

Title of Report:	Correspondence deferred from The Council Meeting held Thursday 26 June 2025
Committee Report Submitted To:	Corporate Policy and Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	23 September 2025
For Decision or For Information	For Decision

Linkage to Council Strategy 2021-2025	
Strategic Theme	Cohesive Leadership
Outcome	Council operates as one effective and efficient corporate unit with a common purpose and culture.
Lead Officer	Director of Corporate Services

Estimated Timescale for Completion	
Date to be Completed	Ongoing

Budgetary Considerations	
Cost of Proposal	N/A
Included in Current Year Estimates	YES/NO
Capital/Revenue	
Code	
Staffing Costs	

Legal Considerations	
Input of Legal Services Required	YES/NO
Legal Opinion Obtained	YES/NO

Screening Requirements	Required for new or revised Policies, Plans, Strategies or Service Delivery Proposals.		
Section 75 Screening	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	EQIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
Rural Needs Assessment (RNA)	Screening Completed	Yes/No	Date:
	RNA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:
	Screening Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)			
	DPIA Required and Completed:	Yes/No	Date:

1.0 **Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 At its Council Meeting held Thursday 26th June 2025, Council considered correspondence from Alison McCullough, Chief Executive, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, dated 12th June 2025 regarding a Motion – *Rural Parliaments* ([link to CC&GBC minutes and audio here](#)). (Correspondence Appendix I attached).
- 1.2 Council **RESOLVED** to refer the correspondence to Corporate Policy and Resources Committee, in order to obtain further information.

2.0 **Background**

- 2.2 The Fermanagh and Omagh District Council Motion is set out:

2.3 **Re: Motion – Rural Parliaments**

Rural Parliaments are an instrument for raising rural issues and bringing about positive change for communities and individuals.

As such, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council:

- ***recognises the value of Rural Parliaments already employed in several European countries, including Scotland***
- ***notes the comprehensive report 'Rural Parliaments in Europe' commissioned by the Scottish government in 2012***
- ***will contact the Executive Office and the other 10 Councils in this region, to lobby for the creation of a Rural Parliament similar to the current Scottish model, but also considering best practices from other European models***
- ***requests the Executive and all Councils in the North of Ireland, to co-finance a Rural Parliament in the north of Ireland and to work with the Irish government to form links across the island to establish an All-Island Rural Parliament***
- ***this Council should endeavour to host the inaugural Rural Parliament in the north when it is established.***

3.0 Officers subsequently wrote to Alison McCullagh, Chief Executive, in order to seek more information.

3.1 Alison McCullagh's Office has responded and supplied the Minutes of the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council meeting held 3rd June 2025 where the motion was debated, Minute Item 13.2, page 14 refers (copy attached) along with a link to the You Tube clip of the meeting

- <https://www.youtube.com/live/rMH-2MVYhQ4?si=k-5IBWLbhaolIbXr>

4.0 Recommendation

4.1 It is recommended that Council further consider the correspondence from Alison McCullough, Chief Executive, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, dated 13th June 2025.

Appendix I – Correspondence, Alison McCullough, Chief Executive, Fermanagh Omagh District Council, 12th June 2025

Appendix II – Minutes of Fermanagh Omagh District Council Meeting held 3rd June 2025.

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive



Fermanagh & Omagh
District Council
Comhairle Ceantair
Fhear Manach agus na hÓmaí

Our Ref: Council/June 2025/13.2

Date: 13 June 2025

Email: [REDACTED]@fermanaghomagh.com

Mr David Jackson
Chief Executive
Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council
66 Portstewart Road
COLERAINE
BT52 1EY

Dear Mr Jackson,

Re: Motion – Rural Parliaments

At the Council meeting held on 3 June 2025, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council adopted the following Motion:

Rural Parliaments are an instrument for raising rural issues and bringing about positive change for communities and individuals.

As such, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council:

- ***recognises the value of Rural Parliaments already employed in several European countries, including Scotland***
- ***notes the comprehensive report 'Rural Parliaments in Europe' commissioned by the Scottish government in 2012***
- ***will contact the Executive Office and the other 10 Councils in this region, to lobby for the creation of a Rural Parliament similar to the current Scottish model, but also considering best practices from other European models***
- ***requests the Executive and all Councils in the North of Ireland, to co-finance a Rural Parliament in the north of Ireland and to work with the Irish government to form links across the island to establish an All-Island Rural Parliament***
- ***this Council should endeavour to host the inaugural Rural Parliament in the north when it is established.***

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Alison McCullagh
Chief Executive

FERMANAGH AND OMAGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of:	Council
Date and Time:	Tuesday 3 June 2025 at 7.00 pm
Location:	The Townhall, Enniskillen / Via Webex
Chair:	Councillor Barry McElduff
Vice Chair:	Councillor Shirley Hawkes
Present:	<p>Councillors: Rosemary Barton; Elaine Brough; Dermot Browne; Mark Buchanan; Glenn Campbell; Debbie Coyle; Roy Crawford; Josephine Deehan*; Roisin Devine Gallagher; AnnMarie Donnelly; Stephen Donnelly; Keith Elliott; Anthony Feely; John Feely; Adam Gannon; Sheamus Greene; Noeleen Hayes; Robert Irvine; Catherine Kelly; Pádraigín Kelly*; Tommy Maguire; David Mahon; Declan McArdle; Stephen McCann; John McClaughry; Marty McColgan; Bernard McGrath; Colette McNulty; Thomas O'Reilly; Mark Ovens; Allan Rainey MBE*; Paul Robinson; Eddie Roofe; Errol Thompson; Victor Warrington; Patrick Withers</p>
In Attendance:	Chief Executive; Director of Community and Wellbeing; Director of Corporate Services and Governance; Director of Environment and Place; Director of Regeneration and Planning; Lead Legal Services Officer (Derry City and Strabane District Council); Democratic Services Team Leader

* Denotes Members attending remotely.

1. Apology

An apology was recorded from Councillor McPhillips.

2. Minutes of Council Meeting held on 6 May 2025

NOTED: that Paper A had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor McClaughry, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 6 May 2025 be taken as read and signed as correct.

3. Declarations of Interest

Declarations of Interest were conveyed by Members as follows:

- Agenda Item 4 – Matters Arising – Correspondence dated 23 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure regarding the Railway Hotel, Enniskillen – Councillor Mahon;
- Agenda Item 4.1 – Correspondence dated 29 May 2025 from the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), Department of Health regarding the Waiting List Reimbursement Scheme for Northern Ireland – Councillor Ovens;
- Correspondence to the Minister of Health regarding waiting list initiatives – Councillor Ovens;
- Agenda Item 10.1 – To receive nominations to attend the ICLRD workshop in the Manor House Hotel, Killadeas on 4 June 2025 – Councillor Ovens;
- Agenda Item 11 - Correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHST) regarding ICLRD Research Update – Councillor Ovens
- Agenda Item 11.1 – Correspondence dated 21 May 2025 from Waterways Ireland regarding Ulster Canal Restoration Project Update – Councillor AM Donnelly;
- Agenda Item 13.3 – Motion – Addressing the Impact of Illegal Immigration in Northern Ireland – Councillors Deehan and Irvine.

4. Matters Arising – Council Meeting

4.1 Meeting with Minister for Infrastructure – Page 3, Item 5.1

NOTED: that correspondence dated 22 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) had been issued with the agenda.

The Chief Executive advised that a delegation had met with the Minister for Infrastructure on 28 May 2025 in relation to the Omagh flood alleviation proposals and added that Members had also raised concerns regarding the disposal of St Lucia by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and DfI.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor McColgan, that the Council:

- (i) **Notes the correspondence dated 22 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure regarding the disposal of St Lucia; and**
- (ii) **Writes to the Minister for Infrastructure requesting that any decision making regarding the disposal process of St Lucia be**

deferred to allow the Council to complete work on the masterplan of the site as previously agreed with the former Minister for Infrastructure, John O'Dowd MLA.

4.2 Postal Deliveries – Page 3, Item 5.2

NOTED: that correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from Royal Mail had been issued in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Crawford, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the Council notes the correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from Royal Mail.

4.3 Minister for Health – Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme – Page 4, Item 5.3

NOTED: that correspondence dated 29 May 2025 had been issued with the agenda.

Members, whilst welcoming the introduction of the new Waiting List Reimbursement Scheme, expressed disappointment that access to the Scheme was only open to residents waiting two or more years on a hospital treatment waiting list. Members said that additional initiatives should be implemented as a matter of urgency to ensure that those unable to access the Waiting List Reimbursement Scheme would not be disadvantaged. A Member requested that the Council seek clarification from the Minister of Health regarding the utilisation of the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) to reduce waiting lists.

In response to a query from a Member, the Chief Executive advised that a response was still awaited from the Department of Health regarding the net costs incurred by the Department to operate the Cross Border Reimbursement Scheme.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Warrington, seconded by Councillor Gannon, that the Council notes the correspondence dated 29 May 2025 from the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), Department of Health.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Deehan, seconded by Councillor A Feely, that the Council writes to the Minister of Health requesting that he implements urgent waiting list initiatives so that those unable to avail of the Waiting List Reimbursement Scheme for Northern Ireland will not be disadvantaged and seeking clarity as to how the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH) is being utilised for elective surgery in order to reduce waiting lists.

4.4 Wastewater Infrastructure – Page 4, Item 5.4

A Member referred to the level of sewage and similar foul discharges entering watercourses within the Council area. Another Member referred to representations he had received from anglers who had caught detritus when fishing in Lough Erne and he highlighted the need for appropriate mitigations to be in place to ensure such issues were properly addressed.

In response to a query from a Member, the Chief Executive advised that correspondence received from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), in respect of a University of Oxford report on water quality, would be reported to the Regeneration and Community Committee meeting on Tuesday 10 June 2025.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor McClaughry, that the Council writes to Northern Ireland Water:

- (i) **Seeking clarification regarding the level of sewage and similar foul discharge being pumped into waterways within the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area; and**
- (ii) **Highlighting the level of detritus being caught by anglers fishing in Lough Erne, seeking an assurance that appropriate filters are in place at water treatment works to eliminate such issues and seeking clarity as to whether there is a system in place to measure the extent of sewage overflow entering Lough Erne during and after periods of heavy rainfall.**

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Greene, seconded by Councillor A Feely, that following the consultation period, the Council seeks a meeting with the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) or senior Department Officials to discuss the potential adverse impact on farmers and the wider agricultural sector of the proposed Ammonia Strategy and Revised Operational Protocol.

Councillor Campbell entered the meeting during consideration of the above matter.

4.5 Railway Hotel, Enniskillen – Page 5, Item 5.5

Due to a Declaration of Interest, Councillor Mahon left the meeting at this juncture.

NOTED: that correspondence dated 23 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Browne, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the Council notes the correspondence dated 23 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure.

Councillor Mahon re-entered the meeting at this juncture.

4.6 Parking Issues St Conor's Primary School, Brookmount Road, Omagh – Page 6, Item 14.1

The Director of Community and Wellbeing updated Members on the outcome of an interagency meeting which had been held with Councillors and key stakeholders on Monday 2 June 2025 and added that a further update meeting would be scheduled for the end of August 2025.

Members reiterated the need for appropriate road safety measures to be put in place at the school and that all required measures to resolve the issue were expedited by the relevant Government departments as a matter of urgency.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Deehan, that, given the associated health and safety concerns associated with the major traffic congestion and parking difficulties at St Conor's Primary School, the Council writes to the:

- (i) Minister of Education stressing that the process to resolve the issue needs to be expedited as a matter of urgency;**
- (ii) Minister for Infrastructure requesting that appropriate road safety measures be put in place including double yellow lines on one side of the road.**

Councillors Greene and Robinson left and re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item.

4.7 Report on call in of decision taken at the Special Council Meeting on 15 April 2025 regarding Fermanagh Lakeland Forum Redevelopment Investment Decision– Page 7, Item 19

In response to comments from a Member, the Director of Community and Wellbeing advised that the Fermanagh Lakeland Forum site would close on 16 June 2025. He stated that the car parking spaces at the Forum were for use by Forum users specifically and added that details regarding the number of car parking spaces at the Fermanagh Lakeland Forum site would be provided to Members.

4.8 Electoral Office for Northern Ireland – Page 13, Item 20.6

NOTED: that correspondence dated 19 May 2025 from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland had been issued with the agenda.

A Member referred to new legislation from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland which stipulated that an Electoral ID Card is only available to an individual who does not hold another form of photographic ID. The Member suggested that this could be perceived as a barrier to voting, particularly for young people.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor O'Reilly, seconded by Councillor Coyle, that the Council:

- (i) **Notes the correspondence dated 19 May 2025 from the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland; and**
- (ii) **Writes to the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland expressing disappointment that an Electoral ID Card is only available to an individual who does not hold another form of photographic ID and highlighting this could be perceived as a barrier to voting, particularly for young people**

4.8 Motion - Good Jobs' Employment Rights Legislation – Page 17, Item 32.1

NOTED: that correspondence dated 3 June 2025 from the Department for the Economy had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Crawford, seconded by Councillor McCann, that the Council notes the correspondence dated 3 June 2025 from the Department for the Economy

4.9 Old Creamery Road, Dromore – Page 22, Item 33.3

NOTED: that correspondence dated 28 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure had been issued in advance of the meeting.

Members expressed disappointment that physical traffic calming measures could not be implemented at Old Creamery Road, Dromore. A Member welcomed the renewal of road markings and installation of warning signage at the location and highlighted that further signage was required at the Fintona turn-off.

Members expressed their concerns regarding the potential health and safety risks posed by reduced or restricted sightlines and noted the importance of DfI ensuring an appropriate standard of maintenance of verges throughout the district. Reference was also made to the maintenance of roundabouts and the deterioration of road markings generally throughout the district, particularly in relation to hatched areas, and the need for renewal of road markings to be undertaken by the Department for Infrastructure.

A Member emphasised the importance of ensuring that upgrade works to the Derrylin Road at Derryallen were prioritised, in light of the road being a main arterial route for those travelling towards Dublin.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor McClaughry, seconded by Councillor McNulty, that the Council:

- (i) **Notes the correspondence dated 28 May 2025 from the Department for Infrastructure; and**
- (ii) **Writes to the Department for Infrastructure requesting that consideration be given to the erection of either 'Give Way' or 'Stop' signage at the Fintona turn-off, Old Creamery Road, Dromore.**

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Greene, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the Council writes to the Department for Infrastructure:

- (i) Requesting an update on the Department's consideration of the Council's previous request that it commences seasonal grass cutting in the Erne East DEA and that a full grass cutting programme is undertaken at all rural junctions and sightlines in the district including the cutting of vegetation around signage in the district, highlighting health and safety concerns;
- (ii) Seeking an update regarding the maintenance of roundabouts in the district with particular reference to the roundabout at the junction of the Derry Road and Strathroy Link Road, Omagh; and
- (iii) Highlighting the need for road markings on roads and hatched areas throughout the district, to be renewed.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Gannon, seconded by Councillor McArdle, that the Council writes to the Minister for Infrastructure requesting that the Department prioritise upgrade works to the Derrylin Road at Derryallen, highlighting that the road is a main arterial route for those travelling towards Dublin.

5. Report of Environmental Services Committee meeting held on 7 May 2025

NOTED: that Paper B had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor McGrath, that the report of the Environmental Services Committee be approved and adopted.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Household Recycling Centres – Page 4, Item 5.2

A Member reiterated his reservations regarding the Council's decision to implement a booking system for the Council's Household Recycling Centres. He stated that the Council's decision-making process in this matter was underhand and had not been subject to adequate discussion by Members and engagement with ratepayers.

At this juncture some Members expressed their concern in relation to the Member's use of the term 'underhand' and sought clarity from the Chief Executive in this regard.

The Chief Executive stated that in her opinion, the comments made by the Member were inaccurate and she added that all reports on the matter had been brought to, and approved, at previous Environmental Services Committee meetings. She advised that should there be any additional information requirements, a further update report could be brought to a future Environmental Services Committee meeting. She highlighted that Members who were not Committee Members could request speaking rights for the meeting, should they wish to contribute to a discussion at the meeting. The Chief Executive stated that it was completely wrong to suggest there was any underhandedness in the decision-making process.

Following other Members continuing to express concern at the Member's terminology, the Chair asked the Member if he wished to reconsider his use of the term underhand, and to withdraw his comment, or alternatively, to provide evidence for his allegation of underhand decision making. The Member declined to do so.

At this point Councillor Coyle proposed that the meeting recess for ten minutes to allow Party discussion regarding the earlier comment made by a Member and this was seconded by Councillor McCann.

Given the divergence in opinion the Chair put the proposal by Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor McCann, to a vote and Members voted as follows:

FOR: 24 votes
 AGAINST: 7 votes
 ABSTAIN: 5 votes

Therefore, the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor McCann, and by the majority of votes cast, that the meeting recess for ten minutes to allow Party discussions regarding a comment made by a Member.

The meeting re-commenced at 8.10 pm.

The Chair stated that Members had expressed concern regarding the comments by the Member which were, in their opinion, improper, totally unfounded and inaccurate. He noted that Members had expressed particular concern that the word "underhand" generally inferred dishonesty and he noted that the use of this word in the context of the Council's decision making, had the potential to bring the Council into disrepute.

In this context, and noting how other Members had deemed the Member's use of language to be improper, the Chair again asked the Member to reconsider the use of the word underhand and to withdraw his comment or to provide evidence for his allegation. The Member again declined to withdraw his comment and stated that he was satisfied with his choice of words as he regarded the decision to be underhand as it was taken in secret, in Confidential Business.

In light of the Member's unwillingness to withdraw his comments and his continued use of the term underhand to describe the Council's decision making processes, Councillor Coyle then proposed that in accordance with Standing Order 25.3, Councillor Ovens not be heard for the remainder of the meeting. This was seconded by Councillor McCann.

The Chair put the proposal by Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor McCann, to a vote and Members voted as follows:

FOR: 20 votes
 AGAINST: 7 votes
 ABSTAIN: 9 votes

Therefore, the proposal was carried.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Coyle, seconded by Councillor McCann, and by the majority of votes cast, that in accordance with Standing Order 25.3, Councillor Ovens not be heard for the remainder of the meeting.

In response to queries from Members, the Director of Environment and Place advised that he would provide further clarification on the use of Waste Transfer Notes at Household Recycling Centres (HRCs) at the Environmental Services Committee meeting on Wednesday 4 June 2025 and that the query regarding the maintenance of DfI roundabouts maintenance could potentially be considered under Any Urgent and Relevant Business at the Environmental Services Committee on 4 June 2025.

NOTED.

7. Report of Regeneration and Community Committee meeting held on 13 May 2025

NOTED: that Paper C had been issued with the agenda.

NOTED: on a point of accuracy, that Councillor Gannon be recorded as an apology.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Campbell, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the report of the Regeneration and Community Committee be approved and adopted, subject to the aforementioned amendment.

Councillors Brough and Elliott left and re-entered and Councillor Rainey left the meeting during consideration of the above item.

8. Matters Arising

8.1 Department for the Economy (DfE) – Review of mineral prospecting licencing legislation – Page 10, Item 7.3

A Member expressed concern that the Department for the Economy was granting seven prospecting licences to mining companies despite a large number of objections, including an objection submitted by the Council.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Deehan, seconded by Councillor S Donnelly, that the Council explores the options available in relation to seeking a potential Judicial Review in relation to the Department for the Economy's recent granting of various prospecting licences in the district.

9. Report of Policy and Resources Committee meeting held on 14 May 2025

NOTED: that Paper D had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Warrington, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that the report of the Policy and Resources Committee be approved and adopted.

10. Matters Arising

10.1 ICLRD Research Update – Page 2, Item 4.2

NOTED: that correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) was issued in advance of the meeting.

Members expressed the view that the Council should proceed with the Health and Social Care Services (HSCS) Sub-Committee meeting as scheduled on Thursday 19 June 2025 at 2.00pm via Webex and were of the opinion that a review of the Sub-Committee was required so that an effective model for future engagement was put in place.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Rooft, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the Council:

- (i) Nominates Councillors Hawkes and Warrington to attend the workshop in the Manor House Hotel, Killadeas on 4 June 2025; and**
- (ii) Notes the correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT).**

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Thompson, seconded by Councillor Coyle, that the Council proceeds with the Health and Social Care Services (HSCS) Sub-Committee meeting as scheduled on Thursday 19 June 2025 at 2.00pm via Webex.

Councillor McColgan left and re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item.

10.2 The Somme Association - 109th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in France – Page 8, Item 7.6

The Chief Executive sought nominations for a delegation to attend The Somme Association – 109th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in France in July 2025.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Warrington, seconded by Councillor Thompson, that the Council nominates Councillors Crawford and Hawkes and the Chief Executive, if available, to attend The Somme Association – 109th Anniversary of the Battle of the Somme in France in July 2025.

Councillor Crawford left the meeting at this juncture.

11. Correspondence

11.1 Waterways Ireland – Ulster Canal Restoration Project Update

NOTED: that correspondence dated 21 May 2025 had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor O'Reilly, seconded by Councillor McClaughry, that the Council notes the correspondence dated 21 May 2025 from Waterways Ireland, and accepts the offer of a meeting to discuss the restoration plans

11.2 Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) – Lisnaskea Police Station site

NOTED: that correspondence dated 23 May 2025 had been issued with the agenda.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor O'Reilly, seconded by Councillor Hayes, that the Council notes the correspondence dated 23 May 2025 from the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

Councillor Crawford re-entered the meeting at this juncture.

11.3 Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) – Public Consultation on Proposed New Rules for Selling and Supplying Puppies and Kittens

NOTED: that correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs had issued in advance of the meeting.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor McGrath, seconded by Councillor Irvine, that:

- (I) The Council notes the correspondence dated 2 June 2025 from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA), and;**
- (II) A draft response to the consultation would be brought to the Environmental Services Committee meeting in July.**

Councillor Greene left and re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item.

12. Delegation of Council Powers

12.1 Environmental Services Committee

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Irvine, seconded by Councillor AM Donnelly, that delegated powers be conferred to the Environmental Services Committee in June 2025:

- To consider report on draft response to the Consultation on “Impacts on the Water Environment – Call for Evidence”**

12.2 Policy and Resources Committee

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Irvine, seconded by Councillor AM Donnelly, that delegated powers be conferred to the Policy and Resources Committee in June 2025

- To consider report on draft response to the Consultation on 'Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper'**
- To consider report on Annual Governance Statement for Fermanagh and Omagh District Council for year ended 31 March 2025**
- To consider report on Draft Financial Position for year ended 31 March 2025**

13. Notices of Motion

13.1 Voting Rights for the Election of the President of Ireland

Proposed by Councillor McCann, seconded by Councillor Browne, the following Motion of which due notice had been given:

This Council notes that the 1998 Good Friday Agreement recognises the birth right of all the people of the North to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both.

We recall that, in November 2013, the Fifth Report of the Convention on the Constitution recommended to give citizens residing outside the 26 Counties the right to vote in presidential elections.

This Council further notes that Irish citizens living in the north can stand for, and be elected as, President of Ireland but cannot vote in presidential elections; and calls on this Council to write to the Irish Government and ask that they implement the recommendation of the Convention on the constitution with regards to voting rights in presidential elections, thereby extending the right to vote in elections for President of Ireland to all Irish citizens on the island of Ireland.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor McCann stated that Irish citizens in the North of Ireland are still disenfranchised from participation in the democratic process to elect the Irish head of state. He added that Sinn Féin had been highlighting this democratic deficit for many years and in May 2025 the Stormont Assembly historically voted in support of extending presidential voting rights for Irish citizens in the North, and the Tanaiste, Simon Harris, had indicated that he was supportive of this principle and would engage with government colleagues and the Taoiseach in this regard. He advised that former President Mary McAleese was the first citizen from the North to take on the role, but was unable to vote for herself in the election and the late Martin McGuinness, a candidate for President, was also unable to vote. He further added that twelve years had passed since the constitutional convention in Dublin voted overwhelmingly by a margin of over 78% in support of extending voting rights to Irish citizens living in the North and this position had been further endorsed by all the main Parties in the South. He expressed concern that the current government had failed in relation to this issue as the matter had not been included on the Programme for Government. In concluding he stated that the government had a constitutional duty to uphold the citizenship rights of everyone born on the island of Ireland and this was about equality, recognition and democratic participation and, as such, the Irish government must act and set a date for a referendum on the twelve year commitment to extend voting rights to Irish citizens in the North.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Browne stated that 20,000 Polish citizens resident in Ireland were allowed to vote in the Polish Presidential election in May. He added that the motion was not about changing the role of the Presidency but about giving those who see themselves as Irish citizens, a say in the election of the Irish Head of State. He further added that as someone who held an Irish passport

the Irish head of state was the figure head he looked up to and he paid tribute to the incumbent President Michael D Higgins who had undertaken the role expertly.

Members of the Democratic Unionist Party and Members of the Ulster Unionist Party expressed opposition to the Motion. A Member stated that the extension of such voting rights to residents of Northern Ireland and members of the overseas Irish diaspora would undermine Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom. Members added that the Irish President had no constitutional role or authority in Northern Ireland, which remained firmly and democratically part of the United Kingdom, and the Belfast Agreement enshrined the consent principle until a majority voted otherwise. In concluding these Members stated that it would be absurd for any country to enter into arrangements that allow those with no practical connection to the Irish Republic, in terms of residency or taxation, to effectively determine the outcome of an election.

During further discussion, other Members indicated their support for the Motion. Members added that the President of Ireland was their head of state and a figure who represented their identity, citizenship and values on a global stage and, as such, they should be able to vote for the President of Ireland. Members added that there was an onus on the Irish government to ensure that Irish citizens living in the North are able to participate more in the affairs of the Irish nation by having voting rights. Members further added that passing the motion did not in their view threaten Members of a Unionist background as the proposal was about the citizenry and not the territory and, therefore, there were no implications for the principle of consent. A Member referred to a recent election held in Dungannon when members of the East Timor community voted in their parliamentary elections which, in his view, was a positive example of civic engagement which did not dilute anyone's sense of identity or shake the constitutional foundations of the United Kingdom and, as such, it was ridiculous that Presidential elections could not be accommodated on the same Island.

In summing up, Councillor McCann thanked Members who had indicated their support for the Motion and expressed disappointment that the Democratic Unionist Party and Ulster Unionist Party were not supportive of the Motion.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor McCann, seconded by Councillor Browne, and agreed by the majority, approval of the above Motion.

NOTED: that the Ulster Unionist Party Members and the Democratic Unionist Party Members dissented from the above decision.

Councillor J Feely left and re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item and Councillor Ovens left the meeting and did not return.

13.2 Rural Parliaments

Proposed by Councillor Greene, seconded by Councillor Campbell, the following Motion of which due notice had been given:

Rural Parliaments are an instrument for raising rural issues and bringing about positive change for communities and individuals.

As such, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council:

- recognises the value of Rural Parliaments already employed in several European countries, including Scotland
- notes the comprehensive report 'Rural Parliaments in Europe' commissioned by the Scottish government in 2012
- will contact the Executive Office and the other 10 Councils in this region, to lobby for the creation of a Rural Parliament similar to the current Scottish model, but also considering best practices from other European models.
- requests the Executive and all Councils in the North of Ireland, to co-finance a Rural Parliament in the north of Ireland and to work with the Irish government to form links across the island to establish an All-Island Rural Parliament
- this Council should endeavour to host the inaugural Rural Parliament in the north when it is established.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Greene stated that the formation of a Rural Parliament would highlight issues where rural dwellers felt let down as well as highlighting the positives of rural life. He added that Rural Parliaments operating in Scotland and other European countries, offer unique benefits which help strengthen rural communities and enhance democratic governance. He further added that whilst Rural Parliaments cannot legislate like National Parliaments they are a platform for rural voices bringing together citizens, organisations and policy makers to discuss and influence rural policy and give rural residents a sense of ownership and empowerment over decisions affecting their lives. He stated that such a Parliament would put the spotlight on key rural issues such as transport, digital connectivity, health services and farming which would make policy makers focus on tailored solutions which align with agriculture, environment, economy and the cultural realities of living in rural areas. In concluding, he stated that the sixth European Rural Parliament was set to meet in Scotland for the first time from 21-23 October 2025 which would be an ideal opportunity to meet up with delegates from forty European nations and gain knowledge of best practice and perhaps at a future date such an event could be hosted in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Campbell stated that there were already Rural Parliaments operating in Scotland and other European countries and, in Ireland, a Senior Citizens Parliament and an Older Peoples Parliament had been established highlighting that the concept of promoting the views of a focus group of people in policy development and decision making was already in place. He added that rural dwellers faced challenges that were not shared by those living in more densely populated cities and towns and the needs of rural people had not been met in the past and rural constituents did not share a level playing field with those living in more urban settings. In concluding, he added that those living West of the Bann had inferior access to GP services, a lack of investment and adequate roads infrastructure and a Rural Parliament could provide an important role by amplifying the collective voices of rural people.

Councillor Rainey re-joined the meeting virtually.

In expressing support for the Motion, Members stated that the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area was very rural and a number of the issues that faced constituents were specific to rural dwellers and it was important that rural dwellers should have a strong voice. The nature of the population density in Northern Ireland meant that MLAs elected to the Stormont Assembly were mostly from urban or suburban backgrounds and from constituencies with a much smaller geographical footprint and such an imbalance of elected officials had led to a consistent and repeated lack of funding and support to rural communities.

A Member stated that the DUP recognised that rural communities and farms were an integral part of the social and economic fabric of Northern Ireland and the Party had a strong record of supporting the rural community. He concluded that the Motion referenced co-financing a Rural Parliament, however, it did not provide the potential costs and further questions would arise as to how an all-Ireland Rural Parliament could operate across two separate jurisdictions. The Member concluded by stating that because of this, the Democratic Unionist Party could not support the Motion.

Speaking on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, a Member stated that the Council represented a rural area and he added that the Council was the first to give evidence to the DAERA Committee in the Stormont Assembly and he was of the view that the Council was already undertaking work on the matters referenced within the Motion. The Member referred to the costs of establishing such a rural parliament, and suggested, if one was formed, it would displace the work of the Council, and as such, the Ulster Unionist Party could not support the motion.

In summing up, Councillor Greene thanked Members who had indicated their support for the Motion and expressed disappointment that the Democratic Unionist Party and Ulster Unionist Party were not supportive of the Motion.

Given the divergence in opinion expressed by Members, the Chair stated that he was putting the Motion proposed by Councillor Greene and seconded by Councillor Campbell to a vote and a recorded vote was requested by Councillor Greene.

The Motion was put to the meeting and Members voted as follows:

FOR (25 votes)	AGAINST (12 votes)	ABSTAIN (0 votes)
E Brough	R Barton	
D Browne	M Buchanan	
G Campbell	R Crawford	
D Coyle	K Elliott	
J Deehan	S Hawkes	
R Devine Gallagher	R Irvine	
AM Donnelly	D Mahon	
S Donnelly	J McClaughry	
A Feely	A Rainey MBE	
J Feely	P Robinson	
A Gannon	E Thompson	

S Greene	V Warrington	
N Hayes		
C Kelly		
P Kelly		
T Maguire		
D McArdle		
S McCann		
M McColgan		
B McElduff		
B McGrath		
C McNulty		
T O'Reilly		
E Roofe		
P Withers		

Therefore, the Motion was carried

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Greene, seconded by Councillor Campbell, and by the majority votes cast, approval of the above Motion.

Councillors Coyle, Mahon and McCann left and re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item.

13.3 Addressing the Impact of Illegal Immigration in Northern Ireland

Proposed by Councillor Mahon, seconded by Councillor Hawkes, the following Motion of which due notice has been given:

That this Council notes the Prime Minister's plans to reduce the number of people migrating to the United Kingdom legally; regrets, however, the Government's continuing failure to meaningfully address illegal immigration, including through measures that apply equally across the United Kingdom; expresses alarm that the estimated cost of accommodation for asylum seekers in Northern Ireland has risen to £400m, four times the original estimate, according to the National Audit Office (NAO); is concerned that, increasingly, this is placing unsustainable pressures on basic services, including access to GPs, Dentists and the provision of school places; further notes the link between illegal immigration, increased demand for housing, and the proliferation of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs); calls on Fermanagh and Omagh District Council to write to the Minister for Infrastructure to review the effectiveness of the current legislation for HMOs and to clarify what mechanisms exist for the Department or a local authority to place additional restrictions on the approval of HMOs.

At the outset, on a point of order raised by a Member regarding the content of the last paragraph of the Motion, the Lead Legal Services Officer advised that he had viewed the Motion in advance of the meeting and it was lawful. He added that the Motion was clearly only seeking clarification regarding mechanisms that might exist and, as such, there was no reason why Members of the Planning Committee could not consider these matters being mindful that they would consider any application

for an HMO which came before them in line with existing legislation and the provisions set out in the LDP.

In proposing the Motion, Councillor Mahon stated that the Democratic Unionist Party wished to see stronger measures taken by the government to stem illegal immigration in the United Kingdom and added that it was equally important that the needs of people who had lived in an area for generations continue to be met. He further added that housing should be affordable and attainable and the rising demand created by illegal immigration was having a significant impact on rental house prices and he highlighted that front-line services must also be accessible for all. Councillor Mahon stated that the majority of people across Northern Ireland who express reservations about the effects of immigration do so peacefully and lawfully and public bodies and political parties needed to engage in meaningful dialogue with communities acutely impacted. He advised that the overprovision of HMOs was a factor in the debate and was a symptom of illegal immigration as opposed to a root cause, however, it led to a change in the resident population and often eroded the residential character of areas affected and placed increased pressures on basic services and local amenities. He stated that the Minister for Infrastructure and the Minister for Communities must urgently revisit the Strategic Planning Policy Statement (SPPS) and overarching direction must be given to Councils to define the parameters of what is deemed to be an over proliferation ensuring that planning controls are robust. In concluding, he advised that whilst Fermanagh and Omagh District Council may not have the same volume of HMOs as other areas, Council should act now to ensure that it has control and is content with the number of HMOs in the district.

In seconding the Motion, Councillor Hawkes stated that Northern Ireland stands at a crossroads and the issue of illegal immigration was among the many challenges it faced. She added that the problem with illegal immigration meant that it was unknown who was coming into the country, what their background was or in some cases their country of origin and there was a need therefore to protect society, and uncontrolled and illegal immigration should not have become the norm. She further added that residents in the district cannot get access to GPs or dentists and over the past five years £18m has been spent on interpreters within the Health Service and as a society this could not be sustained. Councillor Hawkes stated that the National Audit Office had recently reported that £400m had been spent on housing illegal asylum seekers in Northern Ireland and this was a huge cost to the taxpayer. She advised that there needed to be effective border control and respect for the rule of law and addressing illegal immigration required a comprehensive approach which included improving legal pathways for migration and enhancing border security. In concluding, she stated that by working together and engaging in respectful dialogue, solutions can be found that balance our obligations to our own citizens with our humanitarian responsibilities.

In expressing opposition to the Motion, Members were, of the opinion, that the motion was disingenuous and misleading and would marginalise vulnerable people. Members added that many of the points contained within the motion were not relevant to the district and according to the Law Centre NI there were no asylum seekers residing in the Fermanagh and Omagh District Council area. Members stated that many from outside these islands play a vital role within our

health, agri-food sector and wider economy and Members acknowledged the valuable contribution that migrants make on a daily basis in this regard. Members referred to the challenges in education and highlighted that the closure of many schools in the district was a result of an ageing population and declining pupil numbers. Members referred to a recent roundtable meeting of stakeholders in Omagh organised by Empowering Refugees and Newcomers' Organisation (ERANO) regarding the recent rise in misinformation and hate crimes against asylum seekers in our community and expressed surprise that the seconder of the motion had spoken at this meeting. A Member on behalf of Sinn Féin stated that the Party wished to see an immigration system where fairness was paramount and communities were treated with dignity and respect in line with international human rights law. A Member stated that as the Council's Diversity Ambassador she would continue her work welcoming and celebrating diversity in the district.

Speaking on behalf of the Ulster Unionist Party, a Member stated that this was an emotive Motion and the reality was that constituents were talking about this topic as services were under pressure. He added that the Ulster Unionist Party supported a firm but fair immigration system highlighting that illegal immigration was a reserved matter for Westminster. He concluded by stating that as Planning was a devolved matter for the Council, the Ulster Unionist Party would abstain from any vote on the Motion.

At this juncture, the Chair clarified the arrangements for Agenda preparation and the respective roles of the former and incoming Council Chairs in this regard.

In summing up, Councillor Mahon expressed disappointment that there was not majority support for the Motion in the Chamber and he thanked Members for their contributions. In concluding he added that the Democratic Unionist Party was not racist.

Given the divergence in opinion expressed by Members, the Chair stated that he was putting the Motion proposed by Councillor Mahon and seconded by Councillor Hawkes to a vote and a recorded vote was requested by Councillor Mahon.

The Motion was put to the meeting and Members voted as follows:

FOR (6 votes)	AGAINST (21 votes)	ABSTAIN (7 votes)
M Buchanan	E Brough	R Barton
K Elliott	D Browne	R Crawford
S Hawkes	G Campbell	J Feely
D Mahon	R Devine Gallagher	J McClaghry
P Robinson	AM Donnelly	B McGrath
E Thompson	S Donnelly	A Rainey MBE
	A Feely	V Warrington
	A Gannon	
	S Greene	
	N Hayes	
	C Kelly	
	P Kelly	
	T Maguire	

	D McArdle	
	S McCann	
	M McColgan	
	B McElduff	
	C McNulty	
	T O'Reilly	
	E Roofe	
	P Withers	

Therefore, the Motion was defeated.

Councillors AM Donnelly and Warrington left and re-entered the meeting during consideration of the above item and Councillor McArdle left the meeting and did not return.

PART TWO – CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor O'Reilly, seconded by Councillor Robinson, that in accordance with Section 42, Sub Sections (2) or (4) of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, the meeting continue 'In Committee'.

The Chief Executive reported that during 'Confidential Business' the Council:

- (i) Considered the Confidential Minutes of the Council Meeting – 6 May 2025 and received an update on a Matter Arising relating to a lands matter;
- (ii) Considered and adopted the Confidential Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee Meeting – 7 May 2025 and there were no Matters Arising;
- (iii) Considered and adopted the Confidential Minutes of the Regeneration and Community Committee Meeting – 13 May 2025 and there were no Matters Arising;
- (iv) Considered and adopted the Confidential Minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee Meeting – 14 May 2025 and there were no Matters Arising; and
- (v) Received an update in relation to legal matter relating to a planning application and agreed a course of action.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor McGrath, seconded by Councillor Irvine, adoption of the summary report provided by the Chief Executive arising out of Confidential Business.

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor AM Donnelly, seconded by Councillor McColgan, that the meeting be extended by thirty minutes to allow for the completion of the remaining business on the agenda

23. Any Urgent and Relevant Business

23.1 Review of Members' Allowances

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor McClaughry, seconded by Councillor J Feely, that the Council undertakes a review of Members' allowances, Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs) and wider Member support.

Councillors Devine Gallagher and Irvine left the meeting during consideration of the above item and did not return.

23.2 Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA)

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor Mahon, that if, following a review, an appropriate response from the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) had not been received in respect of previous representations by the Council in relation to an abandoned trailer of waste at Sallaghy Parish Church, Newtownbutler that clarification be sought from NIEA regarding the timescale for intervention and a response should a similar situation occur in the future.

23.3 Marble Arch Caves

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Robinson, seconded by Councillor Mahon, that the Council erects a plaque at the Marble Arch Caves to mark the 40th Anniversary of the attraction.

23.4 Project ECHO

RESOLVED:

On the proposal of Councillor Deehan, seconded by Councillor McGrath, that the Council writes to the Director of Hospital Services, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG) and copies in the Assistant Director of Hospital Services, (SPPG) expressing concern regarding the winding down of Project ECHO and highlighting the positive benefits of the Project.

The meeting concluded at 10.26 pm.

Signed: _____
Chair

Signed: _____
Clerk and Chief Executive

Date: _____