

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

**Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 13 January 2025 at 6.00pm in
Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick**

In the Chair: Councillor P Byrne

In attendance in Chamber:

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor J Brennan
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor C Enright
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor D Finn
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 K Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor H Reilly
Councillor M Ruane	Councillor G Sharvin
Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young

In attendance via Teams:

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor A Finnegan
Councillor R Howell	Councillor L McEvoy
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor M Rice
Councillor D Taylor	Councillor J Tinnelly

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
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer

C/001/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor Magennis.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C/002/2025

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

C/003/2025

ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2024

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

C/004/2025

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 2 DECEMBER 2024

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

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

C/005/2025

SPECIAL COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2024

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

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

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

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

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

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/006/2025

MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 9 DECEMBER 2024

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SE/160/2024: Harbour Surveys

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C/010/2025

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

FOR: 5
AGAINST: 32
ABSTENTIONS: 0

Councillor Bowsie's proposal was lost.

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

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

FOR: 32
AGAINST: 0
ABSTENTIONS: 5

Councillor Sharvin's proposal carried.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

C/011/2025

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

The following Motion was received from Councillor King:

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

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor King accepted Councillor Truesdale amendments.

Councillors Feehan and McAteer voiced support of the Motion.

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

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

FOR:	31
AGAINST:	6
ABSTENTIONS:	0

The Chairperson declared the Motion carried.

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

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

C/012/2015

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

The following Motion was received from Councillor Enright:

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

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

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

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

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

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

C/013/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – RESIDENTIAL REHABILITATION SERVICE

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Larkin:

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

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

The Motion was seconded by Councillor D Murphy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor Larkin accepted the amendment to the Motion.

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

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

The Chairperson declared the Motion unanimously carried.

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

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

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

The following Motion was received from Councillor Howie:

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

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Councillor Howie thanked Members for their support for the Motion.

The Chairperson declared the Motion unanimously carried.

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

C/015/2025 NOTICE OF MOTION – 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE & VJ DAY

The following Motion was received from Councillor Hanna:

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

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

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

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

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Reilly.

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

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

The following Motion was received from Councillor Truesdale:

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

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Enright.

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

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

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

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Chief Executive