

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Tuesday, 1 April, 2025 at 6.00 pm

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (COMMITTEE):

Alderman H Legge (Acting Chair)

Aldermen A McIntyre and S P Porter

Councillors T Beckett, C Kemp, B Higginson, S Lowry, G McCleave and T Mitchell

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (COMMITTEE)

Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin

Aldermen A Grehan and S Skillen

Councillor J Gallen

OTHER MEMBERS:

Councillors A P Ewing and G Hynds (Council Chamber)

Alderman J Tinsley (remote)

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

Head of Communities

Head of Parks & Amenities (remote)

Head of Sports Services

Member Services Officers (CR & EW)

The Chair, Councillor D J Craig, being unwell and unable to be in attendance at the meeting, the Vice-Chair, Alderman H Legge, took the chair. Alderman Legge extended best wishes to Councillor Craig for a speedy recovery.

The Acting Chair welcomed all present to the meeting and reminded Members that the meeting would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business. Unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders. Mobile phones were to be turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting.

The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. The Acting Chair asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert the Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

The Deputy Mayor, Councillor R Carlin, joined the meeting at 6.01 pm.

1. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of the Chair, Councillor D J Craig, and Councillors D Bassett and G Thompson.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Report of Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

3.1 Notice of Motion – Role of Dogs

Alderman J Tinsley joined the meeting at 6.08 pm.

At the Council meeting held on 25 March, 2025, a Notice of Motion relating to the 'Role of Dogs', as set out below, had been proposed by Councillor A P Ewing and seconded by Alderman S Skillen:

“This Council recognises the significant role that dogs play in the lives of many of our residents, contributing to social engagement, improved mental health, and overall wellbeing.

Lisburn & Castlereagh has an opportunity to foster a more inclusive and dynamic local community by encouraging responsible dog ownership and supporting dog-friendly events. This approach will strengthen community bonds, support local businesses, enhance tourism, and create a welcoming environment for dog owners and their pets.

While advancing this initiative, the Council will prioritise responsible pet ownership through education, engagement, and public awareness.

Accordingly, I propose that Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council:

1. ask Council staff to prepare a report on the feasibility, costs, and implementation strategies for dog-friendly initiatives within the district;
2. includes recommendations for potential pilot programmes and partnerships, such as:
 - Dog adoption drives
 - Responsible dog ownership workshops
 - Dog-friendly Council events and social gatherings”.

3.1 Notice of Motion – Role of Dogs (Contd)

Councillor A P Ewing, who was not a Member of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee, was in attendance to present his Notice of Motion. Councillor Ewing stated that he was a passionate advocate of a simple, yet effective, cause – making Council events and facilities more dog-friendly and welcoming to pet owners. Studies had shown that dog ownership was linked to combating loneliness, lowering stress, improving mental health and increasing physical activity. By fostering a dog-friendly environment, the Council would not only be accommodating pet owners, but would be promoting a healthier, more connected community. Many cities, towns and local businesses had already embraced creating dog-friendly environments which brought people together, enhanced tourism, supported the local economy and created a friendly environment for both residents and visitors. Councillor Ewing referred to existing dog-friendly events within the Council, such as the Food Fest in Moira. However, events such as the Mayor's Parade and Fun Day in Wallace Park currently did not allow dogs to attend in the park. Councillor Ewing saw an opportunity to make events like this more dog-friendly and inclusive, where Officers could engage with dog owners, encourage responsible dog ownership, promote dog adoption drives and offer advice. He referred to former years when the Mayor's Parade and Fun Day in Wallace Park had been a dog-friendly event. 'Crufts' style dog events had been held as part of the programme and this had always been well-received and enjoyed by the public. By supporting his Notice of Motion, Councillor Ewing stated that the Council would be promoting a vibrant, progressive community.

Alderman S Skillen stated her support for the Notice of Motion by Councillor Ewing.

Alderman A McIntyre thanked Councillor A P Ewing for having brought forward the Notice of Motion which, on behalf of the Alliance Party, he was delighted to speak in favour of. He was particularly pleased that the Motion aligned with work already being undertaken by the Council. Alderman McIntyre stated that he had been the first Member to propose a dog-friendly initiative, back in 2023, with the establishment of the dog-friendly sticker scheme. He put on record his thanks to staff who had brought that idea from concept to reality and went on to speak about the benefits brought about by this scheme. Given that the dog-friendly sticker scheme had been in place for over a year, Alderman McIntyre proposed an amendment to the Notice of Motion, ie. that the following points be added at the end:

3. conduct a review of the existing dog-friendly sticker scheme to assist dog owners in identifying welcoming premises, events and accommodation; and
4. subject to the review, the relevant departments will engage with local businesses to ensure greater awareness and participation in the scheme, ensuring that all eligible and willing businesses, including those that have expressed interest but do not yet have stickers, are properly identified and included.

3.1 Notice of Motion – Role of Dogs (Contd)

Alderman McIntyre hoped that, when a report was brought back to Committee on the Notice of Motion, the Council would actively engage with local animal rescue charities, such as Cavaliers in Need and Almost Home.

The amendment by Alderman A McIntyre was seconded by Councillor C Kemp.

Councillor A P Ewing and Alderman S Skillen, as the proposer and seconder of the original Notice of Motion, confirmed that they were content to accept the amendment by Alderman A McIntyre.

A number of Members spoke in support of the Notice of Motion and amendment, namely Councillors G Hynds, R T Beckett, J Gallen, T Mitchell and G McCleave.

Officers noted that Members would welcome the return of the 'Crufts' style event at the Mayor's Parade and Fun Day in Wallace Park in future years and hoped that dog-friendly initiatives would be rolled out in all District Electoral Areas.

The proposal by Councillor A P Ewing, as amended by Alderman A McIntyre, was put to the meeting and unanimously agreed.

The Acting Chair, Alderman H Legge, advised that Any Other Business would be considered at this point in the meeting, prior to going 'into committee'.

4.1 Lack of Business for Consideration
Alderman S P Porter

Alderman S P Porter commented on the lack of items for consideration in open business at tonight's meeting. He stated that this matter had been raised previously at a meeting, possibly not of this Committee, and it had been agreed that the Corporate Management Team would look at why items reported in the past were no longer being reported.

The Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing stated that, where applicable, reports would be considered in open business; however, the majority of items for consideration at this meeting were of a confidential nature as they contained information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information). She advised that, as a team within Leisure and Community Wellbeing, as well as the Corporate Management Team, there was a rolling programme of reviewing all reports that came forward to Members. If there were reports missing that Members thought had not come forward to Committee, the Director asked that they let her know. She pointed out that Members had agreed the Terms of Reference for this Committee, but if there were considerations around specific reports, she would be happy to discuss with the Member.

4.1 Lack of Business for Consideration (Contd)
Alderman S P Porter

Councillor G Hynds and Alderman A McIntyre concurred with comments raised by Alderman Porter.

4.2 Lack of Housing Liaison Forum Meetings
Councillor G Hynds

The Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing noted concerns expressed by Councillor G Hynds that it was more than a year since the last meeting of the Housing Liaison Forum, even though there was a meeting currently scheduled.

4.3 Making Art in Communities Grant
Councillor B Higginson

In response to a request from Councillor B Higginson for an update in respect of the Making Art in Communities Grant, the Head of Communities advised that the outcome of the Making Art in the Community Grant would be notified to recipients this week. The Arts Service dealt with that grant under delegated authority as it was under £10,000. This would be presented to the Committee for noting next month.

4.4 Fees at Lough Moss Leisure Centre
Alderman A McIntyre

Alderman A McIntyre referred to an issue that had been raised by his colleagues in the Castlereagh South District Electoral Area regarding Lough Moss Leisure Centre and the fees the community were charged for its use. Whilst this was a leisure facility, not necessarily a community facility, it seemed like residents of Castlereagh South were being punished for under-investment by the former Castlereagh Borough Council in the area. This year marked 10 years of Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council. Alderman McIntyre referred to fees paid for use of facilities such as the Bridge Community Centre and the Enler Community Centre and the fact that there was a significantly reduced price for use of those by constituted groups. Alderman McIntyre appreciated that room charges had been agreed in October 2023, but asked that a report be brought back to the Committee on this matter. He was aware of two constituted groups in that area that would hire rooms on a regular/semi-regular basis so there was not necessarily a huge demand, but there were no other immediate community facilities available. The Acting Chair, Alderman H Legge, agreed that a report would be brought to a future meeting.

4.5 Dog Park in Moneyreagh
Councillor S Lowry

Councillor S Lowry advised that, in Autumn 2024, she had attended a Community Association meeting in Moneyreagh, when a number of issues had been raised, one of which was the provision of a dog park. Councillor

4.5 Dog Park in Moneyreagh (Contd)
Councillor S Lowry

Lowry understood that a meeting was to take place imminently and asked what the next steps would be. She also requested an update on other issues raised at the Community Association meeting.

The Head of Communities confirmed that a meeting was to take place this week with colleagues in Parks and Amenities regarding the dog exercise area. Pending suitability of the site, Officers would look at what initial costs would be. If something could be done relatively inexpensively and completed in-house, this would be progressed as part of the revenue budgets. In respect of the extension of the play park equipment, the Head of Communities agreed to liaise with the Head of Parks and Amenities regarding installation of additional equipment. Her understanding at the time had been that this could possibly be considered as part of the Small Settlements Programme and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund. The play park at Crossnacreevy had been agreed for upgrade; there had been no formal action taken for extension or replacement of equipment at the Moneyreagh play park, but the Head of Communities agreed to seek an update on that from Parks and Amenities and provide this to Councillor Lowry.

4.6 Sport NI “Be Seen, Be Heard, Belong” Campaign
Councillor C Kemp

Councillor C Kemp referred to email correspondence in the Information and Correspondence Schedule from Sport NI inviting the Council to support the above campaign and welcomed this initiative.

4.7 Fees at Lough Moss Leisure Centre
Councillor J Gallen

Councillor J Gallen concurred with comments made earlier by Alderman A McIntyre regarding the above matter. He had been contacted by one of the two constituted groups in the area advising that its fee for room use monthly had increased three times. Councillor Gallen would welcome any steps that could be taken to subsidise the groups.

5. Confidential Report from Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

The matters contained in the confidential report would be dealt with “in committee” due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person, including the Council holding that information.

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Councillor S Lowry and agreed that the Confidential Report of the Director be considered “in Committee”. Recording was paused at this stage and any members of the press and public left the meeting (6.35 pm). Councillor A P Ewing also left the meeting at this point.

5.1 Redevelopment of Dundonald International Ice Bowl and Associated Programmes
(Redacted report would become available in January 2026)

Members noted the contents of the Director’s report, which provided an update and progress made to date in respect of the redevelopment of Dundonald International Ice Bowl and associated programmes. A number of Members’ queries were addressed by the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing and the Head of Sports Services and the Director agreed to ask the Head of Finance to come back to Alderman S P Porter on his comments regarding loan charges.

5.2 Stewarding and Crowd Control Tender Evaluation Criteria
(Redacted report would become available in July 2025)

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Alderman A McIntyre and agreed to recommend that the tender evaluation criteria for the above be approved.

5.3 Business Case for the Provision of Hanging Basket Trees
(Redacted report would become available in July 2025)

It was proposed by Councillor R T Beckett, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell and agreed to recommend that approval be given to progress to the tender process for the delivery of hanging basket trees.

The Head of Parks and Amenities addressed a number of Members’ queries and:

- agreed to investigate comments regarding the provision of hanging baskets at shops at Low Road and Seymour Hill;
- noted comments regarding communicating changes to local community groups; and
- noted that a report would be welcomed regarding what was being done, or planned to be done, regarding hanging baskets within urban areas, such as Longstone Street and shops at Ballymacash, Knockmore and Lambeg.

The Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing agreed to liaise with the relevant team within the Council regarding engagement with DfI in respect of the ability to place Christmas lighting on new street lighting columns.

- 5.4 Business Case for Buggy Rental at Golf Courses
(Redacted report would become available once the service had been procured)

It was proposed by Councillor S Lowry, seconded by Alderman S P Porter and agreed to recommend that approval be given to the business case for buggy rental at golf courses and the progression of option 2, as outlined in the report.

Councillor G Hynds put on record that he was pleased to note the success of Aberdelghy Golf Club.

- 5.5 Business Case for Gym Equipment at Lagan Valley LeisurePlex
(Redacted report would become available following the procurement process)

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor G McCleave and agreed to recommend that approval be given to the business case for gym equipment at Lagan Valley LeisurePlex and the progression of option 2, as outlined in the report.

At this point, the Acting Chair, Alderman H Legge, asked if Members had any items of confidential business to raise.

- 5.6 PEACEPLUS
Councillor G Hynds

At the request of Councillor G Hynds, the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing provided an update in respect of PEACEPLUS.

- 5.7 Provision of Beacon at Moat Park for Twelfth of July Celebrations
Alderman S Skillen

The Director Leisure and Community Wellbeing addressed concerns raised by Alderman S Skillen regarding the provision of a beacon at Moat Park for Twelfth of July celebrations and agreed to discuss this matter with her after the meeting and communicate with the other Elected Members in her District Electoral Area.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Councillor G McCleave and agreed to come “out of Committee”.

There being no further business, the meeting was terminated at 7.11 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIR