

## **NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**NMD/C/**

---

### **Minutes of Council Meeting held on Monday 3 March 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 C Bowsie
Councillor P Campbell	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor L Devlin	Councillor C Enright
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor G Hanna
Councillor V Harte	Councillor R Howell
Councillor T Howie	Councillor J Jackson
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor C King
Councillor D Lee-Surginor	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor D McAteer
Councillor L McEvoy	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor D Murphy	Councillor K Murphy
Councillor S Murphy	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor
Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young

**In attendance via Teams:**

Councillor M Gibbons	Councillor M Larkin
Councillor O Magennis	Councillor M Ruane
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  
Mrs D Starkey, Democratic Services Officer  
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**C/031/2025**

### **APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors Brennan and Feehan.

The Chairperson congratulated officers and District Electoral Area (DEA) representatives who had worked on the Multiply projects held across the District with Council exceeding expectations in delivering 117 events with further events to be rolled out before the end of March. Members were advised Council had engaged with over 1600 participants to bring mathematics to people within the community in a fun and engaging way.

The Chairperson congratulated officers involved in the Dublin Belfast Economic Corridor (DBEC) Inaugural Summit recently held in Belfast, stating that the next steps involved forums within the private sector that would help drive innovation for international trade and investment and the green economy.

Councillor Byrne congratulated Youth Voice on a successful conference that had been recently held in the Burrendale Hotel with over 200 young people in attendance from clubs across the District. He commented that they were some of the most engaged young people on important issues such as health and safety and commended their monologue play on ending violence against women.

The Chairperson expressed his thanks to Council officers involved for arranging the Tackling Loneliness and Isolation in the Workplace Event hosted in the Canal Court Hotel recently. This had been a joint initiative between Council and the Southern and South Eastern Health Trusts to tackle the stigma surrounding loneliness and isolation within the workplace, Members were advised a resource would be available on Council website for help and advice for all those in need of support.

Councillor Byrne congratulated Community Radio FM 105 and welcomed the new Board of Directors and volunteers who had managed to keep the station going after months of uncertainty.

On behalf of Council Councillor Byrne along with Councillor Sharvin extended condolences to Councillor Feehan on the recent passing of his uncle Sean Markey, the thoughts of everyone in the Chamber were with him and his family at this difficult time.

The Chairperson congratulated former Councillor Finnegan and wished her well in her new role as MLA.

**C/032/2025**                      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**C/033/2025**      **ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2025**

*C/027/2025: Correspondence Report, Newry Southern Relief Road*

In referring to the letter sent to the new Infrastructure Minister, Councillor Reilly spoke of elements within the media and the general population that seemed to have been advised that because DUP did not object to the letter being sent that the Party was in favour of non-fixed bridge. He asked that it to be put on record that that was not the case and that he and Councillor Hanna fully supported the proposal as it stood.

**Agreed:** The Action Sheet from Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025 was agreed on the proposal of Councillor D Murphy, seconded by Councillor Devlin.

**C/034/2025**                      **COUNCIL MINUTES FOR ADOPTION AND SIGNING OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025 (copy circulated).

*Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee: SPR/012/2025, Castlewellan Forest Park*

Councillor Devlin enquired if there was any update in terms of further opening up of parks after the storm damage and acknowledged that since the last meeting parts of Castlewellan Forest Park including the Lake Walk had been opened which was appreciated by so many.

Councillor Devlin referred to the Crow Road and other paths around the Forest Park that remained closed, an area park runners in particular used, and asked if there was an updated timeline as to when those additional paths would be opened up again to the public.

Mr Mallon spoke of a visit with Councillors to view the damage that had been caused. Members were advised there was an extensive piece of work solely for Castlewellan Forest Park aside from what was required in the other forest parks. He confirmed a piece of work had been undertaken to quantify and establish the amount of work required for Castlewellan alone and that work was ongoing with the Heritage Lottery Fund to look at interventions that may be accessed to help with the recovery.

Mr Mallon stated one of the biggest issues being faced was the availability of contractors to deal with the trees, especially due to the size and therefore it was impossible to put a date forward at this stage. He reiterated that the health and safety of visitors, staff and contractors was paramount and work was being undertaken in a dangerous environment and would take months to get everything cleared.

Councillor Devlin thanked Mr Mallon for the update and having seen the damage for herself acknowledged that progress was being made and suggested that whenever there was an announcement that it was done so through social media and that Members were kept informed as well.

Councillor Hanna took the opportunity to raise an issue regarding large branches from a tree in the lower car park in Kilkeel having fallen into the river and asked if officers could investigate.

**Agreed:** **The Minutes of the Council Meeting held on 3 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor K Murphy.**

**COMMITTEE MINUTES FOR CONSIDERATION AND ADOPTION**

**C/035/2025                      MINUTES OF ECONOMY, REGENERATION AND TOURISM**  
**COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read:                      Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 February 2025 (copy circulated).

*ERT/017/2025: Tourism Events Programme 2025/26*

An earlier query from Councillor Reilly was taken at this point and Mr Mallon stated Members were aware a workshop had been held to discuss the Festival of Flight and there were a significant number of actions and options to be explored and work with Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council and others was ongoing.

Councillor Reilly queried when officers last spoke with Causeway Coast & Glen Borough Council to which Mr Mallon stated he had not been engaging directly himself, however officials within the department had and he hoped to convene a follow up meeting with Councillors within a few weeks which would be communicated to Members.

**Agreed:** **The Minutes of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism Committee Meeting held on 10 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted on the proposal of Councillor S Murphy, seconded by Councillor Andrews.**

**C/036/2025** **MINUTES OF STRATEGY POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 13 FEBRUARY 2025**

**Read:** Minutes of Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2025 (copy circulated).

*SPR/025/2025: Impact of Storm Éowyn on Council Estate*

In response for an update regarding the letter that was to be sent to Minister of Finance, the Chief Executive advised the letter would be issued following ratification of the Strategy Policy and Resources Committee Minutes.

Councillor Reilly spoke of an issue with litter picking in rural areas and it was agreed he should contact Mrs Murphy directly regarding the matter.

*SPR/021/2025: Fuel Policy*

Councillor Hanna made reference to a point he had made that it be inadvisable to prioritise one source over another and enquired if there were any figures to support that the maintenance of those type of vehicles was less as he did not believe electric vehicles were.

Mrs Kelly said she did not have figures at hand and Mrs Murphy advised that when a new or replacement vehicle were being procured a business case was completed which examined fuel options and also took into consideration work that was to be carried out by that vehicle, the load of the vehicle, the distance required to travel and that data was available.

**Agreed:** **The Minutes of Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on 13 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Hanlon.**

**C/037/2025**

**MINUTES OF ACTIVE AND HEALTHY COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON 17 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2025 (copy circulated).

Agreed: **The Minutes of Active and Healthy Communities Committee Meeting held on 17 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Devlin, seconded by Councillor Howell.**

**C/038/2025**

**MINUTES OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE  
MEETING HELD ON 19 FEBRUARY 2025**

Read: Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 February 2025 (copy circulated).

*SE/020/2025: Application for Bus Shelter at Hilltown Road, Newry*

Councillor Devlin commented that the process for Bus Shelters seemed long and drawn out in terms of Translink and asked for an update in relation a bus shelter she had raised a year and a half ago on the Gravel Road, Hilltown.

Mrs Murphy confirmed she would revert to Councillor Devlin directly on the matter.

Agreed: **The Minutes of Sustainability and Environment Committee Meeting held on 19 February 2025 were agreed as an accurate record and adopted, on the proposal of Councillor Jackson, seconded by Councillor Kearns.**

**C/039/2025**

**PLANNING SECTION**

Councillor Reilly asked if Council could provide in very clear terms the number of applications pending and how long it was going to take to process them for the public to have sight off.

Mr Mallon advised a report was tabled on a quarterly basis table that set out the number of applications in the system that had been allocated and the number not allocated. He added to provide a timeline was not something that should be done due to 50% of those not processed being outside of Council control from a time perspective.

In response to a query from Councillor Reilly, Mr Mallon confirmed a report had been tabled in February 2024 with the next one due in the summer.

**C/040/2025**

**CORRESPONDENCE REPORT**

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

*Response from Department of Education: Notice of Motion, Support for Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19*

Councillor Howie voiced her disappointment at the response received stating she felt there was not much substance from the Minister in his reply which was frustrating. She spoke of party colleagues on the Education Committee and other parties doing a lot of work and hoped that those in Stormont would try and push this legislation through for those young people.

*Response from Minister for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road*

In referring to the response received, Councillor Finn said it was her opinion there was ambiguity on the wording in relation to the decision to proceed with a fixed bridge and that Council had asked that as new infrastructure Minister whether or not she agreed with her predecessor. She added that she understood that as a new Minister in post there was an incredible amount of work within the department but it was worth getting clarity on this matter given the strength of feeling.

Councillor Finn proposed Council write back to the Minister for Infrastructure and ask if she was going to reconsider that position.

Councillor McAteer seconded the proposal.

**Agreed:** **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor McAteer to write back to the Minister for Infrastructure and ask if she was going to reconsider her position on the fixed bridge.**

Councillor Young said her initial reaction was disappointment given a recent statement by the Minister's party opposing a fixed bridge, however she did say she was awaiting a report on the consultation and indicated that she would consider this in making a decision and progressing the project so there was a glimmer of hope that the recent support in opposing the fixed bridge would remain the position. Councillor Young agreed with Councillor Finn that clarification was needed.

Councillor Reilly commented the Minister had inherited a decision that was made on the basis of all the practicalities to make a lifting bridge and there was pressure being put on her to overturn a decision that had already been made by previous Ministers.

*Correspondence from Minister of Health: NOM Residential Rehabilitation Services*

Councillor Truesdale took the opportunity to say Council had collectively drawn attention to this issue and agreed that the only way to tackle it was through a multidisciplinary approach.

In referring to the Notice of Motion he had brought before Council in January 2024, Councillor Larkin welcomed the reply from the Minister of Health and the outlining of actions already in place in relation to the issue. He also welcomed the outcome of the independent review for inpatient Tier 4 detoxification residential rehabilitation services across the north and looked forward to the implementation of those recommendations in the future.

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

- **Response from Department of Education: Notice of Motion, Support for Young People with Special Educational Needs over 19**
- **Correspondence from Department for Communities: Storm Éowyn Response**
- **Correspondence from Minister of Health: NOM Residential Rehabilitation Services**
- **Response from Minister for Infrastructure: Newry Southern Relief Road**
- **Northern Ireland Housing Council Minutes: Meetings held on 12 December 2024 and 9 January 2025**

**C/041/2025**

### **NOTICE OF MOTION – NEWCASTLE LIFEBOAT STATION**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Clarke:

*"The Newcastle Lifeboat Station, established in 1825, has been a cornerstone of maritime safety in South Down for two centuries. The station has played a pivotal role in saving countless lives and supporting the wellbeing of sea farers in our community. This year is the 200th anniversary of its formation, it is fitting that we, as a council, formally recognise and celebrate this significant milestone".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Rice.

Councillor Clarke said he respected the decision of the Chairperson to refer the Motion to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group, however sought assurances that the motion would be dealt with in a timely fashion, making reference to a previous Motion regarding the Newcastle Fishing Disaster that had been referred and for which he had not received answers from officials regarding same.

The Chairperson provided assurance to Councillor Clarke regarding this Motion and explained the reason he had referred it to the Equality & Good Relations Reference Group was that it was the soonest meeting scheduled to take place in March 2024.

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

**C/042/2025**

### **NOTICE OF MOTION – ARTS FUNDING DISTRIBUTION**

The following Motion was received from Councillor Finn:

*"NMDDC expresses its deep concern at the lack of equitable distribution of funding for the arts across the North; with particular concern that while Belfast City Council received 71% of all Arts Council funding in the year 2023/24, Newry Mourne and Down Council received a mere 3.18%, further expresses its support for local creative artists, and agrees to write to the Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA calling on him to review the current allocation of resources to deliver a more equitable distribution of resources, and to better help support and sustain the arts across the North regardless of geographical area".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Finn said she was pleased to be able to bring forward a motion that was designed to support artists and creatives and the importance of doing so given that over the last 10 years there had been a cut of over 40% to the Arts Council funding. She stated the motion spoke to the allocation of funding, however it was important to reiterate the frustration at facing the scenario where artists, creatives and organisations were facing budget cuts that were leading to a loss of creatives from the industry, as well as burnout and anxiety for those who were continuing.

Councillor Finn said it was deeply frustrating that this Council area received a mere 3.18% of Arts Council funding, an improvement on the 2022/2023 figure of 2.60%. She added it was even more frustrating given the incredible arts offering across the District. Councillor Finn added she looked forward to the publication of the new Arts and hoped that support from Newry Mourne and Down District Council would help in making the case for both a more equitable and better funding for the Arts.

On behalf of Alliance, Councillor Lee-Surginor stated his Party fully supported the Motion and stood with the local creative artists and believed a more equitable allocation of resources was essential to support and sustain arts in all geographical areas.

Councillor Taylor voiced support for the Motion commenting how Councillor Finn had a deep and personal interest in the Arts and made reference to previous Motions brought forward by her regarding the inadequate support that was provided to the District in terms of funding. He said he would like to find out why there was such a big disparity in terms of the level of funding provided as there was a clear passion for arts within the District.

Councillor Taylor made reference to the Arts Council and asked if they could identify the reasons why there was such a large disparity. He also enquired if there was there an issue with applications going forward and if that was the case, was there something Council could do to support that. Councillor Taylor proposed an amendment that Council also write to the Arts Council to try and identify the reasons why there was such a large disparity.

Councillor Finn accepted and seconded Councillor Taylor's amendment.

Councillor Campbell voiced support for the Motion on behalf of his Party, and as someone who had worked in the Arts for over 20 years, especially in the community and rural sector across the District he fully appreciated the benefits that Arts brings to the community.

Councillor Jackson voiced support for the Motion calling for the Communities Minister to provide more equitable distribution of resources. Councillor Jackson proposed two small amendments in that where it refers to the North that it be replaced that with Northern Ireland.

Councillor Hanna seconded Councillor Hanna's proposed amendment.

Councillor Finn accepted Councillor Jackson's proposed amendment.

In voicing support for the Motion, Councillor Reilly suggested Council investigate how it could reinstate its vigour for Arts.

The Chairperson advised once the Motion was adopted officers would follow up and bring forward more information.

In summing up, Councillor Finn thanked Members for their support and took the opportunity to highlight the Newry Drama Festival was coming up, a local group had recently had a really good win and the Newry Arts Festival. She added that were loads of really good arts things



on and more should be done in promoting that and she was more than happy to work with any colleagues across the Chamber to do so.

**Agreed:** It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Finn, seconded by Councillor Sharvin that NMDDC expresses its deep concern at the lack of equitable distribution of funding for the arts across Northern Ireland; with particular concern that while Belfast City Council received 71% of all Arts Council funding in the year 2023/24, Newry Mourne and Down Council received a mere 3.18%, further expresses its support for local creative artists, and agrees to write to the Communities Minister Gordon Lyons MLA and the Arts Council calling on them to review the current allocation of resources to deliver a more equitable distribution of resources, and to better help support and sustain the arts across the Northern Ireland regardless of geographical area.

**C/043/2025**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICE MODEL**

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Andrews:

*"Expressing our deep concern at the lack of delivery from the Department of Health of the learning Disability Service Model which would greatly help to deliver a more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with a learning disability , Newry, Mourne & Down District Council expresses our solidarity and support with those who have a learning disability, their families and health practitioners who contributed to establishing this model and have been waiting for the new service model.*

*Council will write to the Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt MLA calling for the publication of the report without delay and the immediate implementation of what is being recommended with adequate funding to deliver a such a vital service to so many".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor Galbraith.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Andrews advised the Learning Disability Service Framework was a set of standards and indicators launched in 2015 to improve the quality of health and social services for those within the community with a learning disability. He added the delivery of these services however was varied largely depending on what the Trust somebody lived in.

Councillor Andrews spoke of the Muckamore Abbey scandal and the need for greater care of those with a learning disability, for better services rooted within the community and the need for compassion and professionalism.

Councillor Andrews paid tribute to the tireless work of those across the District including Mainstay DRP and Knockevin Special School, who carried out these efforts for people with a learning disability and needed a new service model and an associated funding and action plan. There were lessons to be learned from the past, it was time to look to the future and deliver essential healthcare for the most vulnerable in society when they need it most.

In voicing support for the Motion on behalf of her Party, Councillor Truesdale commented that the Department of Health and Health Trusts had said that learning disability services continued to remain a key priority for them and the Independent and private sectors.

Councillor Truesdale stated there had been reviews which exposed significant failings in the care provided to people with a learning disability as inpatients in hospitals and their families which also exposed gaps in the wider system of support for people with learning disabilities. She stated people with a learning disability should be provided with the right care at the right time, by the right workforce.

Councillor Truesdale requested an update on a Motion brought by Councillor Clarke calling for the establishment of a Disability Forum as that provided a good opportunity for Council move ahead with a good service model at a local level.

The Chairperson advised Councillor Truesdale officers would provide information on her query and at the request of Councillor Hanlon it was confirmed the update would be provided to all Councillors.

On behalf of Sinn Féin, Councillor Harte thanked Councillor Andrews for bringing forward the motion. She stated the District served individuals of all ages with a learning difficulty and the lack of delivery of this vital Service Model required immediate attention to ensure a fit for purpose model was implemented in its entirety, to ensure individuals, their families and Health Professionals had the adequate resources and support to benefit their quality of life.

Councillor Hanna voiced support for the Motion and spoke the importance early intervention and getting statements at the early age of nursery school stage as there were no restrictions.

Councillor Hanna proposed an amendment to the Motion to include the following:  
“.....which would greatly help to deliver more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with the learning disability **at the earliest possible age.**”

Councillor Jackson seconded Councillor Hanna's proposed amendment, accepted by Councillor Andrews.

Councillor Taylor said he wanted to see the delivery of the Service Model however ultimately the finance needed to be provided to the Department of Health and that he hoped it was one of the priorities within the Executive's Programme for Government.

Councillor Andrews thanked Members for their support the Motion.

**Agreed:**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Galbraith that expressing our deep concern at the lack of delivery from the Department of Health of the learning Disability Service Model which would greatly help to deliver a more regional approach to delivering better service availability for those with a learning disability at the earliest possible age, Newry, Mourne & Down District Council expresses our solidarity and support with those who have a learning disability ,their families and health practitioners who contributed to establishing this model and have been waiting for the new service model.**

**Council will write to the Minister of Health Mike Nesbitt MLA calling for the publication of the report without delay and the immediate implementation of what is being**

**recommended with adequate funding to deliver a such a vital service to so many.**

**C/044/2025**

**NOTICE OF MOTION – FISHING INDUSTRY VISA AND  
ENHANCEMENT SUPPORT**

The following amended Motion was received from Councillor Sharvin:

*"This Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas, and expressing its disapproval at the lack of progress to deliver the outcomes within the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme. This Council agrees to writing to the DAERA Minister Andrew Muir MLA calling for enhanced working with his UK counterpart to deliver greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa, and to review the outcomes within the FSDP and outline what projects can be delivered upon in the next financial year".*

The Motion was seconded by Councillor McAteer.

In presenting the Motion, Councillor Sharvin stated the fishing industry in South Down was part of the lifeblood of the local economy and had been let down time and time again and faced challenges both in sustaining and growing. One of the impacts that had been felt most acutely was the ability of fishermen to recruit crews by the seasonal worker visa route.

He continued that in the absence of a visa mechanism, it was a good fit for the employment of non-EEA workers the industry had little option but to utilise the transit visas. The process for this was complicated, expensive and did not work for those in the sector and without better access to these visas the fishing industry's future was at stake.

The challenges of growing comes with a lack of ambition by the Department in delivering the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme (FSDP). This was programme that could be transformational for both Ardglass and Kilkeel. The programme was set up to conduct a strategic review of the opportunities for developing the sea fishing and seafood sectors in Northern Ireland. The longer the delay, the more out of date this review became and would be back to square one and central government failing the fisheries and seafood sector again.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor McAteer said the situation highlighted the ongoing problems similar to like that which continued to be experienced by mushroom industry where the plight of seasonal workers were required short term periods and there had been no work at all done by the UK Government to alleviate this issue in tandem with the Northern Ireland Executive. The cost to the employer of £8000 for six months did not make economic sense the fishing industries have been brought to their knees by the lack of workers in the sector and with the additional problems and concerns caused by attempting to recruit employees to work for short terms.

Councillor Rice welcomed the Motion on behalf of his Party having brought a similar motion in 2023 regarding concerns with the restriction for seasonal workers in the fishing industry. He said the fishing industry was a major economic driver for communities in Ardglass, Kilkeel and Portavogie and that it was extremely worrying that immigration rules were restricting workers to determine productivity and sustainability of the local fishing industry. Councillor Rice said it was hoped that following another Motion, all relevant agencies and public bodies would act swiftly to ensure the issues surrounding the skilled worker visas

would be rectified to ensure that local fishing industry was fully supported.

Councillor Hanna voiced support for the Motion however he felt it would have little influence with the British Government having sat on their hands for many years and having heavily lobbied on many occasions.

Councillor Enright put forward the following amendment for the Motion to read as follows:

*“This Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas and welcomes engagement between the Department for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and the UK Government on this issue. This Council agrees to write to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to call for greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa. This Council also agrees to write to the Northern Ireland DAERA Minister to request an update on his department’s work with the Fishery Harbour Authority to consider alternative options to those proposed in the Fishing and Seafood Development Programme Strategic Outline Case”.*

Councillor Enright’s proposed amendment was seconded by Councillor Truesdale.

Councillor Sharvin did not accept Councillor Enright’s proposed amendment.

Councillor Sharvin confirmed he would accept writing to the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Councillor Enright agreed to retract his proposed amendment and it was agreed by all the include writing to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Councillor Taylor stated he was very happy to support the Motion as the fishing industry was key to the local area and anything that placed that under threat, Council needed to do all it could to try and encourage those in power to do what was necessary to protect that .

Councillor Reilly voiced support for the Motion.

Councillor Hanlon explained she had met with Ardglass fishermen and there was a lot of shared working with the Scottish Coast and that it might be helpful to examine what they do there. She proposed a further amendment to include writing to Northern Ireland’s DAERA Minister’s Scottish counterpart. Councillor Murphy seconded Councillor Hanlon’s proposed amendment.

Councillor Sharvin accepted Councillor Hanlon’s amendment and thanked Members for the support for the Motion.

**Agreed:**

**It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor McAteer that Council expresses its continued support for those who work in the fishing industry, noting with concern the continued lack of progress to deliver easier access to skilled worker visas, and expressing its disapproval at the lack of progress to deliver the outcomes within the Fisheries and Seafood Development Programme. This Council agrees to writing to the DAERA Minister Andrew Muir MLA calling for enhanced working with his UK counterpart to deliver greater ease of access and affordability of the skilled worker visa, and to review the outcomes within the FSDP**

and outline what projects can be delivered upon in the next financial year.  
It was also agreed to write to the DAERA Minister's Scottish Counterpart and the UK Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

There being no further business, the meeting concluded at 7.20pm.

For confirmation at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

**Signed:**

---

**Chairperson**

---

**Chief Executive**