatrick and further afield. She added the South Eastern Trust and Department of Health must work together to ensure these services were not only protected but enhanced into the future.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Campbell echoed the sentiments of Councillor Hanlon and reiterated the importance of the services for the local area.

Councillor Sharvin thanked Councillor Hanlon for bringing the motion and said similarly SDLP had been contacted regarding the situation with Ward 15 and that he had spoken with the Chief Executive of the Trust to highlight concerns about the situation being faced.

Councillor Sharvin stated he felt it was important to remember that Ward 15, Shimna House was a sub-regional addiction facility and did not just serve the South Eastern Trust. It also provided an important service to the Belfast Trust and to the Southern Trust and therefore it was vitally important that Council highlight to the Health Minister and the Chief Executive of the Trust the importance of that.

He advised it had been shared by the Trust that they had raised an early alert and there had been a positive response in trying to at least get a locum in place, a temporary solution given the consultant was leaving. He added it was important as a Council to hold the Trust to account and ensure that the provision of Tier 4 addictions in the Downshire hospital was continued to be supported and grow.

Councillor Sharvin proposed that the Special Council Meeting with the Health Trust be brought forward at the earliest opportunity when they would be in a position to provide Council with an update on how plans were going with the recruitment of a replacement consultant and also what the permanent plans were going forward, particularly in relation to Ward 15.

Councillor Hanlon accepted Councillor Sharvin's amendment.

In voicing support for the motion on behalf of Alliance, Councillor Truesdale advised she used to make referrals to Ward 15 and was aware there had always only ever been one consultant psychiatrist which had been an issue and skill shortages needed to be looked at within the field of addiction.

Councillor Reilly thanked Councillor Hanlon for bringing forward the motion and spoke of his shock at hearing it was under threat. He added to take such services away from the community beggared belief and that the service required enhancement and facilities vastly increased to facilitate the growing number of young people who needed help with addiction.

Councillor Taylor voiced support for the Motion as there was obvious issues of concern as a result of the developments in terms of staffing arrangements. He stated it was essential for Council to impress upon the Health Minister and the Trust the need to make sure there was a permanent and long term plan in place to protect the services that existed.

Councillor Jackson stated his party fully supported the motion and that it was clear for all to recognise the importance of Shimna House and the facility it provided for our local community.

In summing up, Councillor Hanlon thanked Councillors for the cross party support adding that Staff and patients deserved to have assurances and stability which was so needed when dealing with the most vulnerable.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanon, seconded by Councillor Campbell that Council noted with concern that services at Shimna House (Ward 15) at the Downshire Hospital may be at risk. This Council supports the retention of services at Shimna House Downpatrick and acknowledges the work of the management and staff who provide essential services regionally to support those with alcohol and drug addictions and to support their journey to recovery. We agree to write to Minister for Health and CEO of The South Eastern Trust to note NMD Council's support for full retention of services and trust they will fully commit to ensuring this facility remains open. We also agree to invite the Trust to attend a Special Council Meeting at the earliest opportunity for them to outline their plans for the retention of Shimna House.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.49pm.

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

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 5th August 2024

VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: Council

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Suspension of Standing Orders to hear Emergency Motions

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	X			
C Bowsie				X
J Brennan	X			
P Byrne	X			
P Campbell	X			
W Clarke	X			
L Devlin	X			
C Enright	X			
K Feehan	X			
D Finn	X			
A Finnegan	X			
C Galbraith	X			
M Gibbons				X
O Hanlon	X			
G Hanna	X			
V Harte	X			
R Howell				X
T Kelly	X			
J Jackson	X			
G Kearns				X
C King	X			
M Larkin	X			
D Lee-Surginor	X			
A Lewis	X			
O Magennis				X
A Mathers	X			
D McAteer				X
L McEvoy	X			
D Murphy	X			
K Murphy	X			
S Murphy	X			
S O'Hare	X			
A Quinn	X			
H Reilly	X			
M Rice				X
M Ruane	X			
G Sharvin	X			
D Taylor	X			
J Tinnelly	X			
J Truesdale	X			
H Young	X			
TOTALS	34	0	0	7