

September 26th, 2023

Notice Of Meeting

You are requested to attend the meeting to be held on **Wednesday, 27th September 2023** at **7:00 pm** in **City Hall, Bangor.**

Agenda

Agenda

(Attached)

[C 27.09.2023 Agenda.pdf](#)

Page 1

1. Prayer

2. Apologies

Alan Graham

Stephen Holywood

3. Declarations of Interest

4 Mayor's Business

5 Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the Month of September 2023

(Attached)

[Mayoral Engagements September 2023.pdf](#)

Not included

6 Minutes of Council Meeting held dated 20 August 2023

(Copy attached)

[C 30.08.2023 Minutes.pdf](#)

Not included

[C 30.08.23 MinutesPM.pdf](#)

Page 5

7 Minutes of Committees

7.1 Planning Committee dated 5 September 2023

(Copy attached)

[Minutes PC.05.09.23.pdf](#)

Not included

7.2 Environment Committee dated 6 September 2023

(Copy attached)

📎 *230906 EC Minutes.pdf*

Not included

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

7.2.1 Matter Arising - Governance Arrangement for Management of Council Harbours Appointment of 'Duty Holder'

7.3 Place and Prosperity Committee dated 7 September 2023

(Copy attached)

📎 *PP 07.09.2023 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

7.4 Corporate Services Committee dated 12 September 2023

(Copy attached)

📎 *CS 12.09.2023 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

7.4.1 Matter Arising - Report on the Consultation Response to Northern Ireland's 2030 and 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets and First Three Carbon Budgets and Seeking views on Climate Change Committee (CCC) Advice Report: The Path to Net Zero Northern Ireland

(Report attached)

📎 *Item 7.4.1-Matter Arising-Report on the Consultation response to Northern Irelands 2030 - 2040 Emissions Reduction Targets and First Three Carbon Budgets a.pdf*

Not included

📎 *Item 7.4.1 - Matter Arising - Appendix 1 - Carbon Budget Consultation Document.pdf*

Not included

📎 *Item 7.4.1 - Matter Arising - Appendix 2 - Draft consultation response revised Full council.pdf*

Not included

7.5 Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 13 September 2023

(Minutes attached)

📎 *CWB 13.09.2023 Minutes.pdf*

Not included

7.5.1 Matter Arising - Report on the Funding Offer from Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) for Capacity and Capability Building Programme in Northern Ireland: Non-Good Products 2023/24

(Report attached)

📎 *7.5.1 Matter Arising Funding Offer from BEIS Capacity & Capability Building Programme.pdf* **Not included**

7.6 Audit Committee dated 18 September 2023

(Copy attached)

📎 *AC 18.09.2023 Minutes.pdf* **Not included**

8. Requests for Deputation

8.1 Re-Gen

(Copy attached)

📎 *8.1 Request for Presentation - Re-Gen.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *8.1 Appendix 1 - Letter from Re-Gen.pdf* **Not included**

9. Nomination to East Border Region Members Forum

(Report attached)

📎 *9. Nomination to East Border Region Forum.pdf* **Not included**

10. NILGA Accredited Provision for Elected Member Development 2023/2024

(Report attached)

📎 *10. NILGA Accredited Provision for Elected Member Development 23 24.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *10. Appendix 1 - NILGA Accredited Provision Nominations LetterANDAug2023.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *10. Appendix 2 - NILGA Local Development Planning Leadership Programme 2023-24 Promotion.pdf* **Not included**

📎 *10. Appendix 3 - NILGA Leadership Development Programme 2023 -24 Promotion August 2023.pdf* **Not included**

📄 **10. Appendix 4 - NILGA Accredited Learning Provision Indicative Costs (2023-24).pdf**

Not included

11. Implementation of New HRC Access Booking System Update

(Report attached)

📄 **11. Update Report on Implementation of New HRC Access Booking System DL (003).pdf**

Not included

📄 **11 Appendix 1 - HRC Booking Confirmation Email.pdf**

Not included

📄 **11 Appendix 2 - HRC Booking Reminder Email.pdf**

Not included

12. Nomination to Outside Bodies

(Report attached)

📄 **12. Nominations to Outside Bodies.pdf**

Not included

13. Sealing Documents

14. Transfer of Rights of Burial

15. Notice of Motion Status Report

(Report attached)

📄 **15. NOM Status Report.pdf**

Not included

📄 **15. NOM TRACKER LIVE.pdf**

Not included

16. Notices of Motion

16.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Moore and Councillor Creighton

This Council believes:

education should be accessible to all who seek it and embedding a culture of lifelong learning in our society is essential to enabling people to realise their potential.

part-time flexible learning is crucial to meeting the skills needed to build a modern, inclusive and green economy.

part-time students are a unique demographic, they are more likely to have disabilities, come from disadvantaged backgrounds, having caring responsibilities, such as children or elderly relatives, and in

general, be part of a 'hard to reach' group who missed out on full-time study.

lifelong learning, including non-formal education, addresses social issues, strengthens communities and builds civic engagement. It is the most effective tool for meeting social policy objectives and creating positive social change.

recognises that lifelong learning must become a meaningful and developed policy area with tangible actions and outcomes, underpinned by the wealth of best practice and innovation from across the UK and Ireland.

This Council therefore resolves to:

work with the Lifelong Learning Alliance to develop a Lifelong Learning campaign, to inform and raise public awareness of how lifelong learning transforms lives and communities.

Engage with MLAs and MPs to prioritise funding for formal and informal part-time education when the Executive is formed.

Encourage MLAs to form an All- Party Group on Lifelong Learning to support an evidence and best-practice informed approach to policy making, in collaboration with adult education bodies to form a voice for Lifelong Learning in the Assembly when an Executive is formed.

16.2 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Woods and Councillor McKee

That this Council, recognising its commitment as a responsible employer, and that staff are paid the current Living Wage, tasks officers to explore becoming 'Living Wage' accredited with the UK Living Wage Foundation, as well as ensuring any regularly contracted employees and workers, including those who are employed externally to deliver Council services, are paid the living wage hourly rate. It also explores also becoming Living Hours and Living Pensions accredited too.

16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Adair, Douglas and Alderman McIlveen

That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones.

***** IN CONFIDENCE *****

17. Disposal of Kinnegar Logistics Base Update

(Report attached)

- | | |
|--|---------------------|
| 17. Disposal of Kinnegar Logistics Base -update.pdf | <i>Not included</i> |
| 17. Appendix 1 - Letter from Cleaver Fulton Rankin.pdf | <i>Not included</i> |
| 17. Appendix 1 - Legal Opinion.pdf | <i>Not included</i> |

 **17. Appendix 2 - Letter from Joe O'Neil Belfast Harbour to Stephen Reid.pdf** **Not included**

18. NIE Request for Use of Land Castle Place Car Park, Newtownards

(Report attached)

 **18. Request for a lease to NIE - Kennel Lane Carpark Newtownards.pdf** **Not included**

 **18. Appendix 1 - location map - request from NIE.pdf** **Not included**

 **18. Appendix 2 - substation drawing - request from NIE.png** **Not included**

 **18. Appendix 3 - working area map - request from NIE.pdf** **Not included**

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

20 September 2023

Dear Sir/Madam

You are hereby invited to attend a hybrid Meeting (in person and via Zoom) of Ards and North Down Borough Council which will be held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor on **Wednesday, 27 September 2023 at 7.00pm.**

Yours faithfully

Stephen Reid
Chief Executive
Ards and North Down Borough Council

A G E N D A

1. Prayer
2. Apologies
3. Declarations of Interest
4. Mayor's Business
5. Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of September 2023
6. Minutes of Council meeting dated 30 August 2023 (Copy attached)
7. Minutes of Committees
 - 7.1. Minutes of Planning Committee dated 5 September 2023 (Copy attached)
 - 7.2. Minutes of Environment Committee dated 6 September 2023 (Copy attached)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

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 - 7.3. Minutes of Place and Prosperity Committee dated 7 September 2023 (Copy attached)

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- 7.5 Minutes of Community and Wellbeing Committee dated 13 September 2023 (Copy to follow)
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8. Requests for Deputation
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10. NILGA Accredited Provision for Elected Member Development 2023/2024 (Report attached)
11. Implementation of New HRC Access Booking System Update (Report to follow)
12. Nomination to Outside Bodies (Report attached)
13. Sealing Documents
14. Transfer of Rights of Burial
15. Notice of Motion Status Report (Report attached)
16. Notices of Motion
 - 16.1 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Moore and Councillor Creighton

This Council believes:

- education should be accessible to all who seek it and embedding a culture of lifelong learning in our society is essential to enabling people to realise their potential.
- part-time flexible learning is crucial to meeting the skills needed to build a modern, inclusive and green economy.
- part-time students are a unique demographic, they are more likely to have disabilities, come from disadvantaged backgrounds, have caring

responsibilities, such as children or elderly relatives, and in general, be part of a 'hard to reach' group who missed out on full-time study.¹

- lifelong learning, including non-formal education, addresses social issues, strengthens communities and builds civic engagement. It is the most effective tool for meeting social policy objectives and creating positive social change.
- recognises that lifelong learning must become a meaningful and developed policy area with tangible actions and outcomes, underpinned by the wealth of best practice and innovation from across the UK and Ireland.

This Council therefore resolves to:

- To work with the Lifelong Learning Alliance to develop a Lifelong Learning campaign, to inform and raise public awareness of how lifelong learning transforms lives and communities.
- Engage with MLAs and MPs to prioritise funding for formal and informal part-time education when the Executive is formed.
- Encourage MLAs to form an All-Party Group on Lifelong Learning to support an evidence and best-practice informed approach to policy making, in collaboration with adult education bodies to form a voice for Lifelong Learning in the Assembly when an Executive is formed.

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16.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Councillor Adair and Councillor Douglas, Alderman McIlveen

That Council notes the increasing complaints regarding the poor condition and appearance of our cemeteries across the Borough and tasks officers to bring back a report on options to improve the maintenance of our cemeteries which are places of special significance to those who have lost loved ones.

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

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18 NIE request for Use of Land Castle Place car park, Newtownards (Report attached)

MEMBERSHIP OF ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Alderman Adair	Councillor Hollywood
Alderman Armstrong-Cotter	Councillor S Irvine
Alderman Brooks	Councillor W Irvine
Alderman Cummings	Councillor Irwin (Deputy Mayor)
	Councillor Kennedy
Alderman Graham	Councillor Kerr
Alderman McAlpine	Councillor MacArthur
Alderman McDowell	Councillor Martin
Alderman McIlveen	Councillor McCollum
Alderman Smith	Councillor McCracken
Councillor Ashe	Councillor McKee
Councillor Blaney	Councillor McKimm
Councillor Boyle	Councillor McLaren
Councillor Cathcart	Councillor McRandal
Councillor Chambers	Councillor Moore
Councillor Creighton	Councillor Morgan
Councillor Cochrane	Councillor Rossiter
Councillor Douglas	Councillor Smart
Councillor Edmund	Councillor Woods
Councillor Gilmour (Mayor)	Councillor Wray

ARDS AND NORTH DOWN BOROUGH COUNCIL

A hybrid meeting of the Ards and North Down Borough Council was held at the City Hall, The Castle, Bangor and via Zoom, on Wednesday 30 August 2023 commencing at 7.00pm.

In the Chair:	The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour)	
Aldermen:	Adair	Graham
	Armstrong-Cotter	McAlpine (Zoom)
	Brooks	McDowell
	Cummings	McIlveen
	Douglas	Smith (Zoom)
Councillors:	Blaney	Kerr
	Boyle	MacArthur
	Cathcart	Martin
	Chambers	McCollum
	Creighton	McCracken
	Cochrane	McKee (Zoom)
	Douglas	McLaren (7.02pm)
	Edmund	McRandal
	Hollywood	Moore
	S Irvine	Morgan
	W Irvine	Rossiter (Zoom)
	Irwin	Smart
	Kennedy	Wray

Officers: Chief Executive (S Reid), Director of Corporate Services (M Steele), Director of Place (S McCullough), Director of Prosperity (A McCullough), Director of Environment (D Lindsay), Head of Parks & Cemeteries (S Daye), Head of Communications and Marketing (C Jackson), Democratic Services Manager (J Wilson) and Democratic Services Officer (P Foster)

1. PRAYER

The Mayor (Councillor Gilmour) welcomed everyone to the meeting and the Chief Executive read the Council prayer.

NOTED.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillors Ashe and Woods

NOTED.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Mayor asked for any Declarations of Interest and the following were made:

- Alderman Smith – Item 11 - Christmas Festival Fund 2023
- Councillors Hollywood and Wray – Items 25.2 and 25.3 – Notices of Motion
- Councillors Chambers and W Irvine – Item 31 - Matter Arising from Meeting of the Strategic Policy and Finance Group on 23 August 2023 – Leisure Facilities Management
- Councillor Morgan – Item 11 - Christmas Festival Fund 2023

NOTED.

4. DEPUTATION

4.1. NILGA - NILGA's Purpose and Strategic Direction

The Mayor welcomed the delegation from NILGA and invited them to make their presentation.

Members were thanked by Councillor Bennington on behalf of the delegation from NILGA for the opportunity to attend the meeting to encourage the Council to engage with NILGA. Councillor Bennington stated that she was a member of the NILGA Cross Party Officer Bearer Team and members were advised that this Team operated an open door policy and as such if a member or party had an issue they were encouraged to reach out at any time. Elected members were the most visible part of local government and were in essence the community activists who lived in the towns and villages of the Borough. She stated that as such they effectively gave the local community a voice to which NILGA added value.

At this stage Councillor Billy Webb addressed members thanking them for the opportunity to address the meeting. He added that he too was happy to be able to share with members what NIGLA could offer elected members. Through participation in NILGA Ards and North Down could be given a voice at regional, national and international level on matters affecting the sustainability and performance of the Council. This in turn would support elected members in maximising opportunities to create a thriving, prosperous and sustainable Borough with equality of opportunity for all residents. He indicated that NILGA was owned by all 11 Councils in Northern Ireland and as such members were encouraged to continue to engage both openly and politically through NILGA's Officer Team. At this stage he handed over to Alison Allen, Chief Executive of NILGA.

Ms Allen commented that it was great to see so many familiar faces amongst a number of new faces in the Council Chamber. She stated that she had taken up her role in NILGA just over 18 months ago and during that time she had met with officers and elected members. She proceeded to guide members through a PowerPoint presentation attached.

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The presentation outlined the Role and Benefits of NILGA. Those benefits included Workforce, Elected Member Development, Policy, Representation and Communications.

The Mayor thanked the delegation from NILGA for their presentation and invited questions from members at this stage. The following comments were made:

Alderman McDowell expressed his thanks to the NILGA delegation and sought further details on the Partnership Panel and its impact, further information about Covid-19 recovery funding and an update on the Invest NI review.

In response Ms Allen reminded members that Alderman Adair was the Council's representative on the Partnership Panel adding that currently it was considering the transfer of regeneration powers along with lobbying the Minister. During the Covid-19 pandemic NILGA had supported all 11 Councils through practical and policy assistance. In respect of Invest NI work remained in progress particularly given the ongoing internal issues including the appointment of a new Chief Executive.

Thanking the NILGA delegation for their presentation Alderman McIlveen referred to SOLACE and the NAC noting that currently funding from Council went to all three organisations. As such he would be keen to ensure there was no duplication of work and that funds were spent effectively. Also he referred to a key challenge being faced by the Council that being around climate change and net zero and the anticipated strategy from DAERA around waste and asked if NILGA was doing any work on that to adopt a common waste approach.

In response Ms Allen sought to reassure the member at monthly meetings of SOLACE alignment was ensured at all times. She reiterated that NILGA was politically led while the NAC adopted a similar approach. In relation to the waste issue she confirmed that work was underway adding that she was aware the Council would have considered a report a number of months ago detailing the various options available for a single waste operator for Northern Ireland.

Councillor Boyle welcomed the delegation from NILGA and thanked them for their presentation. Continuing he commented in his capacity as NAC Secretary that the NAC acted on behalf of elected members while NILGA acted on behalf of Councils. Continuing he acknowledged that partnership working arrangements were now in place and were working well and as such he stated that he would look forward to further partnership working with NILGA.

Also thanking the NILGA delegation for their presentation, Alderman Graham asked if there was a case for NILGA to become more streamlined perhaps with having fewer representatives on it and acting more as a Trade Union for Councils. Continuing he also sought clarity on what NILGA's current budget was.

In response Ms Allen confirmed that currently NILGA's operating budget was just over £800,000 which was comprised of Council subscriptions and sponsorship funding sourced by NILGA. She also reported that NILGA had increased its other income streams which had allowed it to diversify and relinquish some of the burden on Councils in respect of financially supporting NILGA. The point raised about

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reducing the size of NILGA would, she stated, very much be a decision for the elected members of the 11 Councils. She reiterated that NILGA was very much owned by the elected members of each of the 11 Councils.

The Mayor thanked the delegation from NILGA for their presentation.

(The delegation from NILGA left the meeting at this stage – 7.31pm)

5. MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor stated that she, alongside some of her colleagues, had been delighted to attend the Veterans Parade in Conway Square, Newtownards followed by a reception in the Royal British Legion, Newtownards on Friday 25 August 2023.

This, she stated, was an important opportunity to recognise and pay tribute to the invaluable contribution of men and women from across the Borough who had served both at home and abroad, in particular on the occasion of their 50th Anniversary, it was great to see the Greenfinches on Parade. She added that as she announced at the Parade, she was very pleased to support the Royal British Legion as one of her chosen charities for this year.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the Mayor's comments be noted.

6. MAYOR AND DEPUTY MAYOR ENGAGEMENTS FOR THE MONTH OF AUGUST 2023

(Appendix I)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor Engagements for the month of August 2023.

The Mayor commented that 12 August 2023 had undoubtedly been one of her busiest days to date.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Smart, that the information be noted.

7. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON 26 JULY 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED: - Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the minutes be agreed.

8. MINUTES OF COMMITTEES

8.1. Minutes of Planning Committee dated 1 August 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of the above minutes.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the minutes be adopted.

9. DEPUTATION REQUESTS

9.1. Sound around Ards (Appendix II)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that a request had been received from Alison Coyle, Hon. Secretary of Sound Around Ards - Talking Newspapers which had requested to present to the relevant Committee in its work in order to try to increase its membership.

Sound Around Ards (SAA) provided those with sight impairments in the Ards and North Down areas with a free weekly news service from the Newtownards Chronicle and County Down Spectator. It had been in operation for 43 years and was 1 of 12 Taking Newspapers left in Northern Ireland.

Every Thursday three of its volunteers buy the papers, select the relevant articles and record a CD at its studio in Ards Hospital Old Labs. CDs were then copied, placed in the returnable envelopes and posted.

The listeners should receive the CD within two days, so the news was fresh. After they had listened to the CD, it could be disposed of and the pre-paid package could be returned in order to receive the following weeks publication.

To use SAA, you did not need to be referred by the hospital, and they were looking to expand their outreach to include those with concentration difficulties who have had a stroke or dementia. It had around 40 listeners at present, but they would like to enhance their reach.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the request be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

9.2. Consulate General for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (Appendix III)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that a request had been received from the Consulate General for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to present to a future Committee on a sports diplomacy initiative with North Down Softball Club.

A copy of the request was attached to the report.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers the request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the request be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

9.3. National Trust (Appendix IV)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report stating that a request had been received from Heather McLachlan, Director for Northern Ireland National Trust which had requested to present to the relevant Committee on the work of the National Trust, the areas of joint endeavour, and outline any policy asks of Councillors.

A copy of the request was attached to this report.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers this request.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the request be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

10. ARDS AND NORTH DOWN SPORTS FORUM GRANTS

(Appendix V)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report stating that on 26 August 2015, Council delegated authority to the Ards and North Down Sports Forum, in order to allow it to administer sports grants funding on behalf of the Council. £45,000 had been allocated within the 2023/2024 revenue budget for this purpose.

The Council further authorised the Forum under delegated powers to award grants of up to £250. Grants above £250 still required Council approval. In addition, the Council requested that regular updates were reported to members.

During June 2023, the Forum received a total of 25 applications: 1 Equipment, 5 Event, 3 Goldcard, 1 Seeding and 15 Travel/Accommodation. A summary of the **23** successful applications were detailed in the attached Successful Equipment, Successful Event, Successful Goldcard, Successful Seeding and Successful Travel & Accommodation Appendices.

For information, the annual budget and spend to date on grant categories was as followed:

	Annual Budget	Funding Awarded June 2023	Remaining Budget
Anniversary	£1,000	£0	£250
Coaching	£3,000	£0	£2,103.75
Equipment	£14,000	*£873.80	£11,527.24
Events	£6,000	*£2,432.00	£968.00
Seeding	£500	*£194.99	£305.01
Travel and Accommodation	£14,500	*£2,180.00	£3,466.09
Discretionary	£1,000	£0	£1,000
Schools/Sports Club Pathway	£5,000	£0	£4,500
*Goldcards proposed during the period June 2023 is 3 (10 Goldcards in total during 2023/24).			

* *The proposed remaining budget for Equipment of **£11,527.24** was based upon a proposed award of **£873.80** – for Approval. *The proposed remaining budget for Events of **£968.00** was based on a proposed award of **£2,432.00** – for Approval. *The proposed remaining budget for Seeding of **£305.01** was based upon a proposed award of **£194.99** – for Noting. *The proposed remaining budget for Travel and Accommodation of **£3,466.09** was based upon a proposed award of **£2,180.00** – for Noting and Reclaimed/Withdrawn costs of £260.79.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached applications for financial assistance for sporting purposes valued at above £250, and that the applications approved by the Forum (valued at below £250) are noted.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Boyle, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Having declared an interest in the next item, Alderman Smith and Councillor Morgan left the meeting at this stage – 7.40pm)

11. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL FUND 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that as members would be aware following on from previous years, that the Council operated a Christmas Festival Programme for the following towns and villages in the Borough who received Christmas Trees from the Council.

Villages –

Ballygowan
Ballyhalbert
Ballywalter
Carrowdore
Cloughey
Conlig
Greyabbey
Groomsport
Helens Bay
Killinchy
Kircubbin
Millisle
Portaferry
Portavogie

Towns –

Donaghadee
Comber
Holywood.

The two Switch-On Festivals in Bangor and Newtownards would continue to be delivered by the Council's Tourism Section in 2023.

The Council invited applications for the 2023-24 Christmas Festival Fund with a closing date of 4pm on Monday 19 June 2023. By the closing date 16 applications were received from 13 villages and three towns requesting funding totalling £21,138.00. The maximum amount of funding for each of the villages was £1,000 and for the towns the maximum applicable was £3,000. £12,138 went to applications from Villages with £9,000 going to applications from Towns.

The applications were assessed and scored by a Community Development Officer, the Grants & Funding Co-Ordinator and a PCSP Officer using the following criteria.

Grant Criteria -	Points
Open and accessible	5
Community Participation	5
Volunteer Involvement	5
Opportunities to improve skills/training	5
Collaboration and partnership	5
Strong sense of Community	5
Value for money	5
Total	35

The assessment panel agreed a pass mark of 45% (score 16). The marks were totalled and calculated as a percentage.

All applications submitted were successful in attaining the pass mark and all received the full amount of grant requested.

Table 1 (VILLAGES)

	Name of group	Date	Time	Amount applied for	Score out of 35	Score as %	Amount Awarded
Villages							
1	Ballygowan & District Community Association	02/12/2023	6-9pm	£660.00	27/35	77%	£660.00
2	Ballyhalbert Community Association	04/12/2023	7-9 pm	£1,000.00	26/35	74%	£1,000.00
3	Ballywalter Community Action Group	01/12/2023	7-9pm	£1,000.00	29/35	82%	£1,000.00
4	Carrowdore & District Community Association	02/12/2023	5-9pm	£1,000.00	25/35	71%	£1,000.00
5	Cloughey & District Community Association	06/12/2023	6.30pm-9.30pm	£478.00	26/35	74%	£478.00

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6	Conlig Community Regeneration Group	02/12/2023	3.30-5.30 pm	£1,000.00	32/35	91%	£1,000.00
7	Discover Groomsport	01/12/2023	6.30pm – 9.30pm	£1,000.00	24/35	68%	£1,000.00
8	Greyabbey & District Community Association	08/12/2023	1pm-9.30pm	£1,000.00	24/35	68%	£1,000.00
9	Killinchy & District Community Development Association	11/12/2023	5pm-9pm	£1,000.00	21/35	60%	£1,000.00
10	Kircubbin & District Community Association	05/12/2023	7-9 pm	£1,000.00	26/35	74%	£1,000.00
11	Millisle & District Community Association	02/12/2023	6.30pm - 9 pm	£1,000.00	28/35	80%	£1,000.00
12	Portaferry Gala Fest	01/12/2023	6.30-8.30 pm	£1,000.00	27/35	77%	£1,000.00
13	Portavogie Regeneration Forum	01/12/2023	6.30-9pm	£1,000.00	25/35	71%	£1,000.00
	Village Total			£12,138.00			£12,138.00

Table 2 (TOWNS)

	Name of group	Date	Time	Amount applied for	Score out of 35	Score as %	Amount Awarded
	Towns						
1	Comber Regeneration Community Partnership	30/11/2023	6-9pm	£3,050.00	16/35	45%	£3,000.00
2	Donaghadee Community Development Association	1-3 Dec'23	Various times	£3,100.00	18/35	51%	£3,000.00
3	Hollywood & District Community Council	25/11/2023	10-5pm	£3,000.00	28/35	80%	£3,000.00
	Towns Total			£9,150.00			£9,000.00
	Overall Fund Total						£21,138.00

RECOMMENDED that the Council approves the assessment panel's recommendations detailed in the tables above and funds Christmas festivals at a cost of £21,138.00.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

(Alderman Smith and Councillor Morgan re-entered the meeting at this stage – 7.41pm)

12. COST OF LIVING CRISIS - REQUEST TO ADMINISTER HARDSHIP FUND FOR 2023-2024

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that in 2022/23 in response to a Notice of Motion, Council agreed to distribute monies provided by DfC towards hardship through partners on the Community Support Steering Group as follows.

Organisation	Purpose of Funding	Funding Recommended
Community Advice Ards and North Down	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
St Vincent De Paul	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Ards Foodbank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Bangor Food Bank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Storehouse Food Bank	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support	£6,672
Ards Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting	£2,872
County Down Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting by supporting their running costs	£2,872
North Down Community Network	To collaborate with partners to provide advice, signposting by supporting their running costs	£2,872
Kilcooley Womens Centre SSM	To collaborate with partners to provide food, signposting and wraparound support by supporting their running costs	£26,672

Council had now received confirmation of a similar offer of funding from the Department for Communities (DfC) for 2023/24 in the form of a hardship fund

totalling £344,027. This was to be distributed before the end of March 2024. It had been hoped that a similar distribution could have been made as above this financial year and the balance put towards an open call scheme. However, DfC had said that all the monies must be subject to open call. DfC had set out the criteria of this fund as follows:

1. A competitive Fund open to: Strategic Community Planning Partners, Community & Voluntary Sector Organisations and registered charities working in Ards and North Down.

2. Purpose of fund: To address hardship due to the current cost of living crisis, particularly the increase in energy and food costs.

The Hardship Funding Programme was developed in recognition of the difficult financial circumstances which exist for the community.

3. The aim of the fund was to:

- Support people who were experiencing food, fuel and financial hardship.
- Provide spaces with a food offering alongside activities and heat (but food should be the primary purpose)
- Enhance service delivery by keeping facilities open and running for longer during the autumn and winter months.
- Develop community schemes to improve self-sufficiency and resilience such as growing spaces and the installation and running of community fridges.
- Increased capacity and integration with existing hardship support services (e.g., Social Supermarkets)
- Holiday hunger initiatives and school/educational based food project e.g. breakfast clubs.

Under the Hardship Funding Programme, applicants could apply for up to £30,000. The minimum value of each application should be £10,000. Applications must demonstrate how the proposed project would address any of the key aims set out above.

4. Who was eligible

The fund was open to the following organisation/groups operating within Ards and North Down:

- Strategic Community Planning Partners (if not delivering statutory functions)
- Community & Voluntary Sector Organisations (if application shows additionality)
- Registered charities (if application should bring additionality to a charitable purpose)

The above organisations needed to meet the following criteria:

- Provide an open and accountable governing document (Constitution or Articles and Memorandum of Association, or applicable governing document, or be based in statute) that has been properly adopted.
- A bank account in the name of the organisation, which requires at least two signatories (unless a Strategic Community Planning Partner).
- An annual set of independently examined financial accounts, endorsed at an annual general meeting (diff for a Strategic CP Partner).
- A Management committee or Governing Board, elected by its membership at an Annual General Meeting, and elected office bearers.

6. What we can and cannot fund

Types of areas which could not be funded included (but were not restricted to):

- Projects that identify communities and individuals who were financially vulnerable and had an innovative solution based on food, fuel and financial hardship.
- Energy costs (e.g., heating and lighting) e.g., voucher schemes (food and fuel)
- Costs associated with the provision of food to provide users/those facing hardship with sustenance e.g., Including Social Supermarkets, Food Banks, Fareshare, Community Fridges, and other meal-based projects.
- Projects that enable community food-based planting programmes delivery e.g., raised beds, poly tunnel, seeds and plants required to grow vegetables/herbs or other items which will provide local communities with produce to assist in meal preparation.
- Purchase and installation of community fridges (but not ongoing energy costs after March 2024)

What we could not fund

- Individual people.
- Private and/or commercial businesses.
- General building or maintenance costs.
- Projects/services operating outside of Ards and North Down area.
- Funding could not be used for subsidy schemes (summer schemes and leisure activities), appliances, small grants to community organisations for community-based projects, advice services, community training, uniform schemes and community transport initiatives (list based on clarity provided by Department for Communities).

Criteria that would be used to short-list applications

- How the applicant would identify people who were most at risk e.g., deprivation, working poor, older people, ethnic minorities, children and young people, socially/physically isolated etc.
- How the applicant would target and promote your project to individuals and communities.
- Number of individuals your project could support.

- Value for money – this was not based on the cheapest value of the project but either the number of people who could be supported or the impact of the support that could be provided to individuals/families.
- Ability to complete project and provide evidence of impact within the required deadlines.

Additional Information

The financial support available through this grant may not cover all costs associated with the requirements of the group for the development of a particular project. Where this was the case, the criteria would require the organisation to cover any shortfall from their existing resources and provide proof of funds. Match funding would not be a pre-requisite for the submission of applications.

Proposals should outline the costs associated in adapting the delivery of, or creating new programmes, services and activities to help address hardship (food, fuel and financial) in local communities.

All projects should be delivered by 31 March 2024.

Successful applicants would be required to collect and submit the following information:

- Number of participants and location.
- Completed entry questionnaire to the scheme (to be provided by ANDBC).
- Completed exit questionnaire to the scheme (to be provided by ANDBC).

RECOMMENDED that Council accepts the offer to administer a Hardship Grant programme as outlined in this report and invites applications from eligible organisations in September.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

The seconder Councillor Wray expressed his full support for the recommendation adding that he was happy to accept this hardship grant programme as outlined in the report. Continuing he stated that he was quite sure every member would be all too familiar with the hardship and struggles that many residents were going through in the current financial situation. As such all help must be greatly welcomed, but he underlined that it was the responsibility of the Council to ensure that every pound of this money was spent correctly, and as a result supported more people. He very much welcomed the fact the DfC had stipulated this was an open call.

Continuing Councillor Wray noted that the Council previously provided entry and exit questionnaires through the first phase and as such his question was had this data been compiled, or had an external evaluation taken place. He hoped that learning could be taken from the first phase, and that the Council could support as many vulnerable people within the Borough as possible.

The Head of Parks & Cemeteries confirmed that evaluations would be forthcoming in due course.

At this stage Councillor Boyle sought clarification around the funding of approximately £26,000 awarded to Kilcooley Women's Centre.

The Mayor advised that funding had been allocated to two Social Supermarkets trials. Underspend from the trial in Newtownards had then been directed to Kilcooley Women's Centre.

At this stage the Head of Parks & Cemeteries provided a brief overview of the Social Supermarket trials and associated funding. It was also noted that a Working Group had been set up with Blu Zebra to consider where the available funding should be allocated and as such it was agreed in conjunction with DfC that the resulting underspend should be allocated to Kilcooley Women's Centre.

Alderman Adair referred members to the report commenting that it detailed the requirement for the completion of entry and exit questionnaires to the scheme.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Wray, that the recommendation be adopted.

13. ACCEPTANCE OF GRANT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SIR SAMUEL KELLY LIFEBOAT (Appendix VI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that Donaghadee Heritage Preservation Company (DHPC) sought the agreement of the Council to become a joint recipient of a grant of £90,000 offered by the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

The grant, which would be disbursed over two years, would pay for the building and equipment of an Exhibition Room in front of the Sir Samuel Kelly (SSK) boat shelter, for a new fence round the SSK compound and for the employment of a part-time worker to take the project forward.

The Council had recently approved a five-year renewal of the lease of the SSK site, and planning permission for the development was expected to be given at the Planning Committee meeting on 5 September 2023. The Council took ownership of the Sir Samuel Kelly under an asset transfer from National Museums Northern Ireland in 2018 and put in place a 25-year License Agreement with DHPC for the conservation, preservation, and display of the SSK.

The Heritage Fund had asked, as a condition of the grant, that the Council should stand behind the Company as a joint recipient. The backing of the Council was required by the Fund because the lease under which the company held the site was not long enough, or secure enough, to satisfy the Fund's centrally imposed conditions. The Company had accepted the Fund's offer of the grant, but the contractual agreement could not be finalised until the Council had given its approval.

By becoming a joint recipient, the Council would incur contingent liabilities to ensure that the grant was properly used and accounted for if the company were to fail to do so. The company's submission was, however, that the risk of those liabilities

materialising was small and that the Fund's requirement for this extra security reflected an abundance of caution.

The Company had previously demonstrated excellent governance and were proactive in seeking and securing financial support for the continued preservation of the SSK and development of the site. The conditions of their five-year lease stated that the Council had an expectation that they sought external funding.

The Heritage Fund made its offer in early July and initially set a term of ten days for the Company to say whether it accepted it. That deadline was extended when it was explained that it would not be possible for the Council to process the request in that time. However, the matter was now urgent.

RECOMMENDED that that Council give its approval to act as a co-recipient of the £90,000 National Lottery Heritage Grant so that there is no risk of this valuable grant being lost to the Borough.

Alderman Brooks proposed, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman Brooks commented that it was very appropriate for the Council to be working in partnership with this project. He acknowledged the tremendous work which had been undertaken to date by many volunteers adding that this would be a great driver for tourism in the Borough.

Commenting as seconder, Councillor McCollum endorsed Alderman Brooks comments welcoming the grant of £90,000 and acknowledging the wonderful work of all the volunteers involved as part of this project.

Councillor MacArthur also endorsed the comments of the proposer and seconder adding that she too welcomed the report and its recommendation. Referring to a recent open day she had attended she reported on how impressed she had been with the work which had been carried out. She added that she looked forward to seeing the future plans for this project come to fruition.

Echoing all of those comments the Mayor also noted the amazing progress which had been made with the project.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor McCollum, that the recommendation be adopted.

14. PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE PROVISION OF FREE PERIOD PRODUCTS IN NORTHERN IRELAND (Appendix VII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report stating that period inequality contributed to the poor mental health and wellbeing experience of those who were unable to access the basic health essentials of period products. This was a growing issue due to the increasing cost of living. Period products were essential items for personal care and should therefore be available to everyone who needed them, regardless of

their economic status.

To address this need, the [Period Products \(Free Provision\) Act \(NI\) 2022](#) was enacted by the Northern Ireland Assembly and required that period products be made freely available from May 2024. The requirements of the Act go beyond seeking to make provision for those in financial difficulty. Rather, there was recognition that period products should be available free of charge by all persons who need to use them. Members would be aware from previous reports to Council that there were two main issues pertaining to the provision of sanitary items:

1. Should sanitary items be made available free of charge to women in all public conveniences as they were essential items, in the same way that soap and hand towels were provided.
2. How do we ensure that women and girls did not miss school/work during their period because they could not afford to buy adequate sanitary protection i.e., those experiencing “period poverty”.

Due to resourcing constraints, the Council had placed the focus on addressing period poverty through working with food banks, social supermarkets and charities as well as providing free period products in seven of the community centres in the most deprived DEAs. The new legislation however made the provision of free period products open to all.

The legislation placed the responsibility of providing and funding free period products on The Executive Office (TEO). It was however difficult to know the quantity and best location for the products to be placed; it was also unclear as to if there was insufficient budget to cover all locations - TEO had already stated that they could not cover all public conveniences because of cost. A report would need to be considered at a future meeting of the Council on The Executive Office’s proposed funding model and the role of Local Government as a partner.

Public Consultation

In order to shape the delivery, TEO had launched a 12-week public consultation into the provision of free period products, running for 12 weeks from Monday 26 June 2023 – Monday 18 September 2023. This sought views on how best the Executive Office (TEO) could ensure that period products were “obtainable free of charge” by “all persons who need to use them”, “while in Northern Ireland”.

The consultation exercise was really designed for individual responses rather than an organisational one – it asked for personal views on **what** period products should be made available, **where** those should be available and **how** people could access those - so whilst approval was sought to send the attached consultation response, Members were also encouraged to send their own responses using the link: [Provision of Free Period Products : Public Consultation - NI Direct - Citizen Space](#)

The questionnaire should take around 10 minutes to complete.

Response and Further Action

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In the proposed consultation response, whilst recognising that the legislation required free period products for all, the need to prioritise those in period poverty was emphasised, bearing in mind the budget restrictions facing TEO.

It also recognised that some minority groups/communities may have had religious or cultural difficulties in engaging in this discussion, and therefore efforts had been made through the Good Relations Officer to contact some of the known groups in the area directly to encourage them to share their views on what type of products were preferred and how to make them more accessible/acceptable to their communities.

The ethos of this Council was also to promote sustainability; therefore, the use of reusable products (accompanied by an education piece) was encouraged.

Finally, TEO had asked for help promoting the consultation and had shared the links below to the:

press release, the consultation page: [Launch of public consultation on provision of free period products | The Executive Office \(executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk\)](#)

TEO's twitter:

<https://twitter.com/ExecOfficeNI/status/1673332816451448837?s=20>

TEO's Facebook coverage: <https://fb.watch/lpmrNi67z4/>

They had asked that the Council considered promoting the consultation by sharing this information within the organisation and on social media platforms.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the attached consultation response document to be returned to The Executive Office.

1. Members complete the online consultation survey as individuals and encourage others to do the same; and
2. Council notes that the Employee Health and Wellbeing will share the consultation document with staff and Corporate Communications will promote the survey through social media platforms to reach as wide an audience as possible.

Councillor McLaren proposed, seconded by Alderman Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Councillor McLaren welcomed the report adding that she was delighted the Council had engaged on this matter. She expressed the view that period products should be available for all at all Council facilities, particularly given the need there was for them. Councillor McLaren added that this matter needed to be discussed without taboo or stigma and as such she encouraged everyone to complete the online consultation survey.

Commenting as seconder, Alderman Douglas reminded members that she had brought forward the initial Notice of Motion on this matter and at that time Council had written to the Minister of Education. She recalled how underwhelming the

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Council report had been and added how disappointed she had been with the lack of support shown by the Council and the Minister. Alderman Douglas informed members that 51% of the population would use those products which she added were very expensive. She added that she was aware that many of those users frequently were caught out having no products to hand and she encouraged members to support the recommendation.

Rising also in support of the recommendation Alderman Armstrong-Cotter referred to similar support offered to the women of India as part of a project she had been involved with, adding that level of support should be provided in Northern Ireland. She stated that matters of health and hygiene were important and as such she welcomed the fact that the Council was taking that message on board.

Councillor Wray expressed his support for the Council approving the Consultation Response Document, to encourage people to complete the online survey, and that Council actively promoted it. He stated that he understood there were financial and logistical issues with providing free period products across the Borough. However, the Period Products Act 2022 stated that products must be made available by May 2024 and as such the Council was running out of time to deliver on that. Continuing he indicated that he was aware that many charity organisations, community groups, and community spaces had taken it upon themselves to make those products freely available. The Council, he stated, now must do the same and show some leadership.

Finally Councillor Wray referred to Item 7 of the paper notes which stated that 'schools are not included in this list as they are not accessible by the general public and provision is already made for schools by the Department of Education.' This was something he took issue with for two reasons. Firstly, pupils were members of the community and secondly this funding from DOE was slashed and the reality was that the majority of schools in Ards and North Down were not providing free period products. He suggested that at another stage this may be something the Council should consider addressing or perhaps even communicate with schools in the Borough reminding them of their responsibilities.

Echoing all of the comments which had already been made, Councillor Martin stated that he would take issue with Alderman Douglas's comments about the response received from the Department of Education. He reminded members that Minister Weir at that time had taken the matter forward, indeed he recalled how a pupil from Strathearn School had successfully lobbied the Minister at that time on this very matter.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor McLaren, seconded by Alderman Douglas, that the recommendation be adopted.

15. UN GLOBAL COMPACT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS FLAG CAMPAIGN 2023

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that in June 2018, Council agreed to actively promote the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through its communication channels and ongoing service delivery.

The SDGs, otherwise known as the Global Goals, were a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure that all people enjoyed peace and prosperity. However, achieving the SDGs required the partnership of governments, private sector, civil society and citizens alike to make sure we all left a better planet for future generations.

The Council had continued to work towards achieving those goals through its Roadmap to Sustainability - agreed by Council in March 2021, which was developed to formalise the Council's commitment to becoming more sustainable and to act as a key enabler in this regard.

To raise awareness of the SDGs and showcase the councils contributions, United Nations Global Compact were inviting organisations to be part of a global movement working [#TogetherForTheSDGs](#) and **join the SDG Flag campaign on 25 September.**

The campaign began in the UK in 2022 and saw 200 SDG flags from 97 organisations raised across the UK by businesses, charities, civil society organisations, and schools. It was proposed that the Mayor would be photographed raising the flag on 25 September 2023 at the flagpole in Castle Park, Bangor. This would be shared on the Council's social media channels and supported by positive PR, highlighting the work that Ards and North Down Borough Council was doing as we move towards Sustainable Development and Net Zero.

The hope was that by raising an SDG Flag, organisations would show their commitment to the Global Goals and highlight the action that they were already taking to combat major global challenges including climate change, gender inequality, poverty, and poor work.



Ards and North Down Borough Councils Flag Policy stated:

'Flags commemorating specific days or events (to include Commonwealth Flag, Armed Forces Day Flag or Red Ensign) be flown at Castle Park, Bangor and Conway Square, Newtownards. Additional flags may also be considered that have a national significance at one or both sites. (Council approval will be required for these on a case-by-case basis).'

RECOMMENDED that Council approve the flying of the SDG flag at Castle Park, Bangor on 25 September 2023 as outlined above.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Irwin, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

16. ULSTER FOLK AND TRANSPORT MUSEUM LETTER OF SUPPORT (Appendix VIII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that the Chief Executive of National Museums NI (NMNI) had written to the Director of Place outlining the ambitious plans for “Reawakening the Ulster Folk Museum” (brochure attached). They were currently developing plans to invest in facilities to enhance the Museum’s role as a beacon of heritage and environmental presentation.

To that end they were pursuing a funding application to PEACE PLUS relating to the “Culture Hub” aspect of the project. This was an opportunity that aligned with the potential for the Museum to renew its peacebuilding role, using its extensive collection to explore shared heritage, express cultural diversity and promote positive dialogue. NMNI were requesting a letter of support from Council to submit with their application.

This project would complement Council’s own Integrated Strategy for Tourism, Regeneration and Economic Development.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the provision of a letter of support to National Museums NI for their funding application to PEACE PLUS.

Alderman Graham proposed, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer, Alderman Graham, stated that he had been very fortunate to have visited this attraction on many occasions and as such would welcome the report. He did however urge caution to ensure that duplication of effort did not occur but was looking forward to the future plans securing the Borough as a tourist destination.

Echoing those comments, Councillor McRandal welcomed the proposals and wished the Museum every success with it.

Having recently visited the facility Councillor Kennedy agreed that this was a fantastic opportunity and one which should be targeting the many thousands of visitors to Belfast via cruise ships. He suggested that perhaps the Council needed to give consideration to the appointment of an Engagement Officer to specifically target those tourists.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Graham, seconded by Councillor McRandal, that the recommendation be adopted.

17. SISTER CITIES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS UPDATE (Appendix IX)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that a sister city/twinning relationship was a broad-based, long-term partnership between two communities in two countries, to foster human and cultural links.

Twinning often paired cities and towns that shared commonalities such as similar demographics, names, and community, business and trade development priorities. The concept of a Twin city/town was a European initiative. Sister Cities was a more formal relationship through the Sister City network. Sister Cities International was based in Washington DC, USA. A city may have any number of sister cities, and each relationship was independent, centered on the activities and areas that were important to them and their community.

All existing town twinning and sister city arrangements within the Borough derived from the two legacy Councils.

Bangor was twinned with Bregenz in Austria and North Down Borough Council formed a Sister City link with Virginia Beach in the USA. Newtownards was twinned with Kemi, Finland and Ards Borough Council formed a Sister City link with Peoria, Arizona, USA.

Some more information on each relationship was below:

Town Twinning – Bangor and Bregenz, Austria

Bangor's connection with Bregenz stemmed from St Columbanus and St Gall who worked as missionaries in Bregenz from 610–612. In 1984 North Down Borough Council agreed to present a stone to Bregenz to commemorate the opening of the Church of St Kolumban in Bregenz. The 2-tonne stone was taken from the Long Hole, Bangor and shipped to Bregenz where it was inscribed and installed outside the church and it was now known as "the Columbanus Stone". In 1987 the official town twinning link between Bangor and Bregenz was established.

In the first 20 years of the relationship, there were numerous civic visits by Mayors from North Down to Bregenz, but those did not continue in the latter years of North Down Borough Council, and not at all since Ards and North Down Borough Council was established. However, outside the Council's civic role, there had been many cultural exchanges between the two towns, including through school visits, Churches, football teams and musical performers.

It was agreed to organise a trip in 2020 for the Chief Executive and the Director of Place (then Director of Regeneration and Development) to go to Bregenz to investigate tourism and regeneration in the area and to learn more about the waterfront area, ahead of the Bangor Waterfront Redevelopment. At the same time, it was hoped to meet representatives who may help to further the ambition of the development of a trans-European Trail from Bangor and including Bregenz, ending in Bobbio, Italy (where the relics of St Columbanus rest), as well as enabling discussions on how the two could re-energise the twinning relationship between Bangor and Bregenz. This trip was cancelled due to the pandemic and plans had not been revisited.

Recognised European Pilgrimage Route – the Columban Way

St Columbanus's journey from Ireland to Bobbio, Italy, where he set up a monastery, was celebrated as a golden age for Irish influence and learning in Europe.

Former Alderman, Deborah Girvan was the President of the European Association of the Columban Way. On previous visits, the Mayor of Bregenz had indicated that they would be keen to rekindle the twinning of the towns and to get further involved in the Columban Way.

Bangor and Bobbio, Italy

Bangor had Christian Heritage links with Bobbio, but not as a formal Twin Town.

In 590, Columbanus departed Bangor Abbey, establishing two of his main monastic settlements in Bobbio and Luxeuil. St. Columbanus is buried in Bobbio.

An informal relationship had existed between the areas for many decades thanks to the legacy of Columbanus with educational and pilgrimage visits between the areas.

In November 2013 the legacy North Down Borough Council signed an agreement to formalise this relationship with the three becoming founding members of a European Cultural Route, "The Columban Way" the aim of which was to build on cultural relations and exchanges, resulting in economic benefits to the area through development of the Cultural Route.

Whilst the initial "Way" involved the three areas mentioned, the hope was that once established other areas related to Columbanus such as Bangor's Twin Town of Bregenz, Austria and St Gallen in Switzerland etc. would see the "Way" expanded to include a number of European partners along with others in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland where there had been expressions of interest to date.

There had been Mayoral and Deputy Mayoral visits to Bobbio on three occasions.

Town Twinning - Newtownards and Kemi, Finland

The link commenced in 1969 following a visit to Kemi of the then Westminster MP for the Ards area, Mr GBH Currie on a House of Commons delegation. Mr Currie felt there were many similarities between the two towns – Kemi was at the head of the Gulf of Bothnia; Newtownards was at the head of Strangford Lough; both had small airports and were mainly industrial with populations approximately similar.

Following re-organisation in 1973 Ards Borough Council agreed that the twinning arrangement should continue.

The main economic activity in Kemi was centred on two large paper and woodpulp mills and it has the only chromium mine in Europe. A polytechnic university of applied science was also situated in Kemi. It had the only deep-water harbour in Lapland so it was capable of addressing the needs of the business sector.

Several delegations from Ards had gone out to Kemi since 1969, the most recent being in 2014 for the 145th Anniversary celebrations. The visit prior to this was in 2009, for the 140th anniversary. Reciprocal visits had been received with the most

recent taking place in 2007 with an unofficial visit of the Deputy Mayor of Kemi. Prior to that, the last official visit was in 1994, to explore the industry and education sectors.

Benefits had been limited due to the prohibitive cost of travel. The main benefits had been cultural and modest gains have been made in terms of trading links.

Sister Cities – Newtownards and Peoria, Arizona, USA

A formal Sister City Agreement was signed in November 2001 between Newtownards and Peoria, Arizona. This was followed up by a delegation from Ards Borough Council in January 2002 to cement the Sister City ties with Peoria, and to commence linkages in the areas of business, education tourism and cultural development.

Strategically, The Creative Peninsula (Newtownards) and the McCall Visual Arts/Challenger Learning Centre (Peoria) exhibitions have been shown in Arizona and Northern Ireland respectively.

Practical exchanges between golfing businesses including Quintero (Peoria), Kirkistown and Scrabo (Ards) took place in 2003 and 2004.

A school exchange programme was agreed in July 2004 involving local schools. Exchanges have taken place between the Fire and Police Departments in August 2004.

A Phase 2 business plan (2004-2006) was developed to take the relationship forward in terms of Economic Development; Tourism, Crafts and Cultural Ties; Education and other key services. This included a Mayoral visit by Ards Mayor in 2005, Sister Cities Young Ambassadors Student Exchange Programme to Peoria and reciprocal visits of students from Peoria in 2006, 2007, 2010, 2011. There was a final visit by the Mayor of Ards and two Officers in April 2010.

Since 2011, the link had not been active. There had also been no contact since the School Exchange trips ended in 2013 due to budget constraints from Peoria.

Sister Cities - North Down and Virginia Beach, USA

The Sister Cities Agreement between Virginia Beach and North Down was formally recognised in 2002, following a visit from the Mayor of Virginia Beach, Meyera Oberndorf to the North Down Borough in 1998. Prior to a formal agreement, a Friendship Agreement was signed in 1999 by the then Mayor of North Down Borough, Marion Smith and the Mayor Oberndorf of Virginia Beach.

Several cultural exchanges had taken place over the years including an exchange with Bangor Ladies Choir performing in Virginia Beach, with the Virginia Beach Orchestral organisation, Symphonicity, planning a tour that would include a visit and performance in Bangor in the near future. Both Virginia Beach and Ards and North Down Borough have had several opportunities to share expertise and community through the exchanges conducted between the Fire and Emergency services.

As well, there was a common interest in business and manufacturing services. On one visit to the Borough, the Virginia Beach Delegation enjoyed a tour of the Denman International facility, and they had since offered to a reciprocal visit of a delegation from Ards and North Down to the IMS Gear Factory (production facility of metal and plastic gear and gearboxes) in Virginia Beach. The Borough had hosted a number of exchanges over the years with the Mayor of Virginia Beach visiting North Down in 1998, 2003, 2006 and 2012.

A focal point of the relationship had been its strong links between schools in North Down including Priory College, Holywood, St Malachy's, Bangor, Towerview Primary School, Bangor with partner schools in Virginia Beach.

In recent years, the Sister Cities relationship had been relatively quiet, with the only current active link being between Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, Virginia Beach, which took part in regular exchanges. The next visit would be a group of students from Glenlola Collegiate visiting Virginia Beach next month and it would be the first exchange of the two schools since the pandemic.

Invitation to Virginia Beach

The Sister City Association of Virginia Beach were now advancing a post-Covid agenda of reinvigorating their Sister City Partnerships, including with the Borough and, alongside the upcoming school exchange between Glenlola Collegiate and Tallwood High School, had sent an invitation (appendix 1), requesting that the Mayor, another Member and an Official visit Virginia Beach from 20-23 September 2023 to explore the potential opportunities that a revived relationship could present. Virginia Beach had also embarked on efforts to re-ignite their Sister City relationships elsewhere, with recent developments outlined in the invitation.

Virginia Beach had explained that they would cover the costs of the delegation including hotel accommodation, meals and transport when in the City, with the Council covering the costs of flights – estimated to be £750 per person.

It was recommended that Council agree to consider the invitation that the Mayor, another Member and an Official travel to Virginia Beach to explore the opportunity to reconnect, with the view to report back to Council on the feasibility of re-igniting this relationship, as well as looking more widely at Sister Cities and Town Twinning as a concept.

International Relations

Upon consideration of the request, officers endeavoured to undertake a review of the legacy Sister City and Town Twinning arrangements.

In November 2022, The Executive Office (TEO) revived the Executive Office/Local Government International Engagement Group, who had not met since 2019. The Group is chaired by the TEO International Relations and Europe Strategy Branch with the purpose of supporting the implementation of the Executive's International Relations Strategy, first agreed in 2014, through co-operation with key stakeholders in Local Government. The Strategy and its supporting structures would undergo a full review in 2023 with a view to informing a revised draft International Relations Strategy for the consideration of the incoming Executive.

Since November, two further meetings of the group had taken place with the next one scheduled for October. Officers from the Council had attended those.

Those meetings had encouraged Council to review their current international relations work and Twinning/Sister Cities relationships, as well as interact with other Council's to share ideas.

It was anticipated that, should the Council agree to accept the invitation from the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach, feedback from the trip, alongside the scoping work underway, would inform a wider report on international relations for the Council's consideration.

Questionnaire on Town Twinning

All Council's in NI were recently contacted by NILGA on behalf of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), a European membership organisation that represents the interests and advocated for local and regional governments in 40 European Countries and who also play a significant role in supporting and advocating for twinning relationships in Europe. Currently, CEMR were conducting a survey on twinning that would help to assess the current twinning initiatives, understand their benefits and challenges and shape future policies and support resources. The deadline for completion of the survey was 8 September 2023. It was found in appendix 2.

It was recommended that Council agree that officer's send a response to the survey in line with the deadline, with a caveat that the response was reflective of the current position, and that a further, wider piece of work on International Relations was underway.

RECOMMENDED that Council:

- (a) Consider the invitation extended to the Mayor, another Member plus one Senior Officer to travel to Virginia Beach at a cost of return airfares, with the view to bring a further report back to Council with next step options on Sister City and Town Twinning relationships.
- (b) Agree that a further report is brought back to the Council on International Relations including Town Twinning and Sister Cities and agree that Officers respond to the Questionnaire on Town Twinning by the deadline of 8 September with initial thoughts and include a caveat that further consideration on this area by Council is pending.

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Graham, that Council:

- (a) Accepts the invitation extended to the Mayor, plus one Senior Officer to travel to Virginia Beach at a cost of return airfares, with the view to bring a further report back to Council with next step options on Sister City and Town Twinning relationships.

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- (b) Agree that a further report is brought back to the Council on International Relations including Town Twinning and Sister Cities and agree that Officers respond to the Questionnaire on Town Twinning by the deadline of 8 September with initial thoughts and include a caveat that further consideration on this area by Council is pending.

The proposer Alderman McIlveen acknowledged the long-standing relationship in place with Virginia Beach particularly with local schools. Continuing he recalled that Alderman Adair during his term in office as Mayor had the opportunity to visit Virginia Beach and enjoyed a very successful and worthwhile trip. As such he welcomed the report.

Alderman McDowell stated that he could not support the proposal at this stage and instead would prefer a clear strategy to be in place outlining what the Council wished to achieve from such Sister City arrangements. He asked if the visit could be undertaken via Zoom in order to save expenses associated with such trips. Alderman McDowell also expressed the view that previous exchanges undertaken during legacy Ards Borough Council times had been based upon economic grounds. He added that there would also be an expectation created whereby the Council would be asked to host a delegation from Virginia Beach. Continuing he noted the short notice for this visit and urged members to consider the ethos of Sister City Partnerships perhaps through a sub-committee before embarking on any visits.

The Chief Executive at this stage informed members that the Council had been a member of the Sister City network since 1999.

Alderman Adair commented on his visit to Virginia Beach stating that he had found it to be very beneficial. He remarked upon the links between Virginia Beach and Groomsport. Referring to the costs associated with such a trip he noted that all accommodation would be paid for leaving the cost of flights only to be covered by the Council. He added that in his experience the trip had been worthwhile and provided an excellent opportunity to promote the Borough as a whole.

Expressing his support for the proposal, Alderman Smith agreed that overall it would reduce the costs involved to the Council. He noted Alderman McDowell's concerns commenting that he was right to express those but his feeling was that the trip should proceed given that it was the only real relationship which still remained in place. He added that he looked forward to the report coming back in due course summarising the visit.

Alderman Boyle indicated that he was sitting on the fence in respect of this matter. While he recognised the need to undertake the visit to promote the Borough he questioned why the report had come forward in the first instance.

In response the Mayor informed Councillor Boyle that within the correspondence received by the Council was an invitation extended to the Mayor, another elected member plus one senior officer to travel to Virginia Beach at a cost of return airfares.

Alderman Douglas while appreciative of the need to reconnect asked if such a meeting could be undertaken via Zoom noting that recently the Deputy Mayor had undertaken a solo trip on behalf of the Council.

For clarification the Chief Executive confirmed that the invitation to the Council had been extended by the Sister Cities Association of Virginia Beach. He agreed that the trip could provide valuable economic development opportunities for the Council and added that the visit had been scheduled to coincide with the exchange visit by Glenlola Collegiate School.

Alderman Douglas commented that Council should be mindful of its carbon footprint in relation to this trip particularly during this ongoing cost of living crisis.

Referring to Alderman McIlveen's proposal Alderman Graham agreed such trips were beneficial for both the Council and local schools.

By way of summing up Alderman McIlveen expressed surprise at some of the comments made by members of the Alliance Party. Continuing he stated that the Council needed to retain the hand of friendship and build upon those existing relationships and accepted that this invitation would enable that to take place.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Graham, with 25 voting For and 10 voting Against, that Council:

- (a) Accepts the invitation extended to the Mayor, plus one Senior Officer to travel to Virginia Beach at a cost of return airfares, with the view to bring a further report back to Council with next step options on Sister City and Town Twinning relationships.**
- (b) Agree that a further report is brought back to the Council on International Relations including Town Twinning and Sister Cities and agree that Officers respond to the Questionnaire on Town Twinning by the deadline of 8 September with initial thoughts and include a caveat that further consideration on this area by Council is pending.**

18. NILGA FORMATION OF NEW NILGA STRATEGIC POLICY NETWORK (Appendix X)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report advising that the Head of Policy & Governance of NIGLA had written to the Council stating that over the course of the 2019 – 2023 mandate, NILGA operated a system of focussed Policy and Learning Networks, covering a variety of policy areas, such as Place Shaping and Infrastructure, and Elected Member Development.

Further to a review of the operation of those networks and the policy offer of NILGA generally, it was agreed that NILGA had been 'spreading itself too thin' and would be better focussing on a smaller number of high-level issues, such as financial sustainability for local government, and climate action. Additionally, over the last few years, it had been observed that the policy context had been extremely dynamic, suggesting that a 'task and finish' approach to policy groups may be a more effective

means of operation. At the NILGA Executive Meeting on 23 June 2023, members agreed that it would be helpful to have a policy oversight group to develop a suitable policy framework and to enable members to decide on ongoing priorities, groups etc in a more detailed discussion than is possible at the monthly Executive Committee.

Council nominations were therefore now being sought, to complement the NILGA nominated Chair and Vice Chair. No specific party membership was required for those nominations.

Further information was included in the attached correspondence.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member to the NILGA Strategic Policy Network.

No proposals were made in respect of this matter.

NOTED.

19. CONFERENCES & INVITATIONS

19.1. APSE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (Appendix XI)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report detailing that the Chief Executive of APSE had invited members to its Annual General Meeting on 13-14 September 2023 in the Clayton Hotel, Belfast, 22 Ormeau Avenue, Belfast, BT2 8HA.

The costs were as follows:

1: Full seminar attendance inc. evening functions

APSE members £439 +VAT

Non member LAs: £625 +VAT

Commercial organisations: £799 +VAT

2: Day Delegate Wednesday only inc. evening functions

APSE members: £269 +VAT

Non member LAs: £389 +VAT

Commercial organisations: £599 +VAT

3: Day Delegate seminar Thursday only

APSE members: £240 +VAT

Non member LAs: £345 +VAT

Commercial organisations: £549 +VAT

4: Day Delegate Thursday only inc. evening awards

APSE members: £339 +VAT

Non member LAs: £460 +VAT

Commercial organisations: £699 +VAT

5: Thursday seminar attendance including all refreshments, lunch, evening awards and bed and breakfast for Thursday evening (check-out Friday 15 September)

APSE members: £399 +VAT

Non member LAs: £499 +VAT

Commercial organisations: N/A

Information on the event was included in the attached correspondence.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers whether it wishes to nominate a Member(s) to attend the APSE Annual General Meeting.

The Chief Executive advised members that there were two places being made available free of charge.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Councillor Martin, that the report be noted.

20. BRITAIN IN BLOOM

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report stating that as members would be aware Donaghadee was representing Northern Ireland in the Small-Town category of the 2023 Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) Britain in Bloom competition.

Britain in Bloom was one of the largest horticultural campaigns in Europe, was run by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) and worked year-round to create a cleaner and greener Britain through community action.

As well as celebrating horticultural excellence, Britain in Bloom promoted cleanliness, sustainability and community participation. As such the campaign complimented several council initiatives and strategies aimed at enhancing the visual appearance and sustainability of the Borough.

In preparation for the RHS Britain in Bloom judging visit, officers from the Parks and Cemeteries Service worked in close partnership with Donaghadee Community Development Committee and local volunteer groups to present the town befitting of the Britain in Bloom campaign criteria.

Judging took place on Monday 7 August 2023 when the judges were taken on a guided tour of the town to assess under the marking criteria of Horticultural Achievement, Environmental Responsibility, and Community Participation.

The judging concluded at the Community Centre where the judges were introduced to the Mayor, Members, Council officers and key groups involved in the campaign.

The announcement of the results was to be held at a ceremony in the Royal Horticultural Society in London on 23 October 2023 between 1pm and 5pm. An invitation had been received for up to five people to attend the Award Ceremony and it was proposed that the Mayor, one Council Officer and three members of

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Donaghadee Community Development Committee attend the ceremony. It was envisaged that the cost for five persons to attend this prestigious event would be approximately £500 for flights.

The Council bestowed the Freedom of the Borough upon the Irish Guards in June 2022. However, unfortunately the Commanding Officer, Major General Ghika was unable to attend the Ceremony and Parade due to illness at the time. He was therefore unable to sign the Council's Book of Burgesses which was an important part of the award. It had not proved possible for the Major General to visit the Borough since and as he was shortly leaving the Army and it was important that this final task was completed. However, there would be the opportunity for the Mayor to visit Major General Ghika at the Irish Guards HQ at Wellington Barracks, London on the morning of the Britain in Bloom Awards Ceremony, 23 October, and for the Book to be signed there. It was therefore recommended that the Mayor and an Officer fly to London on 22 October in order to visit Wellington Barracks on the following morning prior to attending the Britain in Bloom event and this would add overnight accommodation for two people to the flight costs.

RECOMMENDED that Council approves the funding for the attendance at the Britain in Bloom Awards ceremony in London of the Mayor, one Council Officer and three members of Donaghadee Community Development Committee, with the Mayor and the Officer having overnight accommodation approved in order to attend the Irish Guards HQ to meet with Major General Ghika and sign the Book of Burgesses.

Alderman Brooks proposed, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the recommendation be adopted.

The proposer Alderman Brooks expressed thanks to all of those who had been involved with this including the Council's Parks Section, Donaghadee Community Association, Donaghadee in Bloom and Donaghadee Community Choir.

(Councillor Martin left the meeting at this stage – 8.34pm)

Commenting as seconder Councillor MacArthur took the opportunity to express her thanks to all those in the local community who had been involved in this, adding that it had done wonders for the community as whole. Continuing she also commended the Council's Parks and Assets Teams including Jonny Bettes for all their hard work noting that the refurbishment of the external paintwork on the public toilets in the town was very much in keeping. It was noted that a number of local schools had also been involved with litter picks and she wished the town well at the Awards Ceremony.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of, Alderman Brooks, seconded by Councillor MacArthur, that the recommendation be adopted.

21. RESOLUTION

21.1. NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

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PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Correspondence from Newry, Mourne and Down District Council stating that it had extensively discussed the following motion since it was passed in March 2023: "Newry Mourne and Down District Council calls for the voting age of 18 to be reduced to 16 and if this motion is adopted seeks the support of the remaining councils in Northern Ireland to write to the Secretary of State calling him to amend the necessary legislation to enable 16 year old and upwards to vote".

At its recent Council Meeting on 7 August 2023 dismay was voiced at the most recent response from the NIO stating the UK Government position remained the same. As a result, it was agreed to write to all the political parties Conservative, Labour, Lib Dems, Greens, the Welsh, Scottish and parties represented at Council and seeking the support of Independents to do the same and copying in the 10 other Councils in Northern Ireland to write to all concerned parties calling for their commitment to reduce the voting age to 16. The Council would ask that you give this matter serious consideration and it looked forward to your response.

RECOMMENDED that Council considers the correspondence.

Alderman Smith proposed, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the correspondence be noted.

(Councillor Martin re-entered the meeting at this stage – 8.41pm)

Councillor Boyle stated that he did not agree with the proposal as in his opinion it was a very important matter. He suggested that 16-year-olds were much more focussed than many and therefore it was important for them to be able to have their say. Continuing Councillor Boyle noted that at 16 years of age you could do many things so why not enable them to cast a vote. He added that he would support the suggested course of action to write to the Secretary of State.

Councillor Irwin commended Councillor Boyle for his comments adding that her own Party would be completely against noting the correspondence. Indeed to do so would only be a case of putting a marker down on what 16-year-olds could and could not do. She acknowledged that 16-year-olds could pay tax, get a job, join the Army and get married. Continuing Councillor Irwin noted the great work undertaken by the Northern Ireland Youth Council Forum on this matter.

At this stage Alderman Douglas recalled how she along with former member Deborah Girvan had brought forward a Notice of Motion on this very matter. She stated that the youth of today were very important and as such should have the opportunity to vote at the age of 16.

(Councillor Hollywood left the meeting at this stage – 8.44pm)

Concurring with comments of her colleagues, Councillor Moore stated that 16-year-olds were the leaders of the future and as such they should be able to engage as part of the electoral process.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter commented that for her the question was around young people and the focus there appeared to be on them to grow up so quickly. The world

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currently was tough enough and as such young people in her opinion should be protected for as long as possible. She added that as part of her daily work she met with young people on a regular basis and as such she felt there was a need to protect them and that was something she along with her party would endeavour to do.

(Councillor Hollywood returned to the meeting at this stage – 8.55pm)

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, with 22 voting For and 14 voting Against, that the correspondence be noted.

22. SEALING DOCUMENTS

RESOLVED: -

(On the proposal of Councillor Edmund, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter)

THAT the Seal of the Council be affixed to the following documents:-

- (a) Grant of Rights of Burial: Nos D40097 – D40121
- (b) Grant of Rights of Burial D40082, D40034, D40068, D40059 and Clandeboye Plot AE1699 and Clandeboye GX2641
- (c) Statutory Receipt for Dfl Vesting in 2007 of A20 Southern Distributor Road, Newtownards

23. TRANSFERS OF RIGHTS OF BURIAL

RESOLVED: -

(On the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Kerr)

THAT the following transfers be approved:-

Transfer: Kathleen Hogg – Margaret McKee Comber Cemetery section 23 Grave 85

Transfer: Alan Armstrong- Helen Earley Comber Cemetery Section 26 Grave 197

24. NOTICE OF MOTION STATUS REPORT

(Appendix XII)

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- A Status Report in respect of Notices of Motion.

This was a standing item on the Council agenda each month and its aim was to keep members updated on the outcome of Motions. Please note that as each Motion had been dealt with, it would be removed from the report.

RECOMMENDED that the Council notes the report.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Martin, seconded by Alderman Graham, that the recommendation be adopted.

25. NOTICES OF MOTION

25.1. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Creighton and Moore

Councillor Creighton proposed, seconded by Councillor Moore, that this Council notes that the number of households with homelessness status on the social housing waiting list across NI has increased from 12,431 to 26,310 households between 31 March 2013 and 31 March 2023, an increase of 111.7%; notes the enormous strain the homelessness system is under with the number of households in temporary accommodation at unprecedented levels; agrees that this council has a role to play in preventing homelessness in this borough alongside other organisations and bodies in the Public, Statutory and Voluntary sectors; calls on this Council to assess how it contributes to homelessness prevention through carrying out an audit of its services; and requests that Officers bring back a report detailing the homelessness prevention work currently supported as well as how the Council's community planning function can further support homelessness prevention work in the local area.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Creighton, seconded by Councillor Moore, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Chief Executive informed members that following discussion it had been agreed to hear Item 25.3 prior to Item 25.2.

NOTED.

25.3 Notice of Motion submitted by Aldermen McIlveen, Armstrong Cotter, McDowell and Councillor Kennedy

Alderman McIlveen proposed, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that this Council condemns without reservation the threats made to District Judge Mark Hamill and the attack on Newtownards Courthouse as an attack on the rule of law which is the basis of a democratic and free society. Furthermore, this Council affirms its full support for the PSNI in investigating and bringing to justice those who have committed criminal acts within this Borough and encourages everyone to assist the legitimate authorities in this endeavour.

The proposer, Alderman McIlveen stated that he would like to thank the Mayor for allowing this motion to be heard this evening. He acknowledged that it was a long agenda but felt this was a matter of importance in the context of what was

happening. He also took the opportunity to thank Alderman Smith and Councillor Smart for permitting him to bunk the queue on this occasion.

He indicated that this should be a straightforward debate. While it seemed a bit strange even to him that he felt that he had to table this motion, he stated that he would like to thank those of his Newtownards colleagues who signed the motion. He added that he knew Councillor Smart had signed it too and his name would have remained on this motion but for the Standing Order prohibiting signing more than one motion on the Order paper.

The reason behind this motion was simple in that it was a clear unequivocal condemnation of the threats made to District Judge Mark Hamill and of the damage caused to Newtownards courthouse and to offer this Council's support to PSNI in its efforts to tackle criminality in the town and other areas of the Borough.

Unfortunately, he indicated that he was aware some commentators who while condemning the attack on District Judge Mark Hamill as an attack on the rule of law, in the next breath or next sentence had criticised the PSNI for favouring one faction over another. There was no evidence provided that this was indeed the case and only served to undermine the efforts of PSNI in tackling criminality on all sides. It was a tactic adopted by others particularly Republicans when they talked about "political policing" and a "sectarian police force".

In its most simple form the term "rule of law" meant that no one was above the law. He stated that could be broken down into four component parts: everyone treated equally under the law; transparency of the law; an independent judiciary and an accessible legal remedy. All four must be present for the rule of law to function.

Continuing Alderman McIlveen stated that the attacks on the PSNI and encouragement of vigilante action were as much an attack on the rule of law as those spraying threatening graffiti. He could think of nothing more reckless, during a time of heightened tension such as this so-called feud, than encouraging people to take matters into their own hands and to verbally attack the police for seeking to keep the peace. Such recklessness risked escalating thuggery to something much more serious.

Having been a practising criminal lawyer during feuds in 2000 and 2002 representing various factions, he had seen how those things escalated into sickening murder, lives lost, properties destroyed, communities torn apart, children losing parents. Instead of stoking divisions, those in positions of influence and responsibility should be urging restraint. They should be stepping back from Twitter and Facebook. There was quite clearly an element of playing to a gallery in some of the commentary - while this might garner likes on social media it was wholly inappropriate and a dangerous game to play.

As a criminal lawyer, both as a solicitor and a barrister, he was all too aware that some cases took longer to bring to court than others, some where the evidence was more readily accessible than in others and some which were by their nature complex but that did not in itself mean that there was favouritism at play. He had been involved in countless cases which had taken months and even years to reach court.

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Some, of course, never reached a court because the evidential threshold had not been reached. He added that he knew how frustrating this could be to investigators and prosecutors.

Turning to District Judge Mark Hamill, Alderman McIlveen commented that he had appeared before him on countless occasions. Indeed he had been on the bench for his very first contest many years ago in Omagh and he knew that he did not suffer fools kindly. He dealt with those threats in his own characteristic way. He had always been a no-nonsense unflappable character and the actions of the criminals who had sought to intimidate him were always going to be fruitless. Such criminality he stated had no place in society and as such the Council's full support went to him and the court staff in Newtownards as they sought to administer justice not only at this particularly fraught time.

Turning to what the Council would do, Alderman McIlveen stated that members as public representatives had a role in encouraging support for the rule of law. Without it there was tyranny and anarchy, there was impunity and lawlessness. The rule of law was a key building block in a democratic society. That was why this motion was important, to show a unity of message that words and deeds which undermined the rule of law were unacceptable and as such there was no support for them in the Chamber. A crime was a crime because society through laws passed by its democratically elected representatives had made it a crime. He stated that if you engaged in criminality, you should expect that you would be held accountable for that. It did not really matter whether another person had done something else because you were responsible for your own actions.

By way of summing up Alderman McIlveen unequivocally condemned all of those acts of criminality that had caused such misery and fear to those within the Borough and which have had such a damaging impact on the traders within Newtownards. It was important that anyone with information that could assist the PSNI with bringing any of those perpetrators to justice came forward. He added that it was long past time that those criminal gangs, who masqueraded as loyalists, should leave the scene. As everyone was only all too aware, the problems currently being faced did not just start in March 2023 they had been around for many years through drug dealing, extortion, loan sharking and other forms of coercive control. This was a feud about turf and about who controlled the spoils of the community's misery and it was something which needed to stop. He sought the support of the Chamber for this motion.

RECESS

At this stage (9.01pm) the meeting went into recess and recommenced at (9.20pm).

NOTED.

Rising in support of the proposal, Councillor Smart also condemned the outrageous and despicable attempt to intimidate District Judge Mark Hamill by those who had no respect for the rule of law or the local community. He added that he would take this opportunity to sympathise with Judge Hamill and his circle of family and friends, throughout this challenging period.

Sadly as everyone was well aware this was not an isolated incident but rather part of an ongoing feud that Newtownards and the wider Borough had experienced for too long. Councillor Smart stated that it had been his personal honour to serve as a Councillor for Newtownards since the formation of this new Borough in 2014, and in that time he had seen some exciting progress across the community of Newtownards, including a brand new leisure complex, new facilities at Londonderry Park, improvements in play provision and a thriving Chamber which had helped secure Newtownards as High Street of the year. However sadly the town and wider Borough had not been known recently for the many positives it had to offer residents and visitors alike, and instead had been marked out by the feud between a few criminals and their associated organised crime gangs.

Continuing Councillor Smart stated that it had been conflicting at times, as elected representatives they naturally wished to condemn every despicable act which had taken place but did not wish to add any publicity, as was so much sought by opposing groups, in aid of their own dangerous melodramas. Meanwhile ordinary residents and business owners must deal with the associated pain, fear and loss. It could not and should not be acceptable. It was because of this, he believed that any effort, however well intentioned, to bring people onto the streets was an error which at times could exacerbate fears across the community. The best they could do across Ards and North Down was to ensure the PSNI was aided in all of its investigations and make sure that the judiciary, such as Judge Hamill, continued to enforce the law of this land without fear or favour. Finally he thanked Alderman McIlveen for his timely proposal and to any of the crime gangs involved in this incident and provoking this feud his message would be simply to drop whatever flag of convenience they liked to wave and to get off the backs of this community for good.

At this stage Councillor S Irvine stated that he was more than happy to show his support of this motion particularly as personally he believed that it was a no brainer and as such, he fully expected a full house of support this evening.

Councillor Irvine reassured Alderman McIlveen that he had included his support for the motion initially but had to withdraw due to the motion for the Sports award.

Continuing Councillor Irvine commented that as members may well know he had been involved with his constituents on the ongoing tensions in his district electoral area. Indeed, himself and his daughter had been at the end of vile statements lies and threats. He had received threats of legal action by criminals, which he faced down and was also reported to the commissioner's office by the so-called 'Real UFF' with a spurious complaint based upon annoyance that he would call out their criminal activity. Due to those ongoing threats and his stand against all criminality, he had to get security measures on his residences as he had spoken out against certain elements who were terrorizing Newtownards. He added that while it was great to finally see people starting to speak out about those gangs, he was a bit dismayed it had taken a threat to a Judge to bring this about.

Councillor Irvine stated that there was no doubt the threat to District Judge Hamill was an assault on the very constitutional foundations of the Union itself. The

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independence of the judiciary was of vital constitutional importance and as such the rule of law must be defended. However, he questioned where the call was when innocent residents Tina and William had death threats. Tina whose son was nine years old with severe learning difficulties and still had to wear a nappy. William who stood up for himself against the bullies and had his car and property damaged. What about Jordan whose van was burnt out in the middle of the night outside the PSNI station, or the 50/60 pensioners/residents of Scrabo Estate evacuated for six hours during the night because of a pipe bomb.

While he wholeheartedly supported the work of Superintendent Johnston McDowell and his staff for the fantastic job, they were doing in keeping Newtownards and surrounding areas safe, he wanted to put on record the discontent he had in what he believed to be two-tier policing by other elements of within the PSNI in regard to men in jail for a more than questionable charge of affray and unlawful assembly. An ancient common law offence which the Policing Board Human Rights advisor found was a breach of the Humans Rights Act and recommended PSNI stop using it. Whilst several people were put in custody on this highly dubious charge, for peacefully gathering to remove illegal paramilitary insignia, others were allowed to walk the streets with pending drugs charges, hate crimes, dangerous weapons charges, paramilitary shows of strength which had been photographed and handed to police. As such he would ask where those arrests were. A whole gang of the so-called Real UFF holding a show of strength in broad daylight, and yet over five weeks later still no PSNI action. Councillor Irvine stated that those criminals were not loyalists, had never been loyalists and never would be loyalists. They had defaced a church and an orange hall, not to mention the Council's own buildings and yet they paraded within their neighborhood with masks on and terrorized their own community. Regrettably he noted how the PSNI sat by and watched, and he questioned whether the excellent local PSNI were being hamstrung by other sections of the PSNI who, it seemed, were protecting those drug dealing criminals.

In summing up Councillor Irvine stated that his words tonight came from the heart and the mouths of the innocent law-abiding citizens of Newtownards. He was in daily contact with constituents seven days a week regarding this draining feud and added that if anyone was not up to speed with this there were certain residents up for eviction regarding their activities and threatening behavior from one side of this. Clanmill, supported by the PSNI, was currently going through the system of removing the main drugs house which was being used by the gang from the present tenant, who was previously described by the PPS in court as a senior figure in one of Northern Ireland's largest criminal drugs gangs.

Commenting in support Alderman Smith acknowledged that everyone would be encouraged by the clear political consensus on Council in opposition to the gangsterism that had plagued the community in recent months. Fear, violence and gangsterism had been marked within the area and those responsible were rightly condemned from all quarters. He added that it was the PSNI's role to tackle those gangsters and the criminal justice system must work and be seen to work to remove this cancer from society. By unanimously showing support for the police service and judiciary and wholeheartedly condemning the gangsterism of so-called loyalist paramilitaries and organized crime gangs a strong message would be sent from Council and it was crucially important that was done.

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Alderman Graham indicated that he too was happy to support the motion particularly as the protection of citizens was a role for the Council, the Police and judiciary system. He added that the intimidation of ordinary people was not acceptable.

At this stage Alderman McDowell condemned all acts of violence and intimidation but was also cautious of doing something which may make the situation worse. He agreed that there had been reputational damage to Newtownards with the ongoing feud creating a bad impression of the town. Speaking to a number of traders in the town they had noted how quiet the town had been in the weeks following the periods of unrest. As such he would appeal to all those involved in orchestrating the feud to stop and leave the good people of Newtownards in peace. In respect of the intimidation against Judge Hamill, Alderman McDowell commented that such action would not help anyone and he encouraged all members to support the Motion.

Councillor Hollywood expressed his support for the motion adding that the recent attacks were not only an attack on the law but also on the entire Borough, families and businesses. As such he stated that anything the Council could do to help was to be welcomed.

Rising in support of the Motion, Councillor Boyle commented that the ongoing feud had been amongst some of the darkest days for the town, particularly with the attack on Judge Hamill. He added that Councillor Irvine had summed up the matter well and as such he commended him for that adding that at times it was not always easy to do the hard thing despite that being the right thing to do. He agreed that everyone should be allowed to live their lives and run their businesses without fear or intimidation.

Thanking Alderman McIlveen for bringing this motion before the Chamber, Councillor Wray stated that he was happy to support it. He reported that he had seen at close quarters the personal sacrifices that the local Police Service had made over recent months, the stress they had been under and the challenges they had faced. He had also seen how with a greatly stretched team, they had done their best to keep people safe, and bring about law and order. The fact that nobody had been seriously hurt as a result of the recent feud in Newtownards was largely down to the work of the PSNI led locally by Superintendent Johnston McDowell. As such he wished to thank the local PSNI and offer his support to both them and members of the judicial system who had suffered despicable attacks over recent weeks and months.

The concern he did have was that some people would see the motion and think that as a Council it was putting all the responsibility for law and order, community safety, onto the PSNI. Creating a culture of lawfulness was not the responsibility of the PSNI alone and instead Councillor Wray stated that it was his responsibility, as it was the responsibility of everybody in the Council Chamber. He added that it was also the responsibility of parents, teachers, community leaders, and everyone within civic society to ensure support for the rule of law, and to eradicate the power that organised crime gangs have in the community, and the pain they inflicted upon it.

Also rising in support of the Motion, Councillor Kennedy condemned the intimidation being faced by many in Newtownards and on the rule of law, adding that regrettably

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this had been ongoing for many years. He agreed that going forward such issues needed to be addressed as well as the establishment of trust in the PSNI. He agreed that while there had undoubtedly been a lot of negative press of the PSNI in recent weeks he was only too well aware of how under resourced local policing currently was. However he emphasised the importance of ensuring something was done to tackle this ongoing issue.

At this stage Councillor McLaren acknowledged the dedication and bravery of all PSNI officers throughout Northern Ireland. She noted the particular stress the officers were under within the Ards District and offered her wholehearted support to Superintendent Johnston McDowell.

Commenting as seconder of the proposal Alderman Armstrong-Cotter commented that she had spoken out to ask those involved to come together and work with the Police in an attempt to try to resolve the situation. She added that the issue of money laundering had been ongoing for many years now and as a local representative she believed it was her role to try to implement change. Continuing Alderman Armstrong-Cotter stated that the debate was to reaffirm that this type of behaviour was not acceptable and to show solidarity with the local judiciary. The Council wished to demonstrate its support for the PSNI, the rule of law and all those families who had been affected by this ongoing feud. She added that she wished to make a difference to her local community.

At this stage the Mayor expressed her full support for the motion considering the recent threats made to the rule of law and Judge Hamill. She added that she was aware of connected incidents which had taken place throughout the Borough including Bangor and Ballywalter and as such she more than happy to offer her support to the motion.

By way of summing up Alderman McIlveen took the opportunity to express his apologies to Councillor S Irvine stating that he fully aware of his support for the motion. Continuing he acknowledged the amount of work that remained to be done in respect of this matter and adding that his motion had been submitted effectively as Part A given the Ulster Unionist motion which had also been submitted. He thanked members for their comments and support.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the Council condemns without reservation the threats made to District Judge Mark Hamill and the attack on Newtownards Courthouse as an attack on the rule of law which is the basis of a democratic and free society. Furthermore, this Council affirms its full support for the PSNI in investigating and bringing to justice those who have committed criminal acts within this Borough and encourages everyone to assist the legitimate authorities in this endeavour.

(Having declared an interest in the next item, Councillors Hollywood & Wray left the meeting at this stage – 9.58pm)

25.2. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Smart and Alderman Smith

Councillor Smart proposed, seconded by Alderman Smith that this Council recognises the significant public concern created by the feud between rival organised crime groups within Ards and North Down. This feud which began in March 2023 has led to violence, criminal damage, and communities living in fear. We ask that Council contact representatives of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme including The Executive Office and Department of Justice seeking their shared engagement with Council and elected representatives focusing solutions to address this issue, and to reduce the prospect of a similar occurrence in the future. Further to this we ask the Communities in Transition Programme to broaden its remit across the Borough to help create a culture of lawfulness and strengthen community resilience against organised crime and coercive control. In addition, we recognise the role all elected representatives in the Borough have in eradicating organised crime gangs by supporting a culture of lawfulness and strengthening community resilience against organised crime and coercive control.

The proposer Councillor Smart stated that he had put forward the proposal firstly to add to the rightful condemnation of the criminal gangs that had caused such harm across the Borough, but primarily in an effort to ensure that the Council, explored every possible avenue to end the criminality, harm and coercion that was the mainstay of those involved in the feud, that continued locally.

He stated that such criminality had plagued the people of Northern Ireland for more decades than anyone would care to recall and as a community across Ards and North Down, and as individuals, we must do everything, we could, to support each and every tier of the policing and judicial system to bring perpetrators to justice. In doing so, he added that an environment should be created which denied the oxygen such criminality needs, like the ability to prey on the weaknesses of their own community or the ability to recruit impressionable young people into the dead end that was criminality. He reported that this was a focus for the Stormont Fresh Start agreement in 2015 which set out the Executive's commitment to tackling residual paramilitary activity and associated criminality.

In 2016 an independent Action Plan was published to tackle Paramilitarism, Criminality and Organised Crime. Flowing from this, it was noted the Communities in Transition Project was created. This worked to end paramilitary activity and coercive control for communities to become a place where such activity no longer played a role.

Councillor Smart stated that the project had been operational in Kilcooley and Rathgill areas of the Borough and had seen progress in those communities as evidenced in the latest evaluation. It demonstrated that young people felt more resilient and hopeful about their future, and that residents had increased confidence in working with and reporting to the PSNI. He added that the evaluation also stated the Primary Schools had seen an increased school attendance, and that the PSNI had found the community engagement to be game changing. Councillor Smart stated that the work in Kilcooley and Rathgill had a positive impact but as everyone was well aware such long term and societal issues did not exist solely within borders or boundaries. In fact everyone all too sadly had seen the impact of coercive control and organised crime across the Borough in Hollywood, Ballywalter, Whitehill, Portaferry, and across Newtownards, to name only a few. As such prevention work

was an essential piece in the puzzle in defeating such criminality, but at present the programme provided little flexibility to take account of the evolving situation across our Borough.

In this proposal Councillor Smart commented that he was asking for such limitations to be lifted, to allow the whole Borough to be supported holistically by this programme, and while it was a timely ask, he was told that a review of the next support programme was about to begin. As such he suggested that if the Council's shared ask was heard by the Department, it could add to the resources available to tackle the current hurt on the community, and at worst it would simply allow programmes to respond to community need and extend into areas where organised crime and coercive control were most prevalent. Lastly Councillor Smart asked for members support, not only in the hope of speaking with one voice, but also in doing what the Council could, to help challenge this situation which had brought nothing but harm and risk on so many across Ards and North Down.

Commenting as seconder Alderman Smith stated that he was sure every right thinking person in the Borough and beyond would be encouraged by the clear political consensus on Council in opposition to the gangsterism that had plagued the community in recent months. Fear, violence and gangsterism had been visited on our area and those responsible were rightly condemned from all quarters. It was the PSNI's role to tackle those gangsters and the criminal justice system must work and be seen to work to remove this cancer from society. Indeed, he added that most people would prefer a more robust approach especially around the use of assets recovery to hit those gangsters in their pockets. By unanimously showing support for the police service and judiciary and wholeheartedly condemning the gangsterism of so-called loyalist paramilitaries and organised crime gangs the Council would send a strong message.

Continuing however Alderman Smith added that more was needed than just condemnation. More robust policing and effective sanctions on those inflicting pain on the community. Support for the local communities most affected by those criminal feuds was also needed. The good news, as his colleague Councillor Smart, had outlined was that there was an opportunity to deploy resources in support of communities to build alternatives to the coercive control that those so-called paramilitaries imposed upon many areas across the Borough. Alderman Smith stated that there was a model that existed to build social capital in communities, to bring engagement with community policing, to provide mental health services, to create youth diversion opportunities, to encourage education and community growth. He noted the great work which was already taking place in the Borough in Kilcooley and Rathgill but acknowledged the need to be able to ensure that other areas in Newtownards, Donaghadee, across the Ards Peninsula had the same opportunity to access those services.

Timing was everything and fortunately the Council had an opportunity now where The Executive Office was preparing the next tranche of the Communities in Transition Programme. As such through this Notice of Motion the Council was asking for TEO & DOJ to allow the current project in North Down to be able to provide services across the whole Borough so that those were available to all the areas most impacted by the recent violence. This would ensure a nimbler service that could

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deliver support to where it could make a real difference across the Borough. Alderman Smith added that the Motion also called on TEO/DOJ to engage with Council, both at officer and elected member level, to ensure that there was input from those who represented the affected communities, to ensure they benefitted from any future programme and that it was targeted at the areas in greatest need and who would benefit most.

By way of summing up Alderman Smith urged Council to continue with their unity of purpose on this critically important issue by supporting this motion. He stated that it was essential that the Council provided for its communities who were most in need with the support to help them overcome the awful recent events. But equally he acknowledged the importance to also provide the infrastructure to develop and grow communities so they could get out from under the dead hand of paramilitary gangsterism.

At this stage Councillor Moore indicated her full support of the motion and thanked both the proposer and seconder for including her addendum. She expressed the view that elected members held a very privileged position which provided them with influence over a wide variety of stakeholders. Continuing she added that all paramilitary organisations were criminal gangs and added that the role of an elected member went above and beyond the work conducted within the Council chamber.

Alderman Armstrong-Cotter expressed her thanks to both the proposer and seconder for bringing forward this motion particularly given what was going on in the local community. She agreed that this needed to be addressed and people needed to be made aware that there were alternative ways out. Continuing she noted that some groups within the Community had lost out on valuable funding and she personally was aware of the tremendous work they carried out.

At this stage Councillor McCracken acknowledged the good work carried out by both Councillors Hollywood and Wray and commended them for this. He was aware of those within local communities who wished to succeed and as such he would welcome economic development for all including those in the housing estates. Councillor McCracken welcomed the motion particularly as he was aware that some groups on the ground within the community were struggling.

Councillor S Irvine stated that he was more than happy to support and welcome this motion tonight. He wished to send a clear message to the criminal gang calling itself the 'Real UFF', and indeed all those who peddled misery via the vile drugs trade: you are not wanted, you are not welcome. The best place for you, and each and every one of you, was behind bars, and he stated that it was about time the full force of the law was brought down upon their heads.

Continuing, Councillor Irvine reported that the West Winds Estate was one of the most deprived areas in the Borough. Any funding that could be found for those areas would be beneficial, adding that it was only Saturday evening when he along with Councillors Smart and Wray were at the West Winds achievement Award scheme in memory of Alderman Jimmy Menagh. The leadership had worked tirelessly with certain statutory bodies along with the PSNI and West Winds Community Church to secure funding to run this award over the last year. Loosely based on the Duke of

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Edinburgh Award Scheme the young people worked outside their comfort zones learning new skills whilst also completing community work from litter picking to hosting lunches and dinners for the pensioners of the area. This he stated was only one example of how the money could be spent and he added that his dream would be to take this to all areas of the Borough.

Referring to the tremendous community relations work which had been undertaken by the legacy Ards Borough Council, Alderman McIlveen expressed the view that the Council had subsequently lost its vision since the departure of officer Jim Murdoch. Mr Murdoch had been instrumental in creating and maintaining much good work in respect of good relations within local communities. He added that so many young people had commented to him that they now felt left behind and as such he was more than happy to support the motion which would seek to address issue.

In summing up the proposer, Councillor Smart thanked members for their supportive comments adding that he hoped through this the local community could look forward to a bright future.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Smart, seconded by Alderman Smith, that this Council recognises the significant public concern created by the feud between rival organised crime groups within Ards and North Down. This feud which began in March 2023 has led to violence, criminal damage, and communities living in fear. We ask that Council contact representatives of the Tackling Paramilitarism Programme including The Executive Office and Department of Justice seeking their shared engagement with Council and elected representatives focusing solutions to address this issue, and to reduce the prospect of a similar occurrence in the future. Further to this we ask the Communities in Transition Programme to broaden its remit across the Borough to help create a culture of lawfulness and strengthen community resilience against organised crime and coercive control. In addition, we recognise the role all elected representatives in the Borough have in eradicating organised crime gangs by supporting a culture of lawfulness and strengthening community resilience against organised crime and coercive control.

(Councillors Hollywood and Wray re-entered the meeting at this stage – 10.20pm)

25.4. Notice of Motion submitted by Councillors Boyle and S Irvine

Councillor Boyle proposed, seconded by Councillor S Irvine that this Council agrees to the sponsorship of £1000 for the category of Volunteer / Coach of the year award, to be recognised at the forthcoming 2023 Council Sports Awards Ceremony. This funding could potentially be realised through current budget underspends or Council reserves.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Councillor Boyle, seconded by Councillor S Irvine, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Community & Wellbeing Committee.

25.5. Notice of Motion submitted by Alderman Adair, Councillors Edmund and Kerr

Alderman Adair proposed, seconded by Councillor Kerr that Council task officers to bring back a report on the costing to install signage identifying the townlands of Ballyblack and Kirkistown and that officers are tasked to bring forward proposals to incorporate townland signage across our Borough.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Adair, seconded by Councillor Kerr, that the Notice of Motion be referred to the Environment Committee.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman McIlveen, seconded by Alderman Armstrong-Cotter, that the public/press be excluded from the undernoted items of confidential business.

(Alderman Adair and Councillors Chambers & McLaren left the meeting at this stage – 10.23pm)

26. REQUEST FROM CURRY'S AMUSEMENTS TO USE THE MCKEE CLOCK ARENA, BANGOR FOR AN AUTUMN FUNFAIR (Appendix XIII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The Council has received a request from Curry's Amusements to operate an Autumn 2023 funfair and family amusement park at the McKee Clock Arena, Bangor. The report recommended that the Council accedes to the request and permits the funfair, subject to the terms and conditions listed in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

27. PORTAFERRY PUBLIC REALM WORKS - REQUEST FOR COMPOUND SITE (Appendix XIV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

Council has received a request from the contractor appointed by Council to undertake Portaferry Public Realm Works, seeking permission to locate a temporary

site compound at the carpark and on Council land at Meetinghouse Street for the duration of the works. The report recommended that the Council accedes to the request and grants a licence to the contractor subject to the terms and conditions listed in the report.

The recommendation was adopted.

28. TENDER FOR THE PROVISION OF AGENCY WORKERS

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

A tendering opportunity was advertised by Council for the provision of Agency workers, with a closing date of 14 June 2023 and split into two lots. The report recommended that Council award the contract to the top two scoring companies for each lot.

The recommendation was adopted.

29. DISPOSAL OF KINNEGAR LOGISTICS BASE, HOLYWOOD BY MOD – UPDATE (Appendix XV)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

NOT FOR PUBLICATION SCHEDULE 6 – INFORMATION RELATING TO THE FINANCIAL OR BUSINESS AFFAIRS OF ANY PARTICULAR PERSON (INCLUDING THE COUNCIL HOLDING THAT INFORMATION)

The report provided an update on the Business Case commission through the Strategic Investment Board, an update on a potential private sector interest in the site and an update on the MOD's timeline for potential disposal of the site. Council agreed to continue to complete the Strategic Outline Case for the Kinnegar site, to write again to MOD and all relevant government bodies and agencies involved and instruct Council solicitors to engage with any companies, groups or organisations expressing an interest in working in partnership with the Council.

30. MINUTES OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND FINANCE GROUP DATED 14 AUGUST 2023 (Appendix XVI)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Copy of minutes of Strategic Policy and Finance Group dated 14 August 2023.

RECOMMENDED that the minutes be adopted.

RESOLVED, on the proposal of Alderman Smith, seconded by Alderman McIlveen, that the recommendation be adopted.

31. MATTER ARISING FROM MEETING OF THE STRATEGIC POLICY AND FINANCE GROUP ON 23 AUGUST 2023 – LEISURE FACILITIES MANAGEMENT (Appendix XVII)

*****IN CONFIDENCE*****

PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED:- Report, attached at Appendix, entitled Leisure Facility Management was considered at the meeting of the Strategic Policy and Finance Group (SPFG) on 23 August 2023 and it was agreed there that it be brought to the full Council Meeting on 30 August 2023 which was as follows.

RECOMMENDED that the Council, subject to legal advice, approves the recommendation of the SPFG on 23 August with regard to Leisure Facility Management as follows:

“to consider a proposal from SERCO regarding the extension to their contract, to encompass the management of the Leisure Services and Facilities in the legacy Ards Borough Council area and seeks legal advice on this, as well as signs a Non Disclosure Agreement between both parties, to allow the sharing of information, and a report to be brought back to the Council for consideration thereafter”.

Agreed.

READMITTANCE OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED, that the public/press be readmitted to the meeting.

TERMINATION OF MEETING

The meeting terminated at 11.55pm.