

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Minutes of Strategy Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on
Thursday 11 February 2021 at 6.00pm via Microsoft Teams & Downshire Civic Centre
(Hybrid)**

In the Chair: Councillor G Sharvin

In Attendance:

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| Councillor P Brown | Councillor P Byrne |
| Councillor C Enright | Councillor O Hanlon |
| Councillor R Howell | Councillor A Lewis |
| Councillor H McKee | Councillor O Magennis |
| Councillor D Murphy | Councillor B Ó Muirí |
| Councillor M Savage | Councillor W Walker |

Also in attendance:

| | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Councillor T Andrews | Councillor K McKeivitt |
| Councillor G Stokes | Councillor J Trainor |

Officials in Attendance:

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs D Carville, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism
Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning & Policy
Mrs A Robb, Assistant Director Corporate Services
Mr K Montgomery, Assistant Director of Finance
Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects
Mrs L Fitzsimons, HR Manager
Mr A Grimshaw, Project Manager
Mr F O'Connor, Legal Advisor
Mrs C Hanvey, Personal Assistant
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms L O'Hare, Democratic Services Officer

Also in Attendance: Mr T Morrison, Otium Leisure Consultancy

SPR/17/2021: APOLOGIES AND CHAIRPERSON'S REMARKS

Apologies were received from Councillors Doran and Gallagher.

SPR/18/2021: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

**SPR/19/2021: ACTION SHEET ARISING FROM STRATEGY, POLICY AND
RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETINGS HELD ON THURSDAY 14
JANUARY 2021**

Read: Action Sheet of the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 January 2021. **(Copy circulated)**

SPR/185/2020 – Trade Union Dispute/Terms and Conditions of Employment

In response to a query from Councillor Brown, Mrs Carville advised the matter was still with the legal teams and Councillors should hopefully be briefed in the forthcoming weeks.

SPR/005/2021 – Northern Ireland 100 years

Councillor Lewis queried whether there was potential for groups applying for money to hold events at a later date, in light of the continuing lockdown and current long-term restrictions.

Mrs Carville confirmed that this would be considered again should the situation be more long term.

SPR/003/2021 – Letter to Health Minister Mr Swann and contact with PHA

Councillor Savage queried whether a response had been received to Council's request regarding a drive in and walk through testing facility in Newry, and whether there had been engagement with the PHA in relation to working with community groups who want to make their buildings available or use of Council buildings to facilitate use as public vaccination centres.

Mrs Carville confirmed a letter had been sent on the 15 January 2021 to the Health Minister Mr Robin Swann, and the Chief Executive had been in telephone contact with the PHA, however no formal response had been received as of yet. The Chief Executive and Mr Lipsett had held discussions with a regional representative from the GP collective about using council facilities and it was made known in the South Eastern Trust and Southern Trust area that we are willing to help out if required and make buildings available. Mrs Carville agreed to keep the item on the Action sheet going forward and provide an update as it happens.

Mr Quinn advised members that Newry Leisure Centre had been used that week as a vaccination centre at the request of Clanrye GP Surgery.

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed that the action sheet from the Strategy, Policy and Resources Committee Meetings held on 14 January 2021, be approved and previous request for a drive-in and walkthrough facility in Newry to remain on Action Sheet and update provided to members as situation evolves.**

NOTICES OF MOTION

SPR/20/2021: REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION - IMPACT OF MISOGYNY AND TRANSMISOGNY.

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy regarding, Impact of misogyny and transmisogny. **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor McKeivitt thanked officers for the detailed report and members for the opportunity to present the motion paying particular thanks to the members of the 'Equality and Good Relations Reference Group' for their unanimous support of the motion. Councillor McKeivitt urged members and their parties to support the 'Raise Your Voice Campaign' and welcomed the increase in the amount of women that now hold higher positions in management and government throughout the world.

Councillors Brown, Lewis and Magennis spoke in support of the motion, thanking Councillor McKeivitt for bringing the motion.

Councillor Magennis, while referring to a similar motion tabled in Mid Ulster Council where SDLP party members supported an amendment which in effect lessened the effect of the motion, asked for clarity on the overall stance of the SDLP party on why they fully support misogyny and transmisogyny becoming a hate crime in some Councils and not in others.

The Chairperson confirmed that as Chair he would remain neutral on the motion, adding that Councillor McKeivitt's motion, the Newry Mourne and Down SDLP group and Minister Mallon had clearly shown what their view and stance was, however the SDLP party would review and reaffirm what their stance was in view of the amendment made to a similar motion at Mid Ulster Council.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Brown, that Council agree to the following recommendations:**

- 1. Council to write to the Minister of Justice for Northern Ireland highlighting Council's support of the Motion and the Raise Your Voice Campaign;**
- 2. Council to raise awareness of the Raise Your Voice Campaign through:**
 - Placing 'Raise Your Voice' posters in Council properties;**
 - Training for Elected Members and employees;**
 - DEA Coordinators to undertake a community focused programme to support the Raise Your Voice Campaign.**

SPR/21/2021: **REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND ACT**

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy regarding, report on Notice of Motion – Government of Ireland Act **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Ó Muirí highlighted the motion was an important issue for every party and nobody should feel threatened by a motion of this type coming to Council. The effort behind this motion was to find a space to have conversation and debate about looking at and dealing with our past and how this can influence the future.

Councillor Walker stated had no issue with the context of the motion and discussing referendums but made it clear the power of the referendum would lie with the Secretary of State and when that time comes the DUP party would be fully engaged.

Councillor Ó Muirí confirmed that the motion called for 'space for debate' which was teased out at the Good Relations Forum and happy that this space has now been created.

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Murphy, that Council consider and agree to the following:**

- The Equality and Good Relations Reference Group be the vehicle for discussion of the issues raised within the Notice of Motion and that this be included as a standing item on the**

agenda for future meetings of the Councillors' Equality and Good Relations Reference Group.

SPR/22/2021: REPORT ON NOTICE OF MOTION – NORTHERN MUTUAL

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs R Mackin, Assistant Director Corporate Planning and Policy regarding, report on Notice of Motion – Northern Mutual **(Copy circulated)**

Councillor Brown thanked officers for a detailed report, highlighting that by supporting the motion and the Northern Mutual Bank, Council would be taking clear action to indicate their support for Co-operative Banking sector and Community Wealth Building. This initiative had been championed by NICVA, Advice NI and the campaign for the Northern Mutual banks co-founders. Councillor Brown proposed the officer's recommendations, seconded by Councillor Enright.

Mr Montgomery stressed to members in terms of resource implications, once a business case is presented to Council as noted in the motion an assessment would be carried out and a report brought back to committee to consider all implications including resources.

A discussion took place and members raised the following points:

- Where was the business case as cited in the motion and who would be providing it?
- Not enough detail had been provided to make a decision on the motion.
- The motion plucked out 1 element as a stand-alone element for community wealth building.
- As a Council how would we set up a bank and where did the £20million required come from?
- Any development of a mutual bank complemented any existing community wealth building structures i.e. the Credit Union movement and also created opportunities to enhance it.
- Huge financial expectation on the Council and finer detail needed to be interrogated.
- The Minister for Communities had already awarded a Community Welfare Building programme which could form part of the wider programme.
- What was the Advisory Group and who joined it?

Councillor Savage stated he supported the ethos and spirit of the motion and proposed the following amendment which was seconded by Councillor McKee:

'That this Council recognises the need for greater resilience and community wealth building in the council region in light of the coronavirus pandemic and future crises that will inevitably arise due to global warming; and looks to solutions beyond business-as-usual which can help build this necessary resilience and community wealth. In seeking such solutions, this council agrees to assess the financial and practical viability of the Northern Mutual bank—a bank that will be regional, ethical, complementary to our Credit Unions, and not driven by profit but by the needs of the region. This should be done as part of a wider commitment to developing a District-wide Community Wealth Building strategy. A business case will be provided to council to help carry out this assessment'

Councillor Brown responded saying the wording of the motion stated it was asking for a business case and if the Northern Mutual was financially and practically viable, Council would perhaps then choose to commit to some or all of those actions stated. He advised he was content to accept Councillor Savage's amendment.

Councillor Brown clarified the following points:

- The £20million is the total cost the bank start up right across Northern Ireland, there was a wide range of stakeholders across the voluntary, public sector and private sector that Northern Mutual would be hoping would buy in.
- Community Wealth Building strategy was welcomed and hoped it would trickle down to local level.
- Community banking is a good way to add in an additional pillar to the community wealth building strategy.

Mrs Carville asked on a point of clarity – who was providing the business case, as the motion suggested a business case would be brought to Council.

Councillor Brown confirmed it would be Council who was chiefly responsible in preparing a business case in co-operation with the Northern Mutual/Advisory Group.

Mrs Carville stated that Council would need to consider the resources required in order to complete a detailed piece of work such as the business case and asked members if the committee consider the resources required to prepare the business case in the first instance.

Councillor Savage stated he was happy to add to his amendment to include in the last line:

‘Subject to a resource assessment, a business case would be provided to Council to help carry out this assessment’

The Chairperson asked members if they were content to proceed with the following amended proposal:

‘That this Council recognises the need for greater resilience and community wealth building in the council region in light of the coronavirus pandemic and future crises that will inevitably arise due to global warming; and looks to solutions beyond business-as-usual which can help build this necessary resilience and community wealth. In seeking such solutions, this council agrees to assess the financial and practical viability of the Northern Mutual bank—a bank that will be regional, ethical, complementary to our Credit Unions, and not driven by profit but by the needs of the region. This should be done as part of a wider commitment to developing a District-wide Community Wealth Building strategy and officers to review the resource implications of preparing a business case’.

Councillor Byrne stated it was a huge piece of work and more clarity was required for Council officers, he suggested an initial conversation should be had with the Advisory Group in order to assess the implications for the District with regard resources.

The Chief Executive highlighted the understanding and tone of the motion had changed when it was made known that Council were expected to carry out the business case and she would have concerns in supporting anything at present without knowing the full extent of any legal barriers to Council. It would be preferable if members would agree to allow officers to consider this further and bring back to the next SPR meeting.

Members discussed the matter further indicating they were broadly supportive of the motion however further investigation was required in order to proceed.

Agreed: It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Brown, seconded by Councillor Enright, to allow officers time to consider the matter, review the resource implications and the legalities of the Northern Mutual Bank and bring back to SPR for further discussion.

DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

SPR/23/2021: SCHEME OF ALLOWANCES

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs D Carville, Director Corporate Services regarding, Scheme of Allowances **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Byrne, that Members approve the updated Scheme of Allowances and following approval, upload of the Scheme of Allowances to Council website.**

SPR/24/2021: SCHEDULE OF MEETINGS 2021/22

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs D Carville, Director Corporate Services regarding, Schedule of Meetings 2021/22 **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed on the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, that Members consider and agree the schedule of meetings including the amendments on the following dates:**

- **Mock Annual Meeting – Wednesday 26th May 2021 at 2pm**
- **Annual Meeting – Monday 1st June 2021 at 6pm**
- **SPR – Wednesday 16th March 2022 at 6pm**
- **AHC – Wednesday 20th April 2022 at 6pm**
- **NS – Thursday 21st April 2022 at 6pm**

FOR NOTING

SPR/25/2021: MINUTES OF NEWRY CCR PB MEETING – 02.02.2021

Read: Minutes of Newry CCR PB Meeting – 02.02.2021. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed to note the contents of the minutes.**

SPR/26/2021: SICKNESS ABSENCE

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs L Fitzsimons, HR Manager regarding, Sickness Absence. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **It was agreed to note the contents of 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 Howell, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the next matter which related to exempt information by virtue of para. 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Information relating to the financial or business affairs of a particular person (including the Council holding that information) and the public may, by resolution, be excluded during this item of business.

It was agreed to take Item 18 – OBC Consultation – Public Survey Questionnaire at this point in the meeting.

SPR/27/2021: OBC CONSULTATION – PUBLIC SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr C Mallon, Director of Enterprise, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding OBC Consultation – Public Survey Questionnaire **(Copy circulated)**

The meeting was adjourned at 19.57pm

The meeting recommenced at 20.07pm

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Murphy, that Elected Members consider the contents of the report and approve the Public Survey Questionnaire for use to include:

The features question replaced with a numeric scale 1-5 with respondents asked to rank how they view the importance of each feature.

The benefits question to be replaced by a scale of respondents ranking the extent to which they agree or disagree with each benefit.

Budget costs be inserted for each project with those grant funded identified as such.

Each of the projects to be ranked in order of preference.

The term Civic Hub to be changed to Civic Hub/Council Offices.

Responses also invited in letter form by email and post.

Councillor Lewis left during the above discussions – 7.29pm

SPR/28/2021: TENDOR FOR OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH SERVICES

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mrs L Fitzsimons, HR Manager regarding, Tender for Occupational Health Services. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed to approve the request to invite tenders for Occupational Health services for a two-year period with the option to extend twice by mutual agreement for a total of 4 years at anticipated cost as outlined on the officer's report.**

SPR/29/2021: EASEMENT OVER COUNCIL LANDS AT GLEN HILL/WATSON'S RD, NEWRY

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration regarding, Easement over Council lands at Glen Hill/Watson's Rd, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Savage that Elected Members approve the grant of an easement at Watson's Rd/Glen Hill on the following conditions:**

- 1. Payment of the market value for the grant of the easement, as assessed by Council's appointed valuer, together with reasonable valuation and legal costs.**

SPR/30/2021: THE BOAT HOUSE, WARRENPOINT

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration regarding, The Boat House, Warrenpoint. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.**

Agreed: **On the proposal of Councillor Howell, seconded by Councillor Magennis, that Elected Members agree to move forward with option 3 listed in the officer's report – Council renews the Lease of the Boat House with The Hall Estate for a further 5year term at a market rental value agreed by Council's valuer and then sublets The Boat House to The Carlingford Lough Curragh Club for a peppercorn rent,**

subject to Departmental approval. The Carlingford Lough Curragh Club to be responsible for Council's valuation fees.

SPR/30/2021: LEGAL ADVICE ON JUDICIAL REVIEW CHALLENGE AGAINST SE TRUST

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr F O'Connor, Head of Legal Administration regarding, Legal Advice on Judicial Review Challenge Against SE Trust. **(Copy circulated)**

In response to queries from Members, Mr O'Connor advised that Council would not have the vires to take a legal action like this and implications to that from a Local Government Auditors perspective is relevant in relation to monies expended on a legal action which isn't supported by legal advice.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Sharvin, seconded by Councillor Hanlon, to send this detail to the Health Working Group and that Council write to the Trust highlighting the concerns as outlined in the officer's report and seeking confirmation as to the review mechanisms in place and the timescale for revisiting these decisions.

SPR/31/2021: SURPLUS ASSET UPDATE

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects regarding, Surplus Asset Update. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Ó Muirí, seconded by Councillor Savage, that Elected Members note the content of the report and attached Appendix A – D.

Members agreed to approve the following:

- 5 Ballynoe Road, Downpatrick. Having secured outline planning approval for 4No housing units, obtain an updated valuation of the asset and re-commence discussions with NIHE for the associated disposal for social housing provision.
- Lands at former Station Road Play Area, 72 Station Avenue, Castlewellan. To add to the Surplus Asset Registrar and retain the asset in Council ownership until after the review for the new Area Plan has concluded.
- Lands at the former Play Area at Latt Villas, Latt Road, Mullaghglass, Newry. To add to the Surplus Asset Registrar and commence the D1 process, subject to confirmation from our legal department that there are no

restrictions preventing its disposal. Valuation of asset to be undertaken.

- Lands at Lismore Park Playing Fields, Crossmaglen. To extend the deadline of the closure of the D1 process by 4 months to 11th June 2021 to enable the Crossmaglen Rangers/DTNI to undertake their feasibility studies and submit a Business Plan to Council.
- Town Hall, Newry St., Kilkeel. To extend the deadline of the closure of the D1 process by 1 month to 8th April 2021 to enable the KDA/DTNI to complete the feasibility studies and submit a Business Plan to Council.

Councillor Enright left the meeting at this point - 20.50pm

SPR/32/2021: PHA COVID TESTING FACILITY AT ALBERT BASIN, NEWRY

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects regarding, PHA Covid-19 Testing Facility at Albert Basin, Newry. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Murphy, seconded by Councillor Magennis, it was agreed that Elected Members approve the following:

Not to trigger the termination clause within the lease agreement with PHA after the initial 3 months (31st March 2021) and that the lease remains in place for the 6 months period up until 30th June 2021.

Officers to continue to liaise with the PHA and monitor the demand for the testing facility, with a further report to SP&R Committee prior to the end of the 6-month lease period, if a further period is requested by the PHA.

SPR/33/2021: NICTS SHORT-TERM ACCOMMODATION REQUEST

Read: Report dated 11 February 2021 from Mr C Quinn, Assistant Director of Estates & Capital Projects regarding, NICTS Short-term Accommodation Request. **(Copy circulated)**

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Savage, seconded by Councillor Murphy that Elected Members approve the following:

- The Sean Hollywood Arts Centre to be considered for short-term accommodation for NICTS to undertake the

selection of jury panels during identified dates during April and May 2021 (3 days each month).

- Officers proceed to commence negotiations with NICTS on the associated legal agreement between both parties.
- A further report to be brought back to SP&R Committee in late summer 2021 if there is a need to extend the legal agreement after the summer recess. This would only be considered if the current Covid restrictions remain in place.

FOR NOTING

SPR/34/2021: STRATEGIC FINANCE WORKING GROUP ACTION SHEET – 4 FEBRUARY 2021

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Noted: It was agreed to note the contents of the Strategic Finance Working Group Action Sheet – 4 February 2021.

SPR/35/2021: MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS TO 31 DECEMBER 2020

Agreed: On the proposal of Councillor Magennis, seconded by Councillor Savage, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

Noted: It was agreed to note the content of the officer's report.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 21.10pm.

Signed: **Councillor Gareth Sharvin**
Chairperson

Signed: **Dorinnia Carville**
Director of Corporate Services