

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

NMD/C/

Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 February 2025 at 6.00pm in Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre, Downpatrick

In the Chair:	Councillor P Byrne	
In attendance in Chamber:	Councillor T Andrews Councillor P Campbell Councillor L Devlin Councillor K Feehan Councillor A Finnegan Councillor O Hanlon Councillor V Harte Councillor J Jackson Councillor C King Councillor A Lewis Councillor D McAteer Councillor D Murphy Councillor S Murphy Councillor M Rice Councillor G Sharvin Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor C Bowsie Councillor W Clarke Councillor C Enright Councillor D Finn Councillor C Galbraith Councillor G Hanna Councillor T Howie Councillor G Kearns Councillor D Lee-Surginor Councillor A Mathers Councillor S O'Hare Councillor K Murphy Councillor A Quinn Councillor M Ruane Councillor D Taylor Councillor H Young
In attendance via Teams:	Councillor M Gibbons Councillor M Larkin	Councillor R Howell Councillor H Reilly
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/017/2025

APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan, Magennis, McEvoy and Tinnelly.

The Chairperson thanked NIE crews, Council officers and elected representatives for all their work in the aftermath of Storm Éowyn, a once in a generation storm with damage felt by people right across the District.

The Chairperson congratulated the new High Sherriff of County Down, Peter Leckey who had taken over the post from outgoing Sherriff, Sue Wild and wished him all the best in his role for the year ahead.

Congratulations were extended to Ashley Steele of Hollymount Pipe Band who was crowned World Champion at the World Solo Drumming Championships in Glasgow. Ashley took the top spot among 25 other competitors in the U-14 Juvenile Section 1 Grade. The Chairperson said he looked forward to hosting Ashley and her family at Council in the coming weeks.

The Chairperson congratulated the new pool team from the Brain Injury Foundation, Camlough who won their division at the first attempt in the NI Disabled Pool League. They were the first team to represent brain injury survivors and had opened the door to similar groups to compete in future tournaments.

Condolences were extended to the family of former Councillor William Brown who had recently passed away. He sat as Ulster Unionist Councillor and was a past Chairman of the former Down District Council. The Chairperson along with Councillors Taylor and Lewis extended sympathies to his wife Evelyn and daughters Lorraine and Rosemary.

The Chairperson on behalf of everyone in the Chamber sent condolences to Councillor Magennis and her family on the recent passing of her brother Brian. Oonagh and her family would continue to be in the thoughts and prayers of many at this time.

Councillor McAteer took the opportunity to speak about connectivity issues he had with the NIE contact line for elected representatives and Fibrus following the storm and said he felt it was a disgrace. Councillor McAteer proposed Council write to NIE And Fibrus in relation to this.

A lengthy discussion ensued during which Councillors Hanlon, Taylor, Lewis and Truesdale praised the work of NIE in the aftermath of the recent storm and did not support Councillor McAteer's proposal.

Councillor Sharvin reiterated the work of NIE, Fibrus and all utilities was to be commended and that Councillor McAteer was looking at lessons learnt from the major event.

The Chief Executive advised Members the storm had been a significant event for which Council had activated its emergency plan with various communications from Council. Once the decision was taken to stand the emergency plan down officers would within six weeks be carrying out a lesson learned exercise with feedback from elected members to feed into the process through multi agency platforms. Members were assured any comments and learning would be collated at that point.

C/018/2025

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Howell declared an interest in item 6: Minutes of Enterprise, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2025.

Councillor Finnegan declared an interest in item 11.1: Correspondence from Northern Ireland Housing Council.

C/019/2025

TO SET A DISTRICT RATE FOR THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2025/26

Read: Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive and Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the District Rate 2025/26 dated 3 February 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

The Chief Executive stated, in accordance with the requirements of the Local Government Finance Act (Northern Ireland) 2011, the Chief Executive, as Chief Financial Officer was required to provide assurance to Members on the robustness of the revenue estimates and the adequacy of the Council's reserves position as part of the rate setting process prior to submission to the Department of Communities (DfC).

The Chief Executive confirmed detailed estimates had been formulated, presented to and scrutinised by Members at Strategic Finance Working Group (SFWG) Meetings. These had taken into account out-turns from previous years, corporate pressures, planned savings and efficiencies, current spending plans and projected future investment and that adequate funding was available to protect frontline services.

There had been five Strategic Finance Working Group meetings since November 2024 in preparation for striking of the 2526 rate. As a result of this extensive process and the detailed analysis that had been undertaken, the Chief Executive confirmed she was satisfied that the estimates presented should provide adequate financial resources to support the running costs of the Council for 2025/26 and that reasonable consideration of the financial risks to the Council had been made in the preparation of the estimates. The Chief Executive put the recommendations to Council to strike a District Rate of 3.98%.

Councillor Hanlon proposed striking the new rate of 3.98%, seconded by Councillor D Murphy.

Councillor Hanlon spoke of how the Council team had worked diligently with Finance Officers, Directors and the Chief Executive with many meetings held over the past year to discuss striking a rate for Newry Mourne and Down Council and that 3.98% was lower than the 4.5% predicted on the 3 year projections set in 2023. She pointed out that this equated to approximately 47p per week for the average rate payer.

She added that as elected representatives it was their job to oversee and scrutinise the financial management of the Council and that Sinn Féin took this responsibility very seriously as they wanted to secure a stable financial budget for the district and secure funding for capital projects and continued delivery for communities. The party had agreed an increased budget to implement a cleansing schedule across the district, create more jobs and purchase modern equipment which would ensure towns and villages were maintained to the highest of standards and support the teams who worked hard to deliver those services.

Councillor Hanlon said it was imperative that Council continued to move forward with plans to regenerate towns and city and improve tourism offerings and referred to projects being delivered such as a new play strategy, digital transformation in Newry, the pump and skate park in Downpatrick and regeneration projects, upgrades to Castlewellan Forest Park, progression on the Newcastle Leisure Centre and Rock Pool, refurbishment of Kilkeel Leisure Centre and upgrades and maintenance of walking trails across the district. The Council would also be providing a comprehensive Financial Assistance programme that supported local communities across a variety of themes.

Councillor Hanlon said fiscal stability was critical to these plans and a further reduction of the rate would result in cutting services, service level agreements and support for community events and there was a need to ensure jobs were safe for staff.

Councillor Hanlon pointed out this had been another challenging year with challenges for local government in terms of the increase for National Insurance contributions and the rise in overall costs. Sinn Féin believed it was incumbent on all parties to work together for the benefit of the ratepayers and local businesses particularly in the continued challenging times.

Councillor Truesdale reiterated her party's position on seeking cost-effective and cost-efficient outcomes for rates and said whilst they would accept the democratic will of Council, the Alliance Party could not support any rise in the face of the ongoing unknown total expenditure of the Newry Civic Centre and the Gondola Project, especially during a time of great economic difficulty and uncertainty. She said these large capital projects would result in additional borrowing which, in turn, would be passed onto the ratepayer.

Councillor Truesdale said her party had produced a series of green initiative proposals that would drive down any rise in rates, which had been very well received across all Councils in NI. The produced document was not a Council document and was an ongoing work in progress which they were happy to share. She added Alliance were pleased to see sustainability considerations noted and were appreciative of the ongoing work in Sustainability and Environment on sustainability considerations but would like to see a more definitive set of explicitly time-framed targets.

Councillor Truesdale advised the party had worked with the Council's Senior Management Team and engaged as they looked for cost saving measures to implement and keep the rates rise as low as it could be. However, these were cursory measures in the face of the huge expenditure to come if they continued on this path of progress with projects which were heavily opposed by the public and lacked appropriate transparency in terms of their development.

She said the Alliance Party were urging all parties to look realistically at what was coming down the track and that there were far greater projects of urgency, more cost-effective projects that made sense for residents right across Newry, Mourne and Down that money could be spent on as Council attempted to rebuild after years of austerity and cut backs.

Councillor Truesdale confirmed that with that in mind, Alliance would be abstaining on the rates for 2025.

Councillor Sharvin reflected on the position Council was in November at the beginning of the rates process when faced with a potential rate of 9.18% which would have had a significant impact on local businesses and the people of the district. He made reference to National Insurance contributions and the continuous cuts to the rate support grant attributing to 1.8% on the rate to be struck. He said Council had also seen cuts on animal welfare, PCSP, Community Event Grants etc and that all had to be picked up by the Council to make the Community safer, animals protected and first class events to go ahead.

Councillor Sharvin asked Members to be mindful that there was no programme for government, Council did not know what the assembly was going to do and without the continuous cuts and lack of support for local government there would have been different figures presented with the highest rate of 2.18%, and potentially sub 2%.

Councillor Sharvin pointed out Council was delivering an ambitious plan with new refuge and cleansing vehicles across the District, progressing the Rock Pool Newcastle to design stage,

investing in play parks, Ballykinlar Centre of Excellence, Downpatrick Regeneration Projects and providing financial assistance, not just in Sports Capital but also Community Capital, the Newry City Park at Albert Basin with £16.2million of grant funding and Council only having to give £2.5million, investing in Castlewellan Forest Park and a Sports Facility Strategy of £1.8 million.

Councillor Sharvin stated there was nothing more could be done to reduce the rate without impacting on front line services and the plan that Council continued to drive. He said Members needed to be honest with the people and the continued cuts by central government was tying hands and unfortunately Council could go no further than the rate presented and therefore SDLP was supporting the rate of 3.98%.

The Chairperson stated he wanted to make it very clear that in his position as Chairperson of Council and of SFWG that there was openness and transparency when considering proposals brought before the group to try and reduce the rate increase. He made reference to proposals referred to by Councillor Truesdale and the Alliance group that did not impact the rate this year but would impact the rate in future years and there would be conversations regarding that going forward.

He stated that if any parties felt that they could get the rate down below 3.98% then they needed to raise that at SFWG or at Council this evening as that was what the process was for.

The Chairperson referred to the cuts on National Insurance contributions and how costs due to cuts from the Support Grant over the last number of years had brought costs that Council could not reverse.

The Chairperson then put Councillor Hanlon's proposal, seconded by Councillor D Murphy to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group (as outlined within the report) and an increase in the district rate for 2025/26 of 3.98% to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	26
AGAINST:	5
ABSTENTIONS:	5

The Chairperson declared Councillor Hanlon's proposal carried.

Councillor Sharvin referred to the point made by the Chairperson that the SFWG was the mechanism for parties to bring suggestions of how to reduce the rate and given how Members had voted was interested to hear from the DUP if they had any suggestions of how Council could have reduced the rate rather than striking the rate.

Councillor Jackson on behalf of his party said that as a group they had identified a number of efficiency areas that they thought could be improved upon but that suggestions were made and that they were not listened to so needed to go back to that.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor D Murphy, to approve the considerations and recommendations of the Strategic Finance Working Group in relation to the 2025/26 rate setting process and, having regard to the Chief Executive's statement as required by the Local Government Finance Act (NI) 2011:**

1. Approve an increase in the district rate for 2025/26 of 3.98% based on an estimated penny product of 2,525,089 meaning a non-domestic rate of 30.1884 pence and a domestic rate of 0.4862 pence;
2. Approve the Medium Term Financial plan and authorise the 2025/26 expenditure included in the estimates (Appendix 1);
3. Approve the General Estimates of Rates form 2025/26 to be signed by the Chief Financial Officer (Appendix 2)
4. Approve the Capital Strategy Report for 2025/26 as required by the CIPFA Prudential Code. (Appendix 3);
5. Approve the Capital Programme (Appendix 4);
6. Approve the Treasury Management Strategy Statement 2025/26 (Appendix 5);
7. Approve the Minimum Revenue Provision Statement 2025/26 (Appendix 6).
8. Approve the action sheets of the Strategic Finance Working Group relating to the rate setting process. (see Appendix 7: Restricted item)

C/020/2025

ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2025

Agreed:

The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 13 January 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor McAteer.

C/021/2025

COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 13 JANUARY 2025

Read:

Minutes of Council Meeting held on 13 January 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed:

The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 13 January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor K Murphy, seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION

C/022/2025 MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 20 JANUARY 2025

Read: Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 20 January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor Kearns, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.

C/023/2025 MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 23 JANUARY 2025

Read: Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 January 2025 (copy circulated).

SPR/012/2025: Castlewellan Forest Park

Councillor Devlin welcomed the additional spend in terms of utilities at Castlewellan Forest Park. She took the opportunity to acknowledge the devastating damage caused following the recent storm and put on record her thanks to all the staff and enquired if there was any indication as when some of the park might open again including the lake walk.

The Chief Executive advised she had visited Castlewellan Forest Park that day and met with staff on site and confirmed the damage was very extensive and staff were devastated by the damage. Staff were working to try to get the lake walk open however a significant amount more work was required to be done with safety inspections prior to opening.

Mrs Ward advised more work would be undertaken from a publicity perspective over the coming days in relation to all of the forest parks across the district because there had been significant damage.

Mrs Ward advised Members parks were really important tourism facilities for Council and having seen the damage including a loss of approximately ten of the champion trees which were hundreds of years old costs were going to be significant. The public were urged to bear with Council because from a safety perspective Council must ensure everything was right before people could have access.

Mr Mallon advised there were no timelines for opening yet with drone surveys being undertaken to identify the areas within the heavily wooded parts of Castlewellan Forest Park to understand the full scale of damage and challenges ahead with infrastructural works. He added some of the trails may need to be rebuilt so it would be a slow process and that needed to be done in safe manner with public and staff safety at the forefront of decisions on how to move forward.

SPR/015/2025: Planning Department Update

In response to a request from Councillor Hanna for more detailed answers to the questions raised in relation to Planning, Mr Mallon advised a detailed report had been presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee providing rationale and answers to the challenges being faced including backlog, validating applications and allocation of

applications.

Members were reminded that all reports for all committees were accessible via Decision Time and should any Members have difficulty accessing those they should contact Democratic Services.

The Chief Executive pointed out Planning Department updates were presented to the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee on a quarterly basis and the Audit Committee also. She confirmed updates would be tabled as the first item on the Planning Committee.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 23 January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Mathers.**

C/024/2025 **MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 27 JANUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 27 January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Finn.**

C/025/2025 **MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 29 JANUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 January 2025 (copy circulated).

SE/004/2025: Electrical Safety Standards for Private Tenancies Regulations (NI) 2024

Councillor Taylor clarified that he had not enquired whether the Department for Communities had provided any resource but rather he had questioned the cost implications for council given that no funds were being provided by the Department.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 29 January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Enright.**

Councillor Larkin left the meeting at this point – 6.56pm.

C/026/2025 **PLANNING SECTION**

There were no issues arising.

Due to technical difficulties it was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor K Murphy to have a recess at this point of the meeting – Meeting reconvened 6.56pm.

C/027/2025

CORRESPONDENCE REPORT

Read: Report dated 3 Feb 2025 from Mrs Ward, Chief Executive, regarding an update on correspondence received for the attention of Council (copy circulated).

Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road

In referring to the fixed bridge over Newry Canal, Councillor Finn reminded Members this was something that she and Councillor Feehan had raised on a number of occasions. She took the opportunity to thank the outgoing Infrastructure Minister.

Councillor Finn proposed Council write to the new Infrastructure Minister, Liz Kimmins to congratulate her and to ask if she shared the same opinion on a fixed bridge as her predecessor. Also that Council responds to the ongoing consultation by the Department for Infrastructure on the Newry Southern Relief Road to affirm its opposition for any proposal on a fixed bridge.

Councillor Feehan seconded Councillor Finn's proposal.

Councillor Enright advised his party noted the order was for a bridge over a navigable river and that it was their view to keep the river navigable. He said that the approach road to the bridge started to rise towards the new bridge too late and needed to be sloping from the moment it left the dual carriageway.

Councillor Enright proposed an amendment that it be added that Council request that the design needed to be examined with a view to bringing the height of the bridge to an appropriate level for navigability by starting the slope as soon as it left the dual carriageway.

Councillor Finn did not accept Councillor Enright's amendment.

It was agreed by all to accept Councillor Finn's proposal, seconded by Councillor Feehan.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Feehan that Council write to the new Infrastructure Minister, Liz Kimmins to congratulate her and ask if she shared the same opinion on a fixed bridge as her predecessor. Also that Council responds to the ongoing consultation by the Department for Infrastructure on the Newry Southern Relief Road to affirm its opposition for any proposal on a fixed bridge.

Response from the Minister for the Economy: Notice of Motion, Young People with Special Education Needs under 19

Councillor Howie thanked the Minister for the Economy for his response and that the Department were working on the issues raised and with the new Minister, Dr Caoimhe Archibald she looked forward to what she would bring to the post and hoped that she can also bring forward legislation on this matter.

Late Item Circulated to Members at the Meeting - Response from the Minister of Health: Notice of Motion, Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19

The Chief Executive advised a response had been received from the Minister of Health before the meeting and had been circulated to Members from Ms Taggart for their information.

Response from Chief Executive South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust: Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service

Councillor Truesdale put on record her thanks to Roisin Coulter for the audit of current provision.

Councillor Truesdale asked if Council officers could update information booklets on the Council website in line with what had been sent through from the Trust.

Mrs Ward confirmed she would have officers look into that and update as appropriate.

- Agreed:**
- It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Bowsie to note the correspondence report and the following correspondence:**
- **Correspondence from Northern Ireland Housing Council: Minutes from Meetings held in September, October and November 2024**
 - **Response from the Minister for the Economy: Notice of Motion, Young People with Special Education Needs under 19**
 - **Correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road**
 - **Response from the Minister for Health: Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service**
 - **Response from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council: Notice of Motion, Gender Based Violence Against Women**
 - **Response from Chief Executive South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust: Notice of Motion, Residential Rehabilitation Service**
 - **Late Item circulated to Members at the Meeting - Response from the Minister of Health: Notice of Motion, Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19**

C/028/2025

**NOTICE OF MOTION – DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH'S
CONSULTATION ON HOSPITAL RECONFIGURATION
FRAMEWORK RE: DAISY HILL HOSPITAL**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Feehan:

"This Council notes the Department of Health's ongoing consultation on the hospital reconfiguration framework; expresses its dissatisfaction that the Department has failed to schedule a public meeting in Newry as part of their consultation exercise; registers its concern at the proposed designation of Daisy Hill Hospital as a General Hospital.

This Council calls on the Department of Health to schedule a public meeting in Newry on the hospital reconfiguration framework before the February 28th deadline; commits to submitting a consultation response that supports the designation of Daisy Hill as an Area Hospital and further calls for the Department of Health to engage with the Irish Government to identify mechanisms for establishing Daisy Hill as a cross-border Area Hospital."

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Finn.

In presenting the motion, Councillor Feehan explained he had brought the Motion before Council as it was the last opportunity to do so before the consultation ended and questioned why the Department of Health had scheduled a series of public consultations across the north but had opted to place the Southern Trust consultation meeting in Armagh City.

Councillor Feehan explained that this was despite a draft recommendation that Daisy Hill Hospital should be downgraded to a General Hospital, which was defined by the consultation documentation as 'providing defined secondary care services geared to a specific, more isolated geographical location' and he did not believe that this was an appropriate designation for Daisy Hill. He said he struggled to understand the reason for the Departments exclusion of Newry from their public consultation given that people in the area had shown tremendous enthusiasm for engagement in relation to health.

Councillor Feehan spoke at length about the clear need for an area hospital in Newry to cater a wide geographic area, a dense population and pronounced medical needs and how under the proposed recommendations there would be no area or significant acute hospital.

Members were asked to note there were 161,308 people registered with GPs in Newry and District, the second highest in the north after Derry with over 36,000 children and young people under 18, also second highest after Derry. Newry & Mourne legacy Council also had the 3rd largest landmass in Northern Ireland.

Councillor Feehan advised the Department of Health had said Newry and District had some of the highest prevalences of patients with heart failure and non-diabetic hyperglycaemia, as well as coronary heart disease, cancer, arterial fibrillation, hypertension and asthma. It had the 4th highest rates of kidney disease, stroke, diabetes and COPD.

In addition to the health challenges Daisy Hill had best clinical practice, most notably in renal cure where it was ranked the number one in the entire NHS network. In addition there were over 800 years of amassed experience in the Daisy Hill midwifery team and also the Nuffield Trust report in 2023 had recommended that Daisy Hill Hospital should be bolstered with hyper-specialist services e.g. stroke.

Councillor Feehan was asking Council to submit a response to the ongoing consultation as there was an obligation to take a clear position on what was essentially a proposed downgrade of Daisy Hill Hospital and advocate for the placement of an area hospital within the District and in the place where the need was greatest.

He added the call for the Department of Health to engage with the Irish Government to identify mechanisms for establishing Daisy Hill as a cross-border Area hospital made perfect sense and whilst acknowledging some councillors might feel that an uncomfortable proposition he was making it for pragmatic reasons. Reference was made to how, when it was working, the Cross-Border Healthcare Directive had acted as a lifeline for people who were languishing on northern waiting lists. He added another example of sensible partnership was found in the North West Cancer Centre, a life changing initiative that allowed people in the North West to access cancer treatment without having travel hundreds of miles.

Councillor Feehan said it was his view that Daisy Hill Hospital was unfairly disadvantaged because of proximity to the border and that the Department of Health viewed it as a peripheral hospital in a peripheral region and yet Newry sat in the heart of the Belfast-Dublin corridor, in the most populated region on the island.

Councillor Feehan asked where was the plan to establish Daisy Hill as a Cross-Border Area Hospital and stated the reason he brought the Motion was to state the case, clearly, to contribute to the ongoing consultation and to set an aspirational direction of travel for Daisy Hill Hospital.

Councillor King confirmed Sinn Féin were supporting the motion and fully supported Daisy Hill Hospital. Newry was a major population centre with an excellent hospital and it was only right that a public meeting on this consultation was held in Newry and that local people had the opportunity to contribute their views and shape decisions that affected their healthcare.

Councillor King stated Daisy Hill Hospital was a vital facility, staffed by dedicated professionals who provided outstanding care and expanding Daisy Hill must be a priority. It served a population beyond Newry, Mourne, and Down, and its proximity to the border meant the Department of Health must continue working with the Irish government to maximize its potential.

Sinn Féin would continue to hold decision-makers to account to ensure that the local hospital got the resources it needs.

Councillor Campbell took the opportunity to draw attention to the ongoing consultation within the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, especially with regards to the Downe Hospital.

Councillor Hanna spoke in support of Daisy Hill Hospital, however, did not support the last sentence of the Motion and queried how an area hospital would transit across an international border and how it work financially and stated therefore the DUP would not be supporting the Motion.

Councillor Taylor said irrespective of what party you belong to everyone wanted to have the best health service provision available to all and as elected representatives there was a role to make representations to the Department of Health and local Health Trusts to secure the delivery of that. He urged the local community to respond to the consultation to get the message across hospital services at Daisy Hill had to be retained and enhanced.

Councillor Taylor voiced concern about the last remark of the Motion and how there was a political context to it. He spoke of having issues regarding the governance of a cross-border hospital and how it was not straightforward but that it did not mean he was against cross-border cooperation, as he had seen constituents that had benefited from schemes as a result of the cross-border scheme that was in place previously.

Councillor Taylor said whatever the outcome Daisy Hill needed to be retained as a key component of the hospital network.

On behalf of the Alliance Party, Councillor Truesdale advised they viewed the motion as anti-transformational and therefore opposed the motion in its current form.

Councillor Truesdale proposed the following amendment:

*“This Council notes the Department of Health’s ongoing consultation on the hospital reconfiguration framework; expresses its dissatisfaction that the Department has failed to schedule a public meeting in Newry as part of their consultation exercise; **‘agrees that transformation is critical for the survival of Northern Ireland’s Health and Social Care system and must be supported by all stakeholders in all Health Trust areas; calls on the Department of Health to schedule a public meeting in Newry on the hospital reconfiguration framework before the February 28th deadline; and further calls for the Department of Health to engage with the Irish Government to identify mechanisms for expanding cross-border healthcare opportunities.’**”*

Councillor Howie seconded Councillor Truesdale’s proposed amendment.

Councillor Feehan did not accept the amendment as he believed the Motion was pointing to a transformation and that the amendment muddied the waters around the cross-border undertaking.

The Chairperson put Councillor Truesdale’s amended Motion, seconded by Councillor Howie to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	5
AGAINST:	24
ABSTENTIONS:	4

The Chairperson declared the amended Motion was lost.

The Chairperson then put Councillor Feehan’s Motion, seconded by Councillor Finn to a vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR:	23
AGAINST:	9
ABSTENTIONS:	1

The Chairperson declared the amended Motion was carried.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Finn that this Council notes the Department of Health’s ongoing consultation on the hospital reconfiguration framework; expresses its dissatisfaction that the Department has failed to schedule a public meeting in Newry as part of their consultation exercise; registers its concern at the proposed designation of Daisy Hill Hospital as a General Hospital. This Council calls on the Department of Health to schedule a public meeting in Newry on the hospital reconfiguration framework before the February 28th deadline; commits to submitting a consultation response that supports the designation of Daisy Hill as an Area Hospital and further calls for the Department of Health to engage with the Irish Government to identify mechanisms for establishing Daisy Hill as a cross-border Area Hospital.

C/029/2015

NOTICE OF MOTION – STREET LIGHTING

The following Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

"NMDDC notes with concern areas which are lacking or have no street lighting, particularly in light of the issue of women's safety and will in conjunction with the Department of Infrastructure undertake a scoping exercise to identify areas which could avail of additional street lighting across the District".

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Devlin.

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

C/030/2025

NOTICE OF MOTION – PARKING STRATEGY

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Mathers :

*"That this Council;
Recognises;*

- It's responsibility to make Newry, Mourne and Down an attractive, accessible and welcoming place to live, work, shop and socialise in*
- That our residents with disabilities face challenges in their day to day life and Council, like all public authorities, must do all they can to address these challenges*
- Off-street public car parking is a competency of Council*
- Access to off-street car parking can be a challenge for persons with disabilities. This challenge can be in physically accessing pay stations or in the use of mobile apps*

Therefore, calls on Council;

- To examine the feasibility, and implement when viable, free car parking for 'Blue Badge' holders in all Council run car park.*
- To develop a publicity campaign to promote this change*
- To provide an urgent update to elected members on the new Park Strategy mandated by full Council in July 2024."*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Harte.

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 7.40pm.

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

Signed:

Chairperson

Chief Executive