

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 11 November 2024 at 6.00pm in the Boardroom, Monaghan Row**

Chairperson: Councillor A Lewis

**Committee Members
in attendance:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor K Feehan	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor G Hanna	Councillor V Harte
Councillor G Kearns	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor M Ruane	

Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor D Lee-Surginor Councillor J Truesdale

Officials in attendance:

Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration
Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer
Mrs N Stranney, Democratic Services Officer

**Officials in attendance:
(via Teams)**

Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)

ERT/103/2024: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Galbraith and S Murphy.

ERT/104/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest

ERT/105/2024: PRESENTATION

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Eoin Magennis from Ulster University Economic Policy Centre to the Committee Meeting and invited him to make his presentation.

Mr Magennis utilised a Power Point to update Members regarding 'Newry, Mourne and Down Economic Outlook'. (Copy appended to these minutes)

As there were no questions following the presentation, Councillor Lewis thanked Mr Magennis for his presentation.

**ERT/106/2024: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 2024**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration &

Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 14 October 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to note the Action Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 14 October 2024.**

ERT/107/2024: MID YEAR REVIEW OF ERT BUSINESS PLANS 2024-25

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism regarding Mid-Year Review of Ert Business Plans 2024-25. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon advised that the Mid-Year Assessment of each directorate plan had been completed which reviewed progress from April to September, highlighting that the process was key to fulfilling the Council's statutory obligations for performance monitoring.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed that Council agree the Mid-year Assessment of the ERT Directorate Business Plan 2024-25.**

ERT/108/2024: DEVELOPMENT NAMING, POSTAL NUMBERING & ERECTION OF NAMEPLATES POLICY

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Development Naming, Postal Numbering and Erection of Nameplates Policy. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr McGilly explained that a review of the policy had been conducted following a recent tribunal concerning the disclosure of information related to dual language sign surveys, highlighting that a subsequent recommendation was that the breakdown of the dual language survey results should not be published. Therefore, it was proposed that there was to be no changes to the existing policy which would remain in effect for the next three years.

Following a query from Councillor Hanna regarding clarification on the withholding of results, Mr McGilly advised that an outcome recommendation of the investigation was to withhold the information to maintain anonymity for those involved.

Councillor Hanna noted his disagreement with the recommendations, stating that the results should be published while still maintaining anonymity for the participants.

Mr McGilly reiterated the recommendations following the tribunal that stated that the results should not be published.

As there was dissent within the chamber, a roll call vote was carried out with the results as follows:

FOR	10
AGAINST	2
ABSTENTION	0

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the Development Naming, Postal Numbering and Erection of Nameplates Policy.

ERT/109/2024: BELFAST CITY AND REGIONAL PLACE PARTNERSHIP

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Membership with Belfast City and Regional Place Partnership. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Smyth noted that Newry, Mourne and Down District Council had membership of the Belfast City Region Place Partnership for a number of years, highlighting that the partnership was focused on Investment events and brought benefits such as an engagement and advocacy programme and research and media engagement. She stated that it was based around the Belfast region city deal, geography and partners and the cost for the forthcoming year would be £15,000.

In proposing the recommendations, Councillor Feehan noted that following the presentation from Ulster University he was happy to propose the recommendation, highlighting the positive impact the City Deal would have along with the Dublin-Belfast Economic Corridor.

In seconding the recommendations, Councillor Hanlon echoed the sentiments already expressed by Councillor Feehan.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve Membership with Belfast City and Regional Place Partnership for 2025/26 period at the cost outlined in section 4 of the officer's report.

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

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Harte, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to come out of Closed Session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed while in closed session.

FOR DECISION

ERT/110/2024: ECONOMICS DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the recommendations as set out within the officer's report.

ERT/111/2024: GO SUCCEED PROGRAMME

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the recommendations as contained within the officer's report.

ERT/112/2024: MAKE IT LOCAL CAMPAIGN

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanna, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the business case attached to the officer's report for the delivery of a Make it Local campaign in Spring of 2025.

ERT/113/2024: ST PATRICKS AVENUE

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to approve the recommendations contained within the officer's report.

ERT/114/2024: REVIEW OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to note the Financial Assistance review findings and agree the recommendations in section 2.2 of the officer's report.

FOR NOTING

ERT/115/2024: DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION FLEXIBLE FUND

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the contents of the report providing an update on delivery of the Digital Transformation Fund and to note that Call 4 of the DTFF issue to launch in March 2025 and expressions of interest are currently open.

ERT/116/2024: REMOVAL OF BALLYKINLAR HUT

Read: Report dated 11 November 2024 from Ms A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding the Economics Development Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Andrews, it was agreed to note the Expression of Interest process for the removal of Ballykinlar Hut.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 18.43.

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

**Signed: Councillor A Lewis
Chairperson
Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee**

**Signed: Conor Mallon
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism**

Newry, Mourne & Down District Council

Economic Outlook
November 2024

Northern Ireland Outlook: Uncertainty rising



Against expectations and a modest fall in UK GDP in the second half of 2023, the local economy performed relatively well. UUEPC forecast GVA growth of 1.4% in 2024 and 1.7% in 2025 for NI. But much now depends on global impacts on our neighbours.



The most recent quarterly data (Q1 2024) shows that employment grew in the first quarter, underpinned by strong expansion in the Health, Transport and Construction sectors and was largely facilitated by migrant labour. With tighter migration rules, initiatives to incentivise the economically inactive back into the workforce, will be key to fully harnessing future economic growth opportunities.



UUEPC estimate that there will be employment growth of 1.3% in 2024 before slowing slightly to 0.7% in 2025. Unemployment to remain at historic lows.

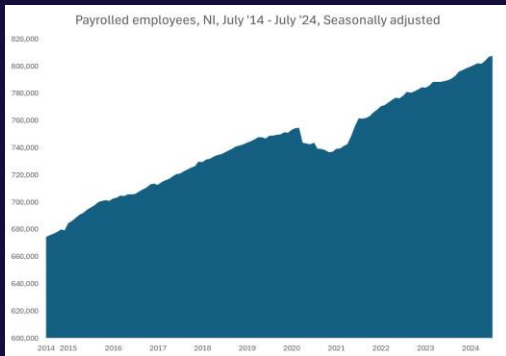


Global outlook is increasingly uncertain with election results dominating forecasts – most being revised downwards.

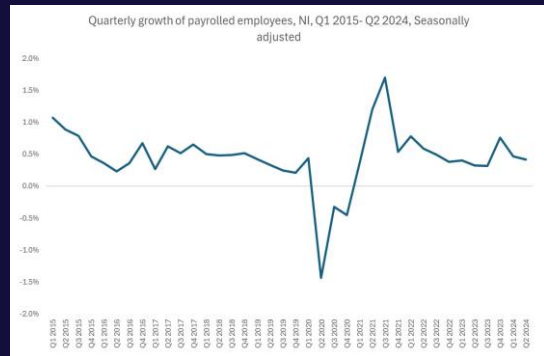


Interest rates and inflation continue to make up the headlines. UUEPC anticipate inflation will pick up slightly in the latter half of 2024, reaching 2.6% in Q4, before falling to 2.3% in 2025. Interest rates are forecasted to reduce to 4.75% by the end of 2024, with further (small) cuts in 2025.

Employee Growth Continues for NI



Source: NISRA- HMRC



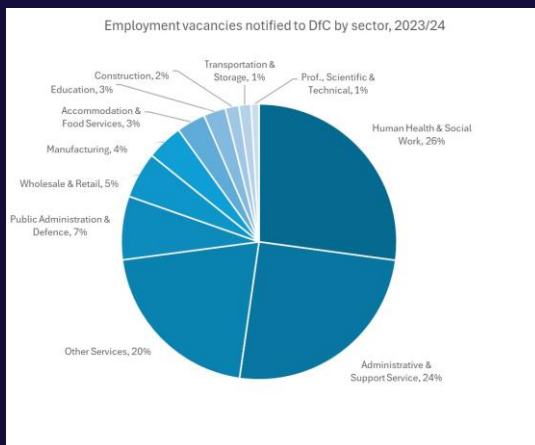
Source: NISRA- HMRC

↑ Payrolled employees reached 807,670 in July 2024, the highest number recorded and 18,150 more than the July 2023 figure.

In Q1 and Q2 of 2024 there was 0.5% and 0.4% growth respectively, up from 0.4% and 0.3% growth experienced in the same periods in 2023.



Vacancies beginning to slow



Source: DfC

Notes: Sector with a below 1% share of vacancies have been excluded from the chart

There were over 49,330 job vacancies notified to the Department for Communities (DfC) in 2023/24, down from 63,300 in 2022/23.

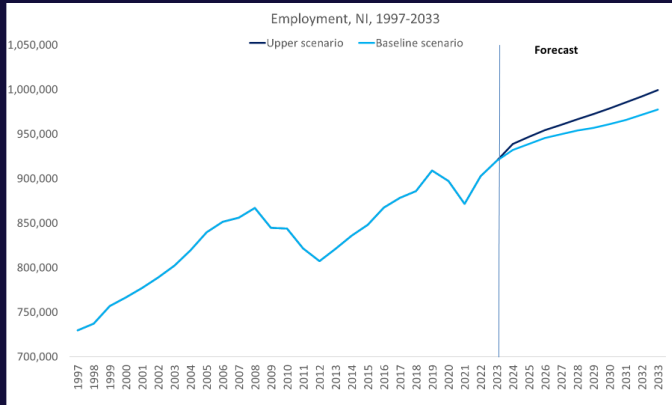


In 2023/24, 65% of vacancies were for full-time, 27% part-time and 8% casual roles.

Health and Social Work accounted for 26% of vacancies, or just over 13,000 roles, followed by Admin. and Support which accounted for 24% or 12,050 roles.



Employment outlook remains positive: 75% employed?



Source: UUEPC Outlook

Note: Total employment refers to workforce jobs including employees, self-employed, Government supported trainees and HM Forces.

UUEPC forecast that total employment in the baseline scenario may reach 997,650 total jobs by 2033, an increase of 57,650 jobs from 2023.



UUEPC suggest there will be growth of 1.3% in 2024, followed by 0.7% growth in 2025.

In an upper scenario, UUEPC anticipate total employment reaching 999,310, 79,300 more jobs than 2023.

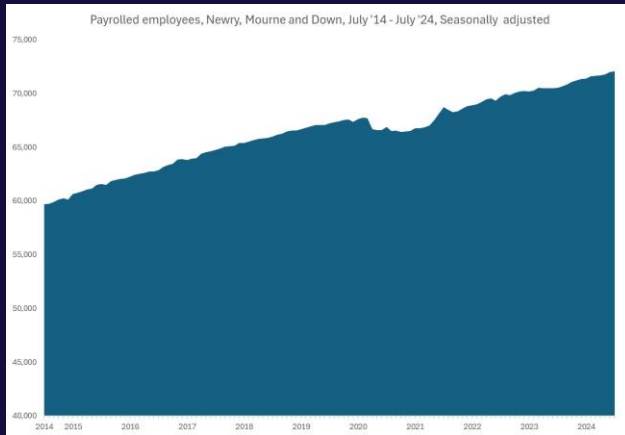


Newry, Mourne and Down

Recent performance and economic outlook

Section 3

Steady employee growth sees 3 in 4 in employment



Source: NISRA- HMRC

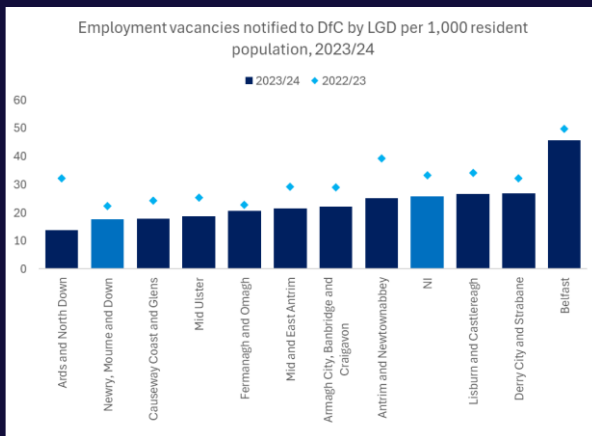
Payrolled employees reached a high of just over 72,070 in July 2024 for Newry, Mourne and Down, resulting in 1,520 more payrolled employees compared to July 2023.



Newry, Mourne and Down experienced 0.4% growth of payrolled employees in Q2 2024, a slight slowdown from 0.5% in Q1 2024 but up from 0.2% in Q2 2023.



Vacancies across the LGDs slowing down



Source: DfC

There were 3,230 vacancies notified to DfC from Newry, Mourne and Down in 2023/24, down from just over 4,060 the previous year.

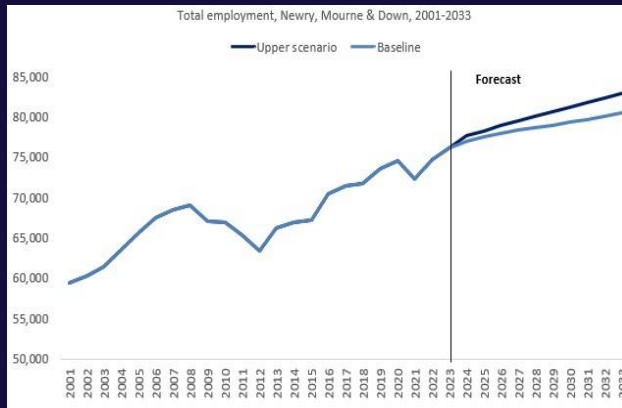


In Newry, Mourne and Down there were 17.7 vacancies per 1,000 resident population, the second lowest across NI and below the NI average of 25.8.

North Down and Ards had the lowest number of vacancies per 1,000 population at 13.8, as this LGD had nearly 2,260 vacancies.



Employment forecasts of 4,400 to 6,700 extra jobs

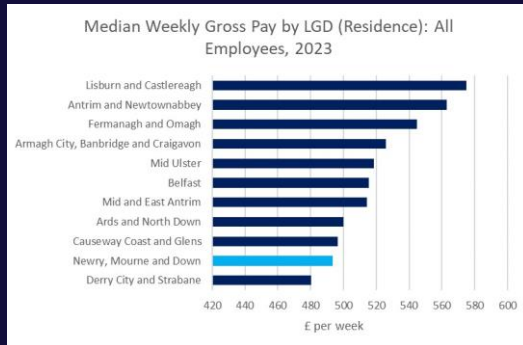


Source: NISRA & UIJEP
 Note: 2023 remains a forecast year due to a lag in data

In the baseline scenario total employment is forecasted to grow by approximately 0.6% annually between 2023 and 2033, increasing from 76,050 to 80,480 jobs (growth of 4,430) across the 10-year period.

In an upper scenario total employment is anticipated to reach 82,740 by 2033, an increase of approximately 6,680 jobs from 2023.

Median weekly pay: Residential and Workplace



Source: ASHE
 Note: Figures are in 'Real' terms



Source: ASHE
 Note: Figures are in 'Real' terms

- For **residents** in Newry, Mourne and Down, the median weekly pay was £532, £98 below Lisburn and Castlereagh where residents have the largest median weekly pay at £630.
- The median weekly pay for employees **working in** Newry, Mourne and Down was £512 per week in 2024, £52 above Ards and North Down, whose workplaces had the lowest median weekly pay.

Northern Ireland

Tight labour markets and forecasts of economic growth reinforce the pressing need to address challenges such as low productivity and wage growth, and high economic inactivity rates. Reducing inactivity by supporting those who would like to work, into work requires a number of initiatives – all at once – including access to childcare, greater flexibility in terms of recruitment (recognizing sickness and caring responsibilities) and looking again at welfare traps. Other ministerial vision areas, such as improving productivity or increasing numbers of good jobs, require a similar mind-shift by all partners.

Newry, Mourne and Down (NMD)

Numbers of payrolled employees have continued to rise in the Council area (to a new high of 72,070) and employment growth is anticipated to continue over the next decade – by between 4,300 and 6,700 new jobs.

Employment opportunities – both within the Council area and for those able or willing to commute – are no longer the issue for many residents of NMD, present and future. Not so great for those with a disability or older women.

Belfast City Region Deal, location on the Dublin/Belfast Economic Corridor and the new Local Economic Partnership priorities all throw up further opportunities – question becomes one of what's best to do?

Sub-regional picture for NMD presents two very clear challenges:

- Productivity performance of local firms is (and has been) poor and is reflected in local wages – exporting levels are good but not clear to me that this goes beyond selling to neighbours for most.
- Business births and entrepreneurship levels have been slipping in recent years – does this mean less local competition and less drive to create new products and services?

Thank you

Economic Outlook
Summer 2024