

NEWRY MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Economy, Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting
held on Monday 20 January 2025 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 D Lee-Surginor
Councillor A Quinn	Councillor M Ruane

Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor C Galbraith Councillor S Murphy
Councillor J Truesdale

Non-Committee Members

in attendance via Teams: Councillor J Tinnelly

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
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs S Kieran, Democratic Services Officer

ERT/001/2025: APOLOGIES / CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Gibbons.

ERT/002/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Andrews declared an interest in Item 8 on the agenda – Peace Plus.

**ERT/003/2025: ACTION SHEET ECONOMY, REGENERATION & TOURISM
COMMITTEE MEETING MONDAY 9 DECEMBER 2024**

Read: Action Sheet arising out of the Minutes of the Economy,
Regeneration & Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 9
December 2024 **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by
Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note the Action
Sheet arising from the Economy, Regeneration &
Tourism Committee Meeting held on Monday 9
December 2024.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

ERT/004/2025: BELFAST REGION CITY DEAL REGIONAL HUB

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism regarding Belfast Region City Deal Regional Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon presented the report stating the Council had conducted consultation and research which had identified a clear need for a Regional Hub. He said following engagement a concept note had been developed and forwarded to the Digital Advisory Board within City Deal for approval to commence the outline business case. He outlined the next stage would be to procure a consultant to develop an outline business case which was a requirement of City Deal projects.

Councillor Harte proposed to accept the officer's recommendation as contained within the report, this was seconded by Councillor Kearns.

Councillor Truesdale stated the Alliance Party were very supportive of economic growth and other benefits the regional innovation hub was projected to bring, however, their views in relation to the matter were well documented. She stated while they supported the need of a place to work for staff, they did not agree with the location, size and cost of the project. She noted Council had conducted consultation and research which demonstrated a clear need for a hub but this information had not been attached to the report and she would like to see the research. Councillor Truesdale requested a recorded vote on the matter.

In response to Councillor Truesdale, Mr Mallon recommended that a workshop be arranged for Members to discuss work carried out to date and to present what the proposed facility would deliver for the district.

In response to Mr Mallon, Councillor Truesdale confirmed she was opposed to the report and recommendations contained therein but welcomed the workshop.

Following some confusion within the chamber over the request for a recorded vote, Ms Taggart, Democratic Services Manager clarified that Councillor Harte had proposed to accept the officer's recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Kearns. She stated that Councillor Truesdale was not in support of the proposal therefore as there was not full agreement within the chamber, Members would be voting on the proposal to accept the officer's recommendation.

As there was not full agreement within the chamber the proposal was put to a recorded vote as requested by Councillor Truesdale, the results of which were as follows (copy appended to these minutes):

FOR:	12
AGAINST:	0
ABSTENTIONS:	2

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns, the following was agreed:**

- **To approve the attached business case**
- **To approve the procurement of consultancy support for the development of an outline**

**business case for a regional innovation hub
within Newry Civic & Regional Hub**

- **To approve the appointment of consultancy support following the BRCD Digital Advisory Board Approval**

ERT/005/2025: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE CALL 2

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Call 2. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report stating the second call for Financial Assistance for the Period 2025-2026 would commence for capital themes in March 2025. The closing date for Applications was April 2025 and letters of offers would be issued by July 2025.

Following queries from Councillors Andrews and Lee-Surginor, Mrs Smyth confirmed a range of workshops would take place for applicants.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to proceed with Financial Assistance Call 2 Capital as detailed in the Officer's Report

ERT/006/2025: GEOPARK STRATEGY

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Geopark Strategy. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report stating approval was being sought for the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark Strategy 2025-2033.

Councillor Truesdale thanked the Council for the report and queried how many people were directly employed by the Council for Geopark work. She asked what 'rangering mechanisms' as referred to in the strategy entailed and whether there would be QR codes on boards for information.

In response to Councillor Truesdale, Mrs Smyth confirmed Council employed an AONB and Geopark Team of four staff who undertook the duties and activities associated with the Geopark, she confirmed recruitment was currently underway for additional staff and these positions would be funded through the NIEA programme.

In relation to 'rangering mechanisms', Mrs Smyth confirmed the NIEA funded Youth Ranger Programmes. Mr Mallon confirmed in the past there had been funding for rangers delivered through the Mourne Heritage Trust which both Council and NIEA had supported.

Mr Mallon confirmed the use of QR codes for interpretation was being investigated across all Council tourism facilities and forest parks.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Feehan, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the Geopark Strategy.**

ERT/007/2025: **LABOUR MARKET PARTNERSHIP ADDITIONAL FUNDING**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism, regarding Labour Market Partnership Additional Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Smyth presented the report and stated Council had received an offer for additional funding from the Department for the Economy via Department for Communities to deliver a level 3 Diploma in childcare on behalf of NMD Labour Market Partnership.

Councillor Hanlon stated the challenges in the childcare sector currently were well documented and Sinn Féin had recently taken a Notice of Motion regarding the issue of childcare. She welcomed the Labour Market Partnership developing this programme and enabling people in the childcare sector to upskill.

Councillor Truesdale queried whether it had been the Department of Economy, the Council or SERC who decided that childcare should be targeted. She stated that childcare workers were mostly women and girls who were notoriously undervalued and underpaid and that there was a huge need for the system, both public and private, to be overhauled. She stated it was disappointing to see childcare chosen again when women were capable of doing lots of different things, stating that the initiative seemed to have been devised by people within the industry rather than those that would need to do 20+ hours work per week by undertaking the Diploma on top of the work they were currently undertaking.

In response to Councillor Truesdale, Mrs Smyth confirmed the Labour Market Partnership was made up of a range of partners from businesses, colleges and the community and voluntary sector. She said they had developed an action plan and childcare was identified as a key theme.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, the following was agreed:**

- **To note Council's acceptance of additional funding from Dept for Economy via Dept for Communities for an Upskilling for Growth Course Level 3 Diploma in Childcare on behalf of NMD Labour Market Partnership**
- **To approve that Council appoint SERC through an SLA to deliver the Level 3 diploma in Childcare on behalf of NMD Labour Market Partnership**

ERT/008/2025: **PEACEPLUS**

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding PEACE Plus. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Quinn, the following was agreed:**

- To approve the minutes of PEACE Plus Partnership on 24 October 2024, attached at Appendix 1.
- To establish a Project Partnership and update the Partnership Board in line with that required for each of the pillars to ensure representation is current and no duplication with the Partnership Board.
- To approve the attached business case for the procurement of Appendix 2 (Strand 1.1 Transforming and Reimaging Project) and Appendix 3 (Strand 1.4 Community Navigation Programme and Strand 1.5 Co-designed Cross Community Place Making Plans)

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

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

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

ERT/009/2025: FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BASIC ELIGIBILITY

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Basic Eligibility. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Kearns, it was agreed to approve the recommendations of the Officer’s Report.

ERT/010/2025: ULSTER FLEADH

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Ulster Fleadh. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Ruane, seconded by Councillor Lee-Surginor, it was agreed to support the organisation noted in the Officer's Report through an SLA arrangement for the hosting of the Ulster Fleadh in Warrenpoint in 2025 as outlined within the Officer's Report.
It was also agreed that officers would meet with the organisation to discuss the application and that they be invited to make a presentation to Committee.

FOR NOTING

ERT/011/2025: INSPIRING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM CONFERENCE

Read: Report dated 20 January 2025 from Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, regarding Inspiring Sustainable Tourism Conference. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Andrews, seconded by Councillor Ruane, it was agreed to note that Council will collaborate with and sponsor the Sustainable Tourism Network to ring the 2026 Inspiring Sustainable Tourism annual conference to Newry, Mourne and Down. This will help showcase the destination and raise awareness of the Mourne Gullion Strangford UNESCO Global Geopark.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 6.37pm.

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

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

Signed: Conor Mallon
Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 20/01/2025 VENUE: Monaghan Row, Newry MEETING: ERT 2024-25

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Belfast Region City Deal Regional Hub - Proposed by Councillor Harte, seconded by Councillor Kearns to accept the officer's recommendation.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
T Andrews	X			
W Clarke	X			
K Feehan	X			
C Galbraith	X			
M Gibbons				X
O Hanlon	X			
G Hanna	X			
V Harte	X			
G Kearns	X			
D Lee-Surginor			X	
A Lewis	X			
S Murphy	X			
A Quinn	X			
M Ruane	X			
J Truesdale			X	
TOTALS	12	0	2	1