

## **NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL**

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### **Minutes of Special Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 12 September 2024 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre**

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**In the Chair:** Councillor T Howie

**In Attendance in Chamber:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor W Clarke
Councillor C Enright	Councillor O Hanlon
Councillor C King	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor S O'Hare	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin	Councillor D Taylor

#### **Non-Committee Members**

**In Attendance:** Councillor J Truesdale

#### **Officials in Attendance in Chamber:**

Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services  
Ms C Mallon, Director Economy, Regeneration & Tourism  
Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment  
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities  
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects & Procurement  
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance  
Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director Regeneration  
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration (Acting)  
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)  
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

#### **SPR/136/2024: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS**

Apologies were received from Councillors McAteer and Lewis and from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive.

#### **SPR/137/2024: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no interests declared

#### **SPR/138/2024 ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 15 AUGUST 2024**

**Read:** Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 15 August 2024 (**Copy circulated**)

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the**

**action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources  
Committee meeting of 15 August 2024.**

**SPR/139/2024**

**ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM SPECIAL STRATEGY,  
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 27  
AUGUST 2024**

**Read:** Action Sheet of Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 27 August 2024 **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 27 August 2024.**

**SPR/140/2024**

**ASSESSMENT OF PERFORMANCE**

**Read:** Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance, regarding Assessment of Performance 2023-24. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Byrne highlighted that Council had a statutory requirement to produce and publish an assessment of performance to include performance improvement objectives, statutory and self-imposed performance indicators by 30 September each year.

Councillor Enright stated that he believed that income from the green economy was missing from the assessment and referenced a number of previous motions relating to the green economy advising that he wished to see indicative targets included in the assessment moving forward.

Mrs Murphy noted that no targets had been set in relation to the green economy for the reporting time frame, but that it would be considered in relation to future assessment performance when green economy projects were set.

Councillor Hanlon queried the statistics on cleanliness and supported community litter pick, and asked whether there was a reason why the litter-pick support was down, despite having received a number of complaints about litter within the District recently and queried what steps could be taken to encourage that figure to increase again.

Mrs Murphy advised that the litter-pick support targets had been set during COVID advising that the services were available through Sustainability and Environment Department for community groups and was something that would be encouraged and supported by Council.

Councillor Hanlon queried whether Council could take any preventative actions in relation to raising awareness through local schools, as some of the complaints were in proximity to some schools and suggested involving the local DEA co-ordinators to address the issues in relation to schools.

Mrs Murphy advised that if there were specific complaints around schools then a targeted intervention could be considered and requested that the information be shared with her team to allow a full picture to be built.

Councillor Reilly stated that it was important for Council to be transparent in their strive for continuous improvement of responsibilities and noted that in relation to planning statistics Council was being unfairly tarnished with a negative reputation when it was reliant on responses from external bodies and referenced in particular the NI Environment Agency (NIEA) which had a 37% score of responding within the statutory time frame. He then proposed that Council write to the Minister to invite him to meet with a delegation to hear of the difficulties that Council was facing due to inefficiencies of NIEA in responding within the statutory timescale for planning issue consultations. This was seconded by Councillor Taylor, who stated that Ministers should be invited to explain any issues, such as staffing or resource concerns.

Mr Mallon advised that while a Planning Department Update was on the meeting agenda, all reporting of statutory consultees was published through NISRA and the latest update did not include these statistics, and in advance of any meeting with the Minister it would be beneficial for Members to have the most up to date statistics regarding statutory consultees.

Councillor Hanlon requested clarity on why only NIEA was being considered, and whether other statutory consultees should also be invited to meet with Council to understand the impact of delayed responses.

Councillor Sharvin queried whether the Minister was the most appropriate person to extend the invite to and whether the invite should be extended to the relevant consultee departments first, but stressed he was keen to discuss the proposal when the Planning Department update was discussed as tabled.

Councillor Clarke stated that it would be beneficial to write to NIEA if they were emerging as an issue in relation to planning applications, however noted that the Minister could be extremely busy. He confirmed that within Planning Legislation, it was within Council's remit to put required time frames on statutory consultations responses, and further stressed that a Planning Department Update was tabled later on the agenda which was the most appropriate stage to discuss the issue.

Mr Mallon reminded Members that there was a Report that provided detailed statistical data regarding consultee response times, considered against targets and reported through NISRA and further stressed that it would be useful for members to have full appreciation of overall picture.

Councillor Howie queried whether Councillor Reilly was content to withdraw his proposal until such time as the most up to date statistics were shared with Members, to which Councillor Reilly confirmed that he was.

Mr Mallon then corrected his statement regarding statistics, advising that NISRA reported on Council progress regarding processing applications, and that DFI reported on statutory consultee response statistics.

**AGREED:**

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

- **The Assessment of Performance 2023-24, including the summary document 'Our Performance Looking Back Going Forward'**
- **That the Assessment of Performance 2023-24 is published by 30 September 2024, before full Council ratification, in order to meet the statutory deadline.**

**Read:** Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Council Remote / Hybrid Meetings. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly noted that following the June 2024 legislation update regarding hybrid meetings, the item had recently been discussed at a Party Leaders meeting which had resulted in the recommendations as outlined within the Report.

Councillor Howie welcomed the return of hybrid meetings, noting that there were times when an elected member required a hybrid meeting option to allow them to still represent their constituents when necessary.

Councillor Taylor also welcomed the paper, stating that there was always the possibility of an issue arising and a Member not being able to make it to the chamber for a meeting and requested clarity in relation to what was deemed exceptional circumstances as stated within the report.

Mrs Kelly stated that it was difficult to provide an absolute answer for exceptional circumstances and confirmed that as much as possible, Members should be present in the Chamber. She further confirmed that physical attendance would also assist with the practicalities of operating two systems for the meetings, one in the Chamber and a remote meeting.

Councillor Rice confirmed his Party's support of the Report in principle and stated that there were instances when a Councillor was unable to attend a meeting and that remote attendance should remain a last resort for attendance.

Councillor Sharvin noted that the word "exception" was a challenge to try and define, but stated that it would be up to the individual as to what that should be. He confirmed his Party's support of hybrid meetings where necessary and confirmed that while they fully endorse the opportunity to attend remotely, he would encourage people to be in attendance as much as possible as it helped to build rapport with officers and members.

Following a query from Councillor Taylor regarding the protocol for remote attendance, Ms Taggart advised that it would be developed through Democratic Services.

Councillor Hanlon stated that it had to be recognised that most Councillors were employed full time, as well as having other responsibilities, so that while remote meetings allowed democracy to continue, physical attendance was always preferable, particularly with the new protocol that if attending remotely you would be last to speak.

Mrs Kelly confirmed that Council would be setting protocols once the item had been ratified at the next full Council meeting.

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Taylor, the following was agreed:**

- **Statutory meetings i.e. Council, ERT, SPR, AHC, S&E, Audit and Special Council to have physical attendance in respective Council chambers, except in exceptional**

circumstances. Non-statutory meetings to continue to be held remotely or in a hybrid manner.

- Speaking rights of those delegates within the chamber will be exhausted prior to taking queries from any remote delegates in order to make the meeting more manageable for Chairpersons.

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

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Rice, 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 Quinn, seconded by Councillor Enright, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

**SPR/142/2024**

**OPERATION AND SUPPORT OF AUDIO-VISUAL SOLUTIONS**

**Read:** Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding the Operation and Support of Audio-Visual Solutions. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to approve the development of a business case supporting the appointment of an IT resource to manage, operate and support the solutions and their users, as well as other audio-visual solutions deployed across Council buildings.

**SPR/143/2024**

**STA APPROVAL**

**Read:** Report from Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director of Community Development, regarding an STA Approval. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the STA as outlined within the Officer’s Report.

**SPR/144/2024**

**TENDER OF POSTAL SERVICES**

**Read:**

Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding the Tender of Postal Services. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Clarke, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the Full Business Case for the Tender of Postal Services as outlined at Appendix A of the Officer's Report and tender for Council's main collection and sorting mail service using a Postal Services Framework Agreement available to all public sector bodies. It was further agreed that the contract award be for a period of 3 years.**

**SPR/145/2024**

**INSURANCE PREMIUMS**

**Read:**

Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Insurance Premiums. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the additional spend for insurance premiums for 2024/25 and subsequent additional payments / year-end adjustments to date.**

**SPR/146/2024**

**FUNDING APPLICATION**

**Read:**

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding a funding application. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed that Council Officers prepare a funding submission to MHCLG and associated business case for projects under the themes set out in Section 2 of the Officer's Report that meet the eligibility criterion and be delivered by March 2025.**

**SPR/147/2024**

**MULTIPLY FUNDING**

**Read:**

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Multiply Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the attached Business Case for the appointment of a delivery agent to undertake business numeracy initiatives.**

**SPR/148/2024**

**PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY**

**Read:**

Report from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration (Acting), regarding a Public Right of Way. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the decision that "Subsequent to investigation and legal opinion, Council do not assert the path shown in Appendix 1 as a public right of way" and to notify all landowners and interested parties of this decision.**

**SPR/149/2024**

**CONTRACTOR PROCUREMENT AND APPOINTMENT**

**Read:**

Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects & Procurement, regarding Contractor Procurement and Appointment. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to commence procurement and appointment of a contractor to complete the upgrades to infrastructure and services outlined in section 2 of the Officer's Report.**

**SPR/150/2024**

**CONTRACTOR PROCUREMENT AND APPOINTMENT**

**Read:**

Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities, regarding Contractor Procurement and Appointment. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Taylor, it was agreed to award the contract for site investigation works as outlined within the Officer's Report.**

**SPR/151/2024**

**ACQUISITION OF LAND**

**Read:**

Report from Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration (Acting), regarding Acquisition of Land. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:**

**On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the purchase of lands from the landowners noted within the Officer's Report at the purchase value quoted, subject to Contract and conclusion of Legal process.**

**SPR/152/2024**

**PLANNING DEPARTMENT UPDATE**

**Read:** Report from Mr J McGilly, Assistant Director of Regeneration, regarding a Planning Department Update. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Clarke, the following was agreed:**

- To note the contents of the report and the proposed additional performance improvement actions.
- To approve the appointment of additional Planning Officers from a reserve list following the current recruitment exercise.
- To approve the additional budget allocation as set out in section 4.1 of the Officer's Report.

**SPR/153/2024**

**ENHANCED FLOOD SCHEME UPDATE**

**Read:** Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding an Enhanced Flood Scheme Update. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- That Members agree to notify DfE of Council's intention to close the scheme to further applications or letters of offer on 7 November 2024.
- That Members agree the proposed themes to be recommended to DfE for unallocated budget.

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

**SPR/154/2024**

**REPORT FROM MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD 4 JUNE 2024**

**Read:** Report from Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held 4 June 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to note the report from the minutes of the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held 4 June 2024.**

**FOR NOTING**



**SPR/155/2024**

**MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD 4 JUNE 2024**

**Read:** Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held 4 June 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the minutes of the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held 4 June 2024.**

**SPR/156/2024**

**MINUTES OF WOMENS WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD 22 AUGUST 2024**

**Read:** Minutes of Women's Working Group Meeting held 22 August 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

On proposing the report, Councillor O'Hare thanked Council for the ongoing work to end violence against women and girls and stated that it needed to be continually highlighted. She further echoed Councillor Finnegan's sentiment that rural areas needed access to workshops and noted her delight that work was underway to deliver these across the district.

Councillor Quinn queried whether a date had been confirmed for the "supporting the global campaign" being held in the leisure centres, to which Ms Taggart advised that provisional dates of 25<sup>th</sup> November and 26<sup>th</sup> November for Newry Leisure Centre and Down Leisure Centre respectively had been scheduled.

Councillor Byrne noted that the media work had been launched last week in Newry, and commended the work carried out on the project to date.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the minutes of the Women's Working Group meeting held 22 August 2024.**

**SPR/157/2024**

**NILGA REGIONAL PROGRAMME**

**Read:** Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding NILGA Regional Programme. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Taggart highlighted the item to Members and encouraged them to attend as part of their own elected Member Development, and as part of Council working towards the Elected Members Development Charter.

**AGREED:** **On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the NILGA Regional Programme for Councillor Development 2024-25.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 20.51pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 October 2024.

**Signed:**           **Councillor Tierna Howie**  
**Chairperson**

**Signed:**           **Josephine Kelly**  
**Director of Corporate Services**