

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Thursday 13 March 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre**

In the Chair: Councillor T Howie

**In Attendance
in Chamber:**

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

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor D Taylor

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth & Tourism
Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director of Finance & Performance
Mr P Rooney, Head of Legal Administration
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/026/2025: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillor Enright, and from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, and Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism.

SPR/027/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

SPR/028/2025: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD 13 FEBRUARY 2025

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 13 February 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 13 February 2025.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/029/2025: DRAFT PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT OBJECTIVES 2025-26

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance and Performance regarding Draft Performance Improvement Objectives. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr G Byrne outlined the Report, advising that the objectives would be subject to an audit over the coming months. He advised that the Report proposed to carry forward all 5 performance improvement objectives from 2024/25, and although the objectives remained the same, some of the targets within those had additional and amended targets included, which was outlined within the Report.

Mr Byrne outlined that if agreed, the consultation on the Performance Improvement Plan would begin on 14 March 2025 and end on 6 May 2025, utilising tools such as the website, public advertisement and engagement through the DEA forums and Section 75 groups, with any feedback being incorporated into the 2025/26 plan.

In proposing the Report, Councillor Reilly expressed his concern that the Plan could be little more than good intentions, using the example of dog fouling across the district. He stated that unless adequate resources were allocated to the issue, it would continue to be a problem, further stressing that Council should consider ways of increasing awareness of responsible dog ownership.

Councillor Sharvin noted his understanding of a statutory target of 15 weeks for processing a planning application but cautioned that this could be an impossible target when considering the trend of the previous 3 years. He queried if Council could input their own internal targets that would show that the Planning Department was continuously improving but stressed his concern that 15 weeks was an unrealistic target that could demoralise staff.

Mrs Ward stressed that the 15 week was a statutory target, and Council reported against statutory targets, but advised that the Senior Management Team were considering reviewing targets for the coming year, and updates would be brought back as required. She advised that there was work being carried out regarding the planning sector at a regional level, and Council Officers were in place on that group to bring any relevant actions forward.

Councillor Hanlon noted the issues that staff turnover could cause, referencing an example whereby emails directed to a member of staff who had left Council had not been actioned, which caused further delays to some planning applications.

Mrs Ward advised that the diversion of emails could be addressed internally, highlighting that the Planning Department was almost at a full complement of staff. She advised that Senior Planners do look to reallocate the work of leavers, but with each case officer carrying a significantly high case load this could unfortunately result in delays to applications.

Councillor King welcomed cleanliness being a focal point in the new plan, noting a recent constructive meeting with the Sustainability & Environment Director where a discussion was had on the cleanliness of the District. He welcomed the community outreach aspect of the plan but stated that he believed that a strategic plan and a new and updated approach was needed from the Department as soon as possible.

Mrs Ward reminded Members of the significant piece of work that was being carried out regarding District cleansing, advising that an update was being tabled at the Sustainability & Environment Working Group scheduled for 19 March 2025.

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

- **The five draft performance improvement objectives 2025-26, as outlined in Appendix 1**
- **The proposed approach and timetable for publishing the Performance Improvement Plan 2025-26, as outlined in Appendix 2, including approval to commence the consultation and engagement process on 14 March 2025**

Councillor Quinn joined the meeting during the above discussion – 06.10pm

SPR/030/2025: PROCUREMENT POLICY

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the Procurement Policy. **(Copy circulated)**

Mrs Kelly advised a new Procurement Act 2023 commenced on 24 February 2025 and stated the Council had updated their Procurement Policy to reflect the requirements of the Act along with an additional section outlining the policy approach to Ethical Procurement, Social Value and Sustainability. She advised procedures had been updated and training for staff had been undertaken and further training would also be organised over the next number of months.

Councillor Reilly in proposing the Policy highlighted the issue that many small businesses throughout the District found the procurement portal daunting and therefore did not tender for Council work. He asked if it was possible to organise workshops that local businesses could access to prepare for tendering for Council contracts.

Mrs Ward advised that considerable training had been organised across the District for buyers over the last few years.

Mrs Smyth advised that in advance of the new procurement system being introduced, officials worked with small businesses to use the system. She stated through the Business Support programme, procurement workshops and tender support with businesses to make them aware of how to find opportunities in the public sector. Mrs Smyth advised future workshops could be considered under the new phase of Business Support programmes being released.

Councillor Hanlon stated she felt the addition of the ethical procurement did not reflect the actual motion she had tabled. She queried whether there was something else within the background of the policy that would refer to the Geneva principles and parameters that had been mentioned within the motion.

Mrs Kelly stated there were various sections within the policy and these would be reflected within the Terms and Conditions that are sent out with Tenders to ensure the ethical procurement was considered before awarding contracts.

Councillor Sharvin asked whether there would be a notice on the existing procurement system to ensure that all suppliers register on the new system. He asked when the first procurement system would be launched.

Mrs Kelly advised the information would be put on the website and officials were investigating portal information for suppliers. She advised this would be sometime between now and summer.

Councillor McAteer queried whether there were statistics as to what level of goods and services supplied to Council was from local suppliers.

Mrs Kelly advised she did not have the figures to hand however would look at the system to see if this information was available. She stated there was a huge remit of procurement across Council , and the idea of social value was to encourage businesses of different sizes to tender for Council services.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to approve the updated Procurement Policy and to note the legislative updates contained within the 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 King, 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 Hanlon, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

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

SPR/031/2025: **LAND AT DAISY HILL, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding lands at Daisy Hill, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor King, it was agreed to sell the lands hatched blue on the map attached to the Officer's Report to the party identified within the report for the market value.**

SPR/032/2025: **LICENCE OF LANDS AT DONARD PARK, NEWCASTLE**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding licence of lands at Donard Park, Newcastle. **(Copy circulated)**

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

- **To grant a licence in respect of the new 3G pitch at Donard Park, Newcastle as outlined in green on the map attached to this report for a licence period of 25 years with the party identified in the Officer's Report subject to the market value licence fee set out in this report.**
- **To grant a licence in respect of the placement of a container at Donard Park, Newcastle for a licence period of 5 years with the party identified in the officer's report at a peppercorn licence fee subject to Departmental consent.**

SPR/033/2025: **RENEWAL OF LEASE OF LANDS ADJACENT TO KILKEEL LEISURE CENTRE**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding renewal of lease of lands adjacent to Kilkeel Leisure Centre. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor Bowsie, it was agreed to grant a further lease in respect of the lands shaded red to the party noted within the report for a period of twenty-five years at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.**

SPR/034/2025: **RENEWAL OF LICENCE AT COUNCIL DEPOT, KILKEEL**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding renewal of licence at Council Depot, Kilkeel. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to enter into a further five-year licence agreement in respect of the Lands as shown outlined in red on the plan attached to the Officer's Report with the party identified at a peppercorn licence fee subject to Departmental Consent.**

SPR/035/2025: **LEASE OF BUILDING & LANDS AT ANNALONG MARINE PARK**

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding lease of building and lands at Annalong Marine. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to enter into a lease variation with the existing tenant named in the officers report, to extend the term of the existing lease by 20 years, to extend the leased area to include the area outlined in green on the map attached to the Officer's Report at a peppercorn rent subject to Departmental Consent.**

Cllr Bowsie left the meeting at this stage – 6.56pm

SPR/036/2025: LEASE OF LANDS AT KILTYBANE, NEWRY

Read: Report from Mr Peter Rooney, Head of Legal Administration regarding lease of lands at Kiltybane, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Quinn, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to enter into a further lease with the party named within the Officers Report for a term of 25 years and to move forward on the basis of option a as outlined in section 2.3 in the Officer's Report.**

SPR/037/2025: DIRECT AWARD CONTRACT

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Direct Award Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the recommendations contained within the Officer's Report.**

SPR/038/2025: AHC FACILITY LEASE

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active and Healthy Communities regarding AHC Facility Lease. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to approve the updated lease arrangements as detailed in the Officer's Report.**

SPR/039/2025: SALE OF LAND, NEWRY

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the sale of land, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to accept the current offer and move to sale agreed.**

SPR/040/2025: **NMDDC LGSC CONTRIBUTIONS**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services regarding the sale of land, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Clarke, it was agreed to approve the payment from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council for the period April 25 – March 26.**

SPR/041/2025: **CEARANCE WORKS – CASTLEWELLAN ARBORETUM AND ANNESLEY GARDEN – NATIONAL LOTTERY HERITAGE FUND PROJECT**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, and Mrs A Smyth, Assistant Director of Economy, Growth and Tourism, Clearance Works – Castlewellan Arboretum and Annesley Garden – NLHF Project. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor O’Hare, it was agreed to approve a compensation event to the contractor to undertake clearance works necessary to enable the contractor to continue with the relevant contract works.**

Councillor Reilly left the meeting at this stage – 7.22pm

FOR NOTING

SPR/042/2025: **POSTAL SERVICES CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding Postal Services Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the extension and Tender of Postal Services for Council’s main collection and sorting mail service using a Postal Services Framework Agreement available to public sector bodies.**

SPR/043/2025: **MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS**

Read: Report from Mr G Byrne, Assistant Director: Finance and Performance regarding Management Accounts. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, to the quarter three 2024/25 Management Accounts.**

SPR/044/2025: **DAERA PROJECT - CASTLEWELLAN**

Read: Report from Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services, regarding DAERA Project – Castlewellan. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to accept the recommendations of the Officer’s Report.**

SPR/045/2025: **MINUTES OF NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING 6 DECEMBER 2024**

Read: Minutes of Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting 6 December 2024. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the minutes.**

FOR NOTING

SPR/046/2025: **MINUTES OF WOMEN’S WORKING GROUP**

Read: Minutes of Women’s Working Group Meeting held on 16 January 2025. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Howie, seconded by Councillor Quinn, it was agreed to note the Minutes of Women’s Working Group Meeting held on 16 January 2025.**

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.33pm

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

Signed: **Councillor Tierna Howie**
Chairperson

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