

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 4 November 2024 at 6.00pm in
Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne

In attendance in Chamber:

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|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Councillor T Andrews | Councillor C Bowsie |
| Councillor J Brennan | Councillor P Campbell |
| Councillor L Devlin | 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 G Kearns | Councillor C King |
| Councillor M Larkin | Councillor D Lee-Surginor |
| Councillor A Lewis | Councillor A Mathers |
| Councillor D McAteer | Councillor S O'Hare |
| Councillor D Murphy | Councillor S Murphy |
| Councillor A Quinn | Councillor H Reilly |
| Councillor M Rice | Councillor M Ruane |
| Councillor G Sharvin | Councillor D Taylor |
| Councillor J Tinnelly | Councillor J Truesdale |
| Councillor H Young | |

In attendance via Teams: Councillor W Clarke Councillor M Gibbons
Councillor R Howell Councillor O Magennis

Officials in attendance: 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
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

C/162/2024

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Enright, McEvoy and K Murphy.

The Chairperson thanked the Tourism and Events staff for their work on the various Halloween festivals that took place across the District highlighting the Footsteps in the Forest, Newry Halloween Festival, Kilkeel Hallow Lights Community event and the Crossmaglen and Crossgar Halloween Festivals. Congratulations were extended to the community groups and Council workers involved in the events.

Thanks were extended to Deputy Chair David Lee-Surginor for accompanying the two nominees to the Pride of Place at a recent awards event in the Hillgrove Hotel, Monaghan. The Chairperson voiced recognition to the Rural Health Partnership and Cuan Mhuire for the work

they do across the community and congratulated Cuan Mhuire who were runners up in the Community Wellbeing Award.

The Chairperson thanked the Mayor of Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon, Sarah Duffy, for joining him in recognising of the All-Ireland winning Armagh team at a civic reception in the Canal Court Hotel and all Councillors who attended the reception. Thanks were extended to Sarah, Shelia and Patricia for their organisation of a remarkable night with a special thanks to the players and management on behalf of both councils.

The Chairperson congratulated Down Ladies GAA on their the 30th anniversary celebrations with an event held in the Canal Court Hotel and advised a donation had been made to Down Ladies GAA through the Chairpersons Fund.

The Chairperson welcomed the announcement of €15.4 million funding from the PEACEPLUS Programme for the development of Ballykinlar Centre of Participation, Well-being and Shared Learning Hub. The Council would be working closely with Ballykinlar going forward with the multi sports hub element of the project and congratulations to all involved in the bid.

On behalf of the Council, condolences were extended to former Chairperson, Charlie Casey, his wife Bridie and the extended Casey family on the passing of their daughter Catherine.

The Chairperson expressed his condolences to colleague Terry Andrews on the passing of his Aunt Betty who had passed away.

The Chairperson spoke of the shock and sadness on hearing of the former Down GAA coach and Abbey (CBS Newry) teacher Jody Gormley's terminal illness. He said the dignity and resilience shown by Jody in the most difficult circumstances was inspirational and the thoughts of all were with Jody, his wife Deirdre and their family, his colleagues and students at the Abbey, CBS, Newry and the wider community.

The Chairperson expressed condolences on behalf of the Council to the family of Joseph Corr, former member of staff who had sadly passed away.

C/163/2024 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/164/2024 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2024

Agreed: The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 7 October 2024 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Kearns.

C/165/2024 COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 7 OCTOBER 2024

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 7 October 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 7 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/166/2024 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2024

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 October 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 14 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Lee-Surginor, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

C/167/2024 MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 OCTOBER 2024

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 October 2024 (copy circulated).

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

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on item SPR/168/2024, 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 Andrews, seconded by Councillor Devlin, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

SPR/168/2024 APPROVAL OF TENDER AWARD AND FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanna, it was agreed to award the contract in line with procurement processes.**

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 17 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.**

C/168/2024

MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 21 OCTOBER 2024

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21 October 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 21 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Finn.

C/169/2024

MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 OCTOBER 2024

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

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

C/170/2024

MINUTES OF AUDIT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 19 SEPTEMBER 2024

Read: Minutes of Audit Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2024 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of the Audit Committee Meeting held on 19 September 2024 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

C/171/2024

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 4 November 2024 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Correspondence from the Executive Office in response to Emergency Notice of Motion, Winter Fuel Payments (C/147/2024)

Councillor Finnegan welcomed the correspondence and how the Executive Ministers concerns mirrored that of Council and that they had written to the Prime Minister to voice concerns.

In welcoming the response Councillor Sharvin echoed the sentiments that the Executive was in agreement on impact of the cuts to Winter Fuel Payments and made reference to a recent Assembly Question put to Minister for Communities regarding hardship payments.

Councillor Sharvin proposed Council write to the Minister for Communities to support that a hardship payment should be in place and that he works with all Executive colleagues to find appropriate funding to support those that would miss out due to the changes to Winter Fuel Payments.

Councillor Finn seconded Councillor Sharvin's proposal.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Finn that Council write to the Minister for Communities to support that a hardship payment should be in place and that he works with all Executive colleagues to find appropriate funding to support those that would miss out due to the changes to Winter Fuel Payments.**

Correspondence from National Association of Councillors in relation to Conferences for 2024/25

Councillor Sharvin advised he had been made aware that the conference listed for 22-24 November 2024 included the National Association of Councillors Annual General Meeting and spoke of the importance of having representation at that from Council.

It was agreed the matter of attendance at the National Association of Councillors AGM would be considered at the Party Representatives Group Meeting to be held on 7 November 2024.

Agreed: **It was agreed the matter of attendance at the National Association of Councillors AGM would be considered at the Party Representatives Group Meeting to be held on 7 November 2024.**

Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure in relation to meeting with the Minister to discuss the Newry Southern Relief Road (C/143/2024)

Councillor Finn welcomed the Ministers offer to meet with Council regarding the important issue of the Newry Southern Relief Road.

It was agreed once a date was finalised that it would be forwarded to all Councillors.

Agreed: **It was agreed once confirmed, details of the meeting with the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the Newry Southern Relief Road be forwarded to all Councillors.**

Correspondence from Voice of Young People in Care in relation to Care Day 25 on 21 February 2024

On behalf of her Party, Councillor Young spoke in support of the request for civic buildings to be lit up on 21 February 2025 and that the planting of a tree would be a poignant gesture to mark the occasion of Care Day UK and Ireland. Councillor Young spoke at length about increases in the number of children in care and paid tribute to those who look after and provide care and support to children.

The Chairperson confirmed the lighting up of Council buildings for Voice of Young People in Care on 21 February and that the planting of a tree was to be considered at the Councillors' Equality & Good Relations Reference Group Meeting.

Correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council in relation to a Motion, Racism

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Byrne to write to Fermanagh and Omagh District Council**

in support for their motion on Racism and include details of Newry, Mourne and Down District Councils motion.

Correspondence from BBC in relation to Notice of Motion, Sign Language (C/160/2024)

Whilst acknowledging the response from BBC, Councillor Devlin stated she did not believe that the prominent slot on the BBC News website was anywhere on par with the lunchtime news segment that had been cut from their schedule.

Correspondence from NILGOSC in relation to Emergency Notice of Motion, NILGOSC Bonds (C/161/2024)

In welcoming the response from NILGOSC, Councillor Feehan said that whilst NILGOSC had stated it did not invest or divest for political reasons they did hold Israeli Government Bonds in their investment mix and now they did not. Councillor Feehan pointed out this was a good outcome and thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor O'Hare to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:**

- **Correspondence from Voice of Young People in Care**
- **Correspondence from Fermanagh & Omagh District Council**
- **Correspondence from BBC NI and Department for Communities**
- **Correspondence from Executive Office**
- **Correspondence from NILGOSC**
- **Correspondence from Department for Infrastructure**
- **Correspondence from National Association of Councillors**

C/172/2024

NOTICE OF MOTION – SECTION 76 ORDER, DOWNPATRICK EASTERN DISTRIBUTOR ROAD

The following Motion was received from Councillor Enright and presented by Councillor Truesdale:

"Council notes Council minutes of 9th April 2018 and file note of meeting with DfI Permanent Secretary of 9th March 2018. Council unanimously supported the Permanent Secretary's suggestion that Council's Section 76 powers be used to help build out the Downpatrick Eastern Distributor Road.

The Chief Executive undertook to bring forward a policy paper using Council's section 76 power to levy developers on the Eastern and Southern side of Downpatrick for a contribution to the cost of the Downpatrick Eastern Distributor Road. Council notes that the DEDR is intended ultimately to connect the Downe Campus, Council HQ and Hospital to the Belfast Road per the Area Plan and will largely be delivered by private finance according to DfI.

Council directs that this paper be brought forward in the current financial year so as to create a fair and equitable balance between those developers who are voluntarily building out sections of this road and those who are making no contribution. Council notes that several hundred units have been completed on zoned land in the area relevant to the DEDR since 2018. Council regrets the loss of potential hypothecated income needed to build out the road".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Howie.

The Chairperson pointed out Councillors Truesdale and Howie should be invited to attend the Planning Committee Meeting.

Agreed: The Motion was referred to the Planning Committee in accordance with Standing Order 16.1.6

Councillor Reily left the meeting at this point – 6.35pm.

C/173/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – FAILURE OF RAISE PROGRAMME IN TACKLING EDUCATIONAL UNDERACHIEVEMENT

The following Motion was received from Councillor O'Hare:

"That this Council recognises that socio-economic background is the biggest predictor of educational underachievement; acknowledges that a range of targeted interventions across government are required to tackle the issue and give children and young people the opportunity to reach their potential; welcomes the allocation of over £20 million from the Shared Island fund to help tackle educational underachievement; regrets that the resulting RAISE programme's eligibility formula excludes many schools in some of the most deprived working class communities; further regrets that, by design, this programme will not deliver based on objective need; and calls on the Minister of Education to replace the RAISE programme with a new programme which will target support to the schools and children that, based on objective evidence, need it most".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Howell.

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

C/174/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – ESTABLISHMENT OF A NEWRY CANAL REGENERATION TASKFORCE

The following Motion was received from Councillor Feehan:

"Council recognises the poor condition of Newry Canal and the significant untapped potential of our inland waterways as tourism, heritage and ecological assets, calls for a multi-agency response to lead the regeneration of Newry Canal, and will request the support of ABC Council in writing to both the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to request the urgent establishment of a Newry Canal regeneration taskforce that will work in partnership to deliver on the potential of our inland waterways".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Finn

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

The following Motion was received from Councillor S Murphy:

"This Council notes with concern the serious issues affecting maternity services across the Southern Trust, with a potential risk to Daisy Hill maternity services.

This Council supports the retention of Maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital and acknowledges the work of the management and staff who provide excellent care to mothers and babies.

That this Council agrees to write to the Minister for Health and CEO of The Southern Trust, to note NMD Council's support for full retention of Maternity services at Daisy Hill; further calls on the Southern Trust to fully commit to protecting maternity services, to ensure mothers and babies across the Southern Trust have access to a safe and equitable service".

In presenting the motion, Councillor S Murphy advised staff and service users in the Maternity Department of Daisy Hill Hospital had contacted Sinn Féin expressing their concerns following the Southern Trust outlining maternity services capacity issues due to a shortage of Obstetrics and Gynae consultants.

She stated that whilst this was an issue right across the North, it was concerning what this could mean going forward for maternity services at Daisy Hill and that any removal or relocation of maternity services would not be in the best interests of mothers and babies within the District. She spoke of potential implications for staff, expectant mothers and their babies if they had long journeys to travel to get to a maternity unit, which could result in emergency situations arising and patient safety compromised.

Councillor S Murphy welcomed that the Health Minister had stated his commitment to maternity services at Daisy Hill. She commended the invaluable care Midwives and Maternity staff provided for women of the District and pointed out the implementation of a stabilised and a robust long term work plan was needed for them to continue to provide quality care services.

Councillor S Murphy asked Members to support the Motion and that Council write to the Health Minister and Chief Executive of the Southern Trust outlining concerns and seeking assurances that services would be protected.

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Harte.

Councillor Harte spoke of having her own children in Daisy Hill and the invaluable service the hospital had to offer. She said maternity was one of the vital services in Newry, Mourne and South Armagh and highlighted the risk to pregnant women in labour having to travel to Craigavon to give birth, especially if complications were to arise for either the mother or the baby during that travel. Councillor Harte pointed out that part of the District could not do without maternity services.

In supporting the Motion on behalf of her Party, Councillor Truesdale stated the stabilisation of services was crucial for the well-being of everyone involved. She spoke of how morale amongst those that delivered maternity services was at its lowest and she was not happy with the way the Southern Trust Management had conducted business with what seemed to be a game of who said what between the Health Minister and Trust Management.

Councillor Truesdale referred to midwife and consultant shortages and levels of sickness pointing out that she hoped HR departments were taking note of what type of sickness and was it work related in order to get to the nub of the issues.

Councillor Taylor voiced support for the Motion and that it would be unthinkable for the local community to have no maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital. He spoke of his concern about the handling of it by the Trust and stated that measures needed to be put in place to deal with

the issues that had arisen. He welcomed the Ministers commitment to Daisy Hill Maternity Services however the Trust needed to get to work to address any concerns.

Councillor Hanna spoke in support of the Motion and the importance of maternity services in Daisy Hill to the whole of South Down, South Armagh and further afield. He added it was challenging that the staff were under pressure and there was a need for better staffing and better leadership from the Southern Trust and that Council should do all it could to secure its future.

Councillor Feehan echoed support for the motion and that making Councils position clear was vitally important and that a full suite of consultant led maternity services must be retained at Daisy Hill Hospital.

Councillor Feehan stated it was important to apply pressure for action on the key challenges that had been identified and proposed an amendment to the motion as follows:
to include a call for the Trust and the Department to produce and present a detailed workforce plan and winter pressures plan.

Councillor Feehan's proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Finn.

Following clarity on what detail was included in correspondence issued regarding Motions by the Chief Executive Councillor S Murphy agreed to Councillor Feehan's amendment.

The Chairperson confirmed the Motion was unanimously approved.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor S Murphy, seconded by Councillor Harte that Council notes with concern the serious issues affecting maternity services across the Southern Trust, with a potential risk to Daisy Hill maternity services. This Council supports the retention of Maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital and acknowledges the work of the management and staff who provide excellent care to mothers and babies. That this Council agrees to write to the Minister for Health and CEO of The Southern Trust, to note NMD Council's support for full retention of Maternity services at Daisy Hill and call for the trust and the Department to produce and present a detailed workforce plan and winter pressures plan; further calls on the Southern Trust to fully commit to protecting maternity services, to ensure mothers and babies across the Southern Trust have access to a safe and equitable service.**

Councillor Lewis left the meeting at this point – 6.52pm.

C/176/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – VAPING

The following Motion was received from Councillor Kearns:

*"That this Council recognises that the 2024 Northern Ireland Audit Office report on tackling the public health impacts of smoking and vaping, shows an increase in 11-16 year olds vaping; This Council is concerned that children vaping in schools is detrimental to a child's health and educational outcomes;
Agrees that greater awareness must be raised with children in schools about the risks of vaping;
Acknowledges that teachers and school staff must have the support and resources they require to raise awareness and inform children on the risks of vaping;*

*We agreed to write to the Minister of Education and Minister for Health urging them to bring forward a plan to end vaping in school grounds and to reduce the number of young people vaping:
We will also write to all other Councils in the North asking for their support in tackling this issue".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Campbell.

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

C/177/2024 NOTICE OF MOTION – PROFESSIONAL RUNNING TRACK

The following Motion was received from Councillor Devlin:

"Acknowledging the sterling contribution made on the international athletic stage by local athletes from Newry Mourne and Down, this Council regrets the current lack of a professional running track within the east of the district and commits to carrying out a desktop review of all publicly available land in East Down that could accommodate a professional running track, with a view to delivering on this much needed sports amenity for current and future athletes within our district."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

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

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 6.54pm.

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

Signed: _____

Chairperson

Chief Executive

