

THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2026

Table of Contents

No	Item	Decision
1.	Mayor's Business	Received
2.	Apologies	Alderman Callan, Fielding Councillor McShane, Wisener
3.	Declaration of Members' Interests	Alderman McAuley
4.	Deputation – Build our Bridge	Received
5.	Minutes of Council Meeting held Tuesday 30 June 2026 (reconvened Tuesday 4 August 2026)	Confirmed as a correct record
6.	Minutes of Council Meeting held Tuesday 4 August 2026	Confirmed as a correct record
7.	Minutes of Planning Committee held 24 June 2026	Received and noted
8.	Finance Committee Report	
8.1	Management Accounts - Period 3	Noted
9.	Planning Committee Report	
9.1	NILGA – Call for Evidence – Tree Protection Bill - Draft Council Response	That Council agrees the draft response to the NI Tree Protection Bill including the amendments proposed by Councillor Storey.
10.	Matters for reporting to the Partnership Panel	That Council writes to the Executive Office regarding

		<i>the status of the Partnership Panel.</i>
11.	Conferences	<i>Noted</i>
12.	Correspondence	<i>Noted</i>
13.	Consultation Schedule	<i>Noted</i>
14.	Sealed Documents	<i>Seal Affixed (Items i–iv)</i>
	In Committee (Items 15 - 15.1)	
15.	Leisure and Development Committee report	
15.1	Floodlighting Tender Awards	<i>That Council note the tender process in Annex A (previously circulated), for the upgrade of Floodlighting at Scroggy Road and Rugby Avenue 3G pitches and approve the Contract award of £150,157 to Pattons.</i>
	In Public (Items 16 – 19)	
16.	Notice of Motion Proposed by Alderman Hunter, seconded by Councillor Wisener (abbrev: Supporting Our Emergency Services, Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans Through Leisure Access)	<i>Referred to the Leisure and Development Committee</i>
16.	Notice of Motion Proposed by Alderman Fielding, Seconded by Alderman S McKillop (abbrev: Repairs to concrete surfaces at the Blue Pool, Portrush)	<i>Referred to the Leisure and Development Committee</i>
17.	Notice of Motion Proposed by Alderman S McKillop, Seconded by Councillor Wilson	<i>Referred to the Leisure and Development Committee</i>

	(abbrev: Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival)	
18.	Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Wilson, Seconded by Councillor Elder. (abbrev: Emergency General Surgery at Causeway Hospital)	<i>To support the Notice of Motion.</i>

UNCONFIRMED

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, RIADA HOUSE
AND VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE ON
TUESDAY 1 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7.00 PM**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Huggins (C)

Members Present : Alderman Boyle (C), Brown Stewart (R), Coyle (R),
Hunter (R), Knight-McQuillan (C), John McAuley (R),
S McKillop (C), Scott (R)

Councillors Anderson (C), C Archibald (C), N
Archibald (C), Bateson (C), Callaghan (R), Chivers
(R), Elder (C), Holmes (C), Kane (C), Kennedy (C),
Kyle (C), Mairs (C), Jonathan McAuley (C), McCully
(R), McGlinchey (R), McGurk (R), MA McKillop (C),
McMullan (C), McQuillan (C), Nicholl (R), Peacock
(C), Schenning (C), Storey (C), Wallace (R), Watson
(R), Watton (C), Wilson (C)

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive (C)
P Mulvenna, Director of Leisure and Development (C)
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer (C)
M Jones, Council Solicitor (R)
S Mulhern, Development Plan Manager (C)
L Irwin, Acting PR Manager (R)
U Harper, Senior Democratic Services Officer (C)

In Attendance: K Bradley, Build Our Bridge (C)
G Roberts, Retail NI (C)
A Lennox, Acting ICT Manager (C)
L Boyd, ICT Officer (C)
C Taggart, ICT Officer (C)

Press: (1 No) (R), Public (5 No C), (2 No. R)

Key – R = Attended Remotely

The Chief Executive undertook a roll call.

The Mayor advised Council of its obligations and protocol whilst the meeting was being audio recorded.

1. THE MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor stated that August had been a busy month and thanked Alderman Hunter for her support as Deputy Mayor.

The Mayor stated that Coleraine Connect have been doing a sterling job with events, and noted the positive impact on footfall and trade in the town, with one business reporting that their trade was up 56% with the same Saturday last year.

The Mayor attended celebratory events including the 70th anniversary of the Abbeyfield care homes in Ballymoney and Portstewart, the 100th anniversary of the Baptist church in Limavady, and the church service to celebrate 400 years of Ballymena.

The Mayor attended the LEP event for the North Carolina Trade Delegation and noted that it was a very successful event and thanked the Officers involved in arranging this. The Mayor also noted the success of the Lammas Fair.

The Mayor stated that the Freedom of the Borough for the NI Prison Service was a fantastic event and thanked the Officers involved in organising it.

The Mayor wished Alderman Coyle and Councillor Mairs well in their recovery.

The Mayor passed on condolences to Councillor Wilson on his grandmother's passing.

The Mayor noted the work of the Planning department in making Causeway Coast and Glens one of only two Councils in Northern Ireland ahead of the 30-week benchmark for Major applications.

Councillor Watson congratulated the Antrim Camogie team for their All-Ireland intermediate Antrim Camogie win and the under-23 win.

Councillor Watton congratulated Patsy's Bar in Coleraine as one of eight UK-wide finalists for the PubAid Community Pub Hero Awards 2026 for its charity work.

The Mayor congratulated Hannah Scott for her success in winning silver in the World Championships.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Callan, Alderman Fielding, Councillor McShane and Councillor Wisener.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Alderman McAuley declared an interest in Item 15 – Notice of Motion Proposed by Alderman Hunter, seconded by Councillor Wisener, Supporting Our Emergency Services, Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans Through Leisure Access.

CHANGE TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Mayor advised that the Leisure and Development Committee report will be heard In Committee prior to the Notices of Motion.

4. DEPUTATION – BUILD OUR BRIDGE

The Mayor welcomed Kenny Bradley from Build our Bridge and Glyn Roberts from Retail NI and invited them to present to Council.

The Retail NI representative stated that Retail NI supports the traders in Kilrea, who have not been treated well by the Executive, with the Department for Communities and DARD failing to provide support. He advised that the traders should have got the same support as that provided to the traders in Sandy Row when the Boyne Bridge was closed. He stated that a new bridge in Kilrea should be part of Council's Local Development Plan and the process of getting a new bridge should start now.

The representative from Build our Bridge delivered a presentation to Members calling for a new two-lane bridge across the Lower Bann and asking for Council to support their call for a DfI options appraisal and scheme development. He noted the impact of the eight-month emergency closure of Kilrea bridge from September 2025, not just on traders, who experienced a 30% - 50% reduction in turnover, but on all parts of the community. This included access to health centres and school transport, and resulted in increased social isolation and additional CO2 emissions.

He noted that the current bridge is not designed for today's traffic demands, yet it serves as a key link in the area. He stated that the 2025 closure represented a single-point failure in the regional road network, and he called for a strategic approach to avoid a future failure. He referred to the proposed redevelopment of St Conor's College and emphasised the importance of ensuring that the transport infrastructure is in place to support this. He stated that failure to act now risks repeated closures and that a new crossing is the only long-term solution.

Alderman Knight-McQuillan welcomed the presentation and stated that Council has also been campaigning on this. She stated that the closure of the bridge demonstrated how crucial it is, and noted that there has been damage to the road surfaces where the diversions occurred. She emphasised that the current

bridge should be retained but that a modern, two-way bridge should also be provided. She stated that Council supports the call for the new bridge and will do what it can to campaign for it.

Councillor Bateson thanked the Build our Bridge campaign for their work. He stated that Kilrea needs a new two-lane bridge. He noted that Council passed a Notice of Motion earlier this year in support of this matter. He stated that Council must push for meaningful engagement and will give its full support to the campaign.

Councillor Peacock agreed that the long-term future of the bridge needs consideration. She emphasised that Rasharkin also suffered disruption from the closure, which exposed the lack of connectivity over the Bann. She stated that Council will do all that it can to support the campaign and suggested that Council request an update from the LDP team.

Councillor Holmes noted the massive impact of the bridge closure and stated that the failures at Stormont are disheartening, with rural communities overlooked. He noted that the Partnership Panel does not seem to function to address these issues. He noted that Portglenone bridge is not in much better shape. He asked what else Council can do to support the campaign.

The Retail NI representative emphasised the importance of cross-party support for the campaign and asked Councillors to speak to their party colleagues to ensure that MLAs and the local MP are speaking with one voice on this matter. He suggested that there may be funding options in respect of the Shared Island Fund.

Councillor Storey stated that he concurred with all that had been said. He queried whether including the bridge in the LDP would leave Council bearing the cost. He suggested that Council should write to DfI to request an update on what has been done to address the matter and what is planned.

Alderman Coyle expressed his support for the campaign. He suggested that Council could consider working with constituents to identify other rural roads where issues may arise.

The Retail NI representative noted that Department for Finance provided support through the Rates hardship fund but suggested that this scheme needs to be reformed as it was difficult to utilise. He stated that an important first step would be to get a new bridge included in the Council's local development plan. He emphasised the importance of all parties speaking with one voice on the matter.

The Mayor thanked the delegation for their presentation and noted the cross-party support.

- * **The representatives of Build our Bridge and Retail NI left the Chamber at 7.45pm.**

**5. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD TUESDAY 30 JUNE 2026
(RECONVENED TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 2026)**

Copy previously circulated, presented as read by the Mayor.

Proposed by Councillor Schenning
Seconded by Councillor Kennedy and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Council Meeting held Tuesday 30 June 2026 (reconvened Tuesday 4 August 2026) are confirmed as a correct record.

6. MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING HELD TUESDAY 4 AUGUST 2026

Copy previously circulated, presented as read by the Mayor.

Proposed by Councillor Kyle
Seconded by Councillor Wilson and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of Council Meeting held Tuesday 4 August 2026 are confirmed as a correct record.

7. MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE HELD 24 JUNE 2026

Copy previously circulated, presented as read by the Mayor.

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held Wednesday 24 June 2026 are received and noted.

8. FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

8.1 Management Accounts - Period 3

Report, previously circulated, was presented as read by the Chief Executive.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to present the current management accounts to Council for information and analysis.

Further information is provided in the report.

Summary

This report represents solid start to the financial year, especially again with regards some of our income streams however it is imperative that Council remains vigilant over the coming months to ensure the performance is maintained.

Council NOTED the report.

9. PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

9.1 NILGA – Call for Evidence – Tree Protection Bill - Draft Council Response

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Development Plan Manager.

Purpose of Report

To present, at the request of the Planning Committee, the Council's draft response to the NI Tree Protection Bill.

The Tree Bill and the draft response were previously circulated.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Members note the attached draft and advise the Development Plan Manager of any comments by Tuesday 8th September.

Councillor Storey expressed his appreciation to the Development Plan Manager for the draft report. He encouraged Members to look at the Bill and noted that, if implemented, the cost would fall to Council. He also noted that the proposed fines would be unlimited and that other Councils have raised serious concerns. He asked that the response should also note that the Bill requires new duties for Council and highlight that it has no financial provision in respect of these.

In response to a question from Councillor McMullan, the Development Plan Manager stated that the Bill would require the landowner to report to Council.

Proposal

- To agree the draft response to the NI Tree Protection Bill including the amendments proposed by Councillor Storey.

Proposed by Councillor Storey

Seconded by Councillor McMullan

RESOLVED – That Council agrees the draft response to the NI Tree Protection Bill including the amendments proposed by Councillor Storey.

10. MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO THE PARTNERSHIP PANEL

The Chief Executive advised that no date has been set for the next meeting of the Partnership Panel.

Alderman Knight-McQuillan suggested that the matter of Kilrea bridge be put to the Partnership Panel.

Members expressed frustration with the status of the Partnership Panel. Councillor Holmes suggested that Council could write to the Executive Office regarding the status of the Partnership Panel and ask for feedback on issues raised over the past five years.

Proposal

- To write to the Executive Office regarding the status of the Partnership Panel.

Proposed by Councillor Holmes

Seconded by Councillor Peacock

RESOLVED – That Council writes to the Executive Office regarding the status of the Partnership Panel.

11. CONFERENCES

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Executive.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to inform Elected Members of conferences and courses they may wish to attend.

The following is listed:

Association of Public Sector Excellence Annual Seminar 2026 'Local Government on the frontline: Meeting challenges and supporting communities' and AGM. (email received 12 August 26, copy correspondence previously circulated)

Date: Wednesday 16 September 2026 at 16:30

Location: The Crowne Plaza, Liverpool City Centre, 2 Nicholas Place, L3 1QW

Cost:- Two free delegates per Council

Registration opens at 11:30 to enable AGM attendance to be registered alongside those attending the APSE Annual Seminar 2026 and will remain open

until 16:30. The AGM will commence at the rise of the first day of the seminar at 16:30.

Voting cards will be issued at the time of registration; members are reminded that there is only one vote per member authority. Voting cards must be returned after the meeting. The AGM will close at approximately 17:15.

Evening reception following the AGM: 19:00 Wednesday 16 September 2026

Members wishing to attend this event should contact Democratic Services.

**Northern Ireland Policing Board: Conversations with Purpose Events
(email received 26 August 26, copy correspondence attached)**

Dates/Locations:

- Wednesday September 2 18:30 – Derry/Londonderry, Magee Campus, Ulster University and online
- Thursday September 17 18:30 – Belfast, York Street, Ulster University and online
- Wednesday September 23 18:30 – Dungannon, Ranfurly House - Hill of the O'Neill and online

Cost:- Nil

Members wishing to attend this event should contact Democratic Services.

Swim Ireland: Infrastructure and Facility Local Authority Conference (email received 26 August 26, copy correspondence attached)

Date: Wednesday 7 October 2026 09:30 – 16:30

Location: GAA Development Centre, Sport Ireland Campus, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15

Cost:- Nil

Swim Ireland in conjunction with Ireland Active are inviting you to join us for a day of learning and sharing of experience.

Join colleagues from local authorities across Ireland for a practical one-day conference focused on the planning, development and operation of aquatic and leisure facilities. The event will bring together local authority representatives, industry specialists and project partners to share real-world experience, practical guidance and solutions for future-ready facilities.

The programme includes the Irishtown Leisure Centre development and Banagher Open Water Pool, offering valuable lessons from projects at different stages and scales.

Members wishing to attend this event should contact Democratic Services.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider the Conference report.

Council NOTED the report.

12. CORRESPONDENCE

Report, previously circulated, was presented by the Chief Executive.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of the report is to present correspondence for Members' consideration.

The following correspondence has been received:

Gerard Murray, Director of Local Government and Housing Regulation Division, Department of Communities (letter dated 10 July 2026, copy of letter previously circulated)

Extract

Progress to dissolve the Local Government Staff Commission. The Dissolution Board is currently working to ensure an orderly and effective dissolution, with suitable succession arrangements in place, where appropriate. This includes transferring any functions which are still considered necessary, to another body. This will require subordinate legislation.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council considers the correspondence.

Council NOTED the report.

* **Councillor Nicholl left the meeting remotely at 7.54pm.**

13. CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

The following Consultation Documents were listed:

- Department for the Economy Consultation to strengthen protections for heat network consumers submission by 1 October 2026

- The Electoral Office for Northern Ireland Combined Polling Place Scheme 2027 Elections submission by 2 October 2026
- Department for Infrastructure Review of the Classes and Thresholds in the Schedule to the Planning (Development Management) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 submission by 9 October 2026
- Department of Agricultural, Environment and Rural Affairs Consultations on the draft Irish Sea Pelagic and Demersal Fisheries Management Plans (FMP) submission by 21 October 2026
- The Food Standards Agency and the Department of Health Consultation on proposals to restrict the promotion of products high in fat, sugar or salt in Northern Ireland submission by 21 October 2026
- Department for Communities Historic Environment Policy Consultation submission by 23 October 2026

Council NOTED the Consultation Schedule.

14. SEAL DOCUMENTS

Members were advised of the undernoted items for signing and sealing by Council, approval having been previously granted and all necessary legislative requirements being met.

- (i) Grave Registry Certificates, No's 6235 to 6246 inclusive
- (ii) Deed of Variation between Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and Tetra Tech Consulting Limited re. Bushmills Regeneration Programme (L&D - 210524, CM - 040624).
- (iii) Renewal of Commercial Lease, Shop Unit at South Pier, Portrush now known as Babushka Kitchen Café – Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council and George Nelson
- (iv) Conveyance Relating to Part of the lands at Fairhill Street Car Park, Ballycastle – Department for Infrastructure and Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council

Proposed by Councillor Kane

Seconded by Councillor Storey and

RESOLVED – That the sealing of documents, as listed, are approved (Items i-iv).

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN COMMITTEE'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan

Seconded by Councillor Storey and

AGREED – *to recommend that Council moves 'In Committee'.*

* **Press and Public left the meeting at 7:57pm**

15. LEISURE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT

15.1 Floodlighting Tender Awards

Confidential report, by virtue of paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014, was previously circulated and presented by the Director of Leisure and Development.

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the outcome of the tender for the upgrade of the Floodlighting at Scroggy Road, Limavady and Rugby Avenue, Coleraine 3G pitches and to seek approval to award the contracts to Pattons at a cost of £150,157.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the tender process in Annex A (previously circulated), for the upgrade of Floodlighting at Scroggy Road and Rugby Avenue 3G pitches and approve the Contract award of £150,157 to Pattons.

Proposed by Councillor Schenning

Seconded by Councillor N Archibald and

RESOLVED – that Council note the tender process in Annex A (previously circulated), for the upgrade of Floodlighting at Scroggy Road and Rugby Avenue 3G pitches and approve the Contract award of £150,157 to Pattons.

MOTION TO PROCEED 'IN PUBLIC'

Proposed by Alderman Knight-McQuillan

Seconded by Councillor N Archibald

AGREED – to recommend that Council move 'In Public'.

16. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY ALDERMAN HUNTER, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR WISENER

Supporting Our Emergency Services, Armed Forces Personnel and Veterans Through Leisure Access

CCGBC recognises the immense contribution made by those who serve our communities and country, including members of the emergency services, serving Armed Forces personnel, reservists and veterans. These individuals dedicate themselves to protecting public safety responding to emergencies, often making significant personal sacrifices in doing so.

Whilst Council make public statements of support and appreciation which are important, meaningful actions which demonstrate that support locally are equally important.

Therefore, I'm asking this Council supports and agrees to instruct officers to investigate and implement the most appropriate and administratively efficient option from the following:

- 1. Sign up to and participate in the Blue Light Card Scheme, enabling eligible emergency services personnel to access leisure related discounts and benefits within Council operated leisure facilities.*
- 2. Extend the commitments contained within the Councils Armed Forces Covenant, by introducing a bespoke Council leisure discount scheme for, employees of recognised Emergency Blue Light services, serving members of the Armed Forces, Reservists and Veterans.*

In developing either option, officers should determine which approach can be most effectively integrated within our Councils existing systems and resources, while ensuring value for money and ease of administration.

Eligibility should be verified through appropriate evidence such as a Current Payslip, staff identification, recognised Blue Light Card for Emergency Service personnel, a Veteran Card, Ministry of Defence identification, or other recognised proof of service of Armed Forces personnel or veterans.

Any personal information collected for the administration of the scheme shall be processed and retained in accordance with all relevant data protection legislation, including UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act of 2018.

I believe this proposal will provide a practical demonstration from CCGBC of its commitment to those who protect, serve and support our communities across the Borough, ensuring that this Council's support is reflected not only in words but in tangible actions that recognise and reward public service.

Request that Council instruct officers to prepare a report outlining implementation options, associated costs, administrative requirements and recommendations for implementation by the appropriate committee no later than three months from date of approval of this motion. Any financial implications arising from the preferred option can then be identified and included in sufficient time to allow for consideration during the Councils 2027 Budget and Rates Setting process.

The Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion, without discussion, to the Leisure and Development Committee.

17. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY ALDERMAN FIELDING, SECONDED BY ALDERMAN S MCKILLOP

That this Council repairs the concrete surfaces at the Blue Pool, Portrush, and reinstates an access ladder to ensure safe entry to, and exit from, the pool for swimmers; thereby preserving and supporting the bathing heritage of the Blue Pool, as reflected in the recently installed Heritage Interpretation Sign at Bath Terrace.

The Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion, without discussion, to the Leisure and Development Committee.

18. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY ALDERMAN S MCKILLOP, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR WILSON

That this Council notes the vital role of the Bushmills Salmon and Whiskey Festival as a 'celebration of local culture, heritage and produce'; commits to its continued growth and enhancement to ensure it serves as a catalyst for fulfilling our obligations under the Rural Needs Act (NI) 2016, supports the local economy, and enriches the visitor experience; and further resolves to actively pursue formal collaborations with relevant public bodies – including government agencies, tourism boards, health and wellbeing services, and the Education Authority – and to partner proactively with local community and voluntary sectors to deliver enhanced satellite events that maximise the festival's reach, inclusivity, and impact.

The Mayor referred to the Notice of Motion, without discussion, to the Leisure and Development Committee.

19. NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR WILSON, SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ELDER.

Emergency General Surgery at Causeway Hospital

That this Council calls upon the Minister of Health to overturn the decision to remove emergency general surgery from Causeway Hospital and urgently set out how he intends to protect the hospital's future as an acute hospital serving Causeway Coast and Glens and the wider North Coast.

Council recognises the staffing, sustainability and service-delivery challenges facing emergency general surgery across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust. However, it does not accept that centralising the service at Antrim Area Hospital is the solution.

Such a move risks concentrating existing pressures at Antrim while creating serious difficulties for patients, staff and services across the Causeway area. The removal of emergency surgery cannot be viewed in isolation. It could have significant consequences for the Emergency Department, other acute and clinical services, ambulance provision, future investment and the overall sustainability of Causeway Hospital.

It will also make the hospital less attractive to consultants, doctors, nurses and other specialist clinicians, creating wider recruitment and retention difficulties. Council calls upon the Minister to take account of the particular needs of the area served by Causeway Hospital, including:

- *its large rural geography and the significant travel times to alternative acute hospitals;*

- *its ageing population and increasingly complex healthcare needs;*
- *the additional demands that longer transfers would place upon the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service;*
- *the substantial number of tourists and visitors to the Causeway Coast each year;*
- *major events such as the North West 200, when tens of thousands of additional people require access to effective emergency and acute services; and*
- *the potential impact upon the recruitment and retention of specialist staff across multiple departments.*

Following the previous loss of maternity services, Council is deeply concerned that removing emergency surgery would represent a further erosion of services and could lead to consequential losses across other departments.

Council therefore agrees to write immediately to the Minister, calling upon him to intervene and provide an urgent written response setting out:

- *what action he will take to retain emergency general surgery at Causeway Hospital;*
- *how the challenges facing emergency surgical provision across the Northern Trust will be addressed without dismantling services at Causeway;*
- *how associated departments, ambulance provision and workforce recruitment will be protected;*
- *and what long-term assurances he will provide regarding Causeway Hospital's future as a strong acute hospital.*

The Mayor invited Councillor Wilson to speak to the motion.

Councillor Wilson proposed the motion and stated that he had listened to the Northern Trust and recognises the genuine challenges around workforce, recruitment, retention and maintaining safe clinical standards across two sites. He stated that recognising those challenges does not mean we should simply accept the Trust's preferred option without question. He asked, if recruitment and retention are part of the argument for removing emergency surgery, what assessment has been made of the opposite effect; that is, could its removal make Causeway less attractive as a place to train, work and build a career. He queried the long-term impact on the Emergency Department, ICU, anaesthetics, diagnostics, acute medicine and the wider sustainability of the hospital.

He stated that we need clear evidence that Antrim has the beds, theatres, staffing and capacity to absorb this additional workload safely, and proper modelling on ambulance pressures and transfer times for patients across our rural and coastal communities.

Councillor Wilson suggested that the following questions be put to the Health Minister:

- Has the Minister satisfied himself that every reasonable option for maintaining emergency general surgery at both Causeway and Antrim has genuinely been exhausted?
- If recruitment and retention are central to the case for removing emergency surgery from Causeway, what assessment has been made of the opposite effect — that its removal could make Causeway less attractive as a place to train, work and build a career? What would this proposal mean for the future recruitment and retention of doctors, nurses, surgeons, anaesthetists and other specialist staff at Causeway?
- What assessment has been carried out of the cumulative impact of removing emergency surgery on the wider Causeway Hospital? Over the next five or ten years, what would its removal mean for the Emergency Department, anaesthetics, intensive care, diagnostics, acute medicine and Causeway's ability to manage seriously ill patients?
- Can the Minister demonstrate that Antrim Area and Altnagelvin Hospital have sufficient beds, theatres, diagnostics, staffing and emergency capacity to safely absorb the additional workload?
- What modelling has been undertaken on the additional demands this would place on the Ambulance Service and on journey and transfer times for patients from our rural and coastal communities, especially after learning that the budget for non emergency transport is scheduled to be vastly reduced?
- Will the Minister commit to publishing the evidence, his assessment and his decision well in advance of the end of this year?

Councillor Elder seconded the motion. She acknowledged that the Trust has concerns about staffing and the long-term sustainability of emergency surgery. She asked how long a patient at Causeway Emergency Department needing emergency surgery will wait to be transferred, and what additional pressure will that place on an ambulance service that is already stretched. She noted the impact this will have on families visiting a patient.

She asked whether, if important acute services are removed, it will become more difficult to recruit and retain experienced doctors, nurses and specialists. She asked whether younger clinicians will be attracted to Causeway as a hospital where they can develop their skills and build a long-term career.

She expressed concern that, if emergency surgery is removed and the hospital's clinical base is weakened, this may affect other services in the future. She stated that we need clear guarantees that Causeway will remain an acute hospital, with proper evidence and a long-term plan for the hospital.

Councillor MA McKillop stated her support for the motion. She acknowledged the difficulties with staffing but expressed concern regarding the pressure that the

reconfiguration would put on ambulance services. She noted the ageing population in this area and the increase in population during events such as the NW200. She noted the loss of maternity services from Causeway and stated that the Trust cannot call Causeway an acute hospital while removing acute services. She stated that a long-term plan is needed and that the Minister must commit to the future of Causeway hospital.

Councillor McAuley stated his support for the motion. He stated that the decision should not be pushed back until after the election. He stated that Causeway has already lost maternity services and cannot afford to lose emergency surgery.

Councillor Kane stated that the motion calls on the Minister to overturn a decision that has not yet been taken. He emphasised that this is about service reconfiguration to provide more sustainable care and creates an opportunity to expand elective surgery at Causeway. He stated that Consultant surgeons have been clear that the choice is between planned, clinically led reconfiguration, or the growing risk of an unplanned service failure which could jeopardise patient care. He clarified that moving emergency general surgery does not mean that Causeway will lose its Emergency Department as the Trust has stated that Causeway will remain an acute hospital with a 24-hour Emergency Department. He cited personal experience of requiring emergency surgery on a different hospital site. He stated that the debate must be about patient outcomes. He stated that emergency general surgery was reconfigured in the Western Trust in 2022 and an independent review has since found mortality among EGS patients fell by 24%, complications by 28.5%, and readmissions by 22.5%.

Councillor Kane proposed an amendment as follows:

Emergency General Surgery at Causeway Hospital

"That this Council recognises the pressures facing Emergency General Surgery across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and believes that any service change must be based on clinical evidence, patient outcomes, workforce sustainability and the impact on patient safety.

Council recognises the vital role of Causeway Hospital as an acute hospital serving Causeway Coast and Glens; welcomes the Northern Trust's commitment to maintaining its 24-hour Emergency Department; and calls for this commitment to be reaffirmed by the Minister.

Council calls on the Minister of Health and Northern Health and Social Care Trust, before any final decision is taken, to fully assess and clearly communicate the implications of the proposed consolidation of Emergency General Surgery, including transfer times, ambulance capacity, workforce implications and the impact on services at Causeway and Antrim.

Council further calls on the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to set out a clear long-term plan which protects and strengthens Causeway Hospital as an acute hospital and maximises opportunities to expand elective care."

Councillor Watton stated that when maternity services were removed from Causeway, concern was expressed that further services would be removed, and that it would be a farce to remove emergency general surgery from Causeway hospital.

Councillor Holmes stated that this is a vital issue and that while it would be foolish not to appreciate the challenges faced by the Trust, the Northern Trust is yet to make the case that the proposal is a better solution. He asked whether concentrating pressure in Antrim is the safest option and expressed frustration regarding the poor communication from the health sector.

Councillor N Archibald noted that Causeway Hospital is a vital community asset that serves people across Causeway Coast and Glens borough. She thanked hospital staff for going above and beyond to deliver for patients. She stated that quality of care and patient and staff safety must be the guiding principles, with any decision taken being based on clinical evidence. She noted that Sinn Féin has engaged with those concerned about potential decisions: trade unions, clinical staff, the Northern Trust leadership, the Department for Health and the Health Minister. She emphasised that the Health Minister must ensure that all the evidence is considered, as people are rightly concerned about patient safety and travel times due to the rural nature of parts of the area the hospital serves. She called on the Minister to produce a long-term plan for Causeway Hospital that enables everyone to access to quality health care.

Alderman Boyle seconded Councillor Kane's amendment. She noted her experience working in the health sector and undertaking health outcome research. She noted that the Alliance Party is committed to holding the Northern Trust to account over their assurances that Causeway A&E Department will be kept running. She noted that Causeway Hospital recently had a new £2 million MRI scanner installed, and has benefited from recruitment of additional consultants and extra elective care funding. She stated that a reconfiguration would help to reduce the long waiting lists for daytime elective surgery at Causeway Hospital.

Councillor Schenning stated that the current waiting lists are unacceptable and that health staff are under pressure. She stated that change is necessary and it would be preferable for it to be planned properly and clinically led. She stated that reform must result in better results for patients.

Councillor Kyle stated that the TUV would not support the amendment. He expressed concern that only the data to support the proposed reconfiguration would be presented.

Amendment

Proposed by Councillor Kane

Seconded by Alderman Boyle

- That this Council recognises the pressures facing Emergency General Surgery across the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and believes that any service change must be based on clinical evidence, patient outcomes, workforce sustainability and the impact on patient safety.

Council recognises the vital role of Causeway Hospital as an acute hospital serving Causeway Coast and Glens; welcomes the Northern Trust's commitment to maintaining its 24-hour Emergency Department; and calls for this commitment to be reaffirmed by the Minister.

Council calls on the Minister of Health and Northern Health and Social Care Trust, before any final decision is taken, to fully assess and clearly communicate the implications of the proposed consolidation of Emergency General Surgery, including transfer times, ambulance capacity, workforce implications and the impact on services at Causeway and Antrim.

Council further calls on the Northern Health and Social Care Trust to set out a clear long-term plan which protects and strengthens Causeway Hospital as an acute hospital and maximises opportunities to expand elective care.

Councillor Wilson requested a recorded vote.

The Mayor put the Amendment to the Council to vote

17 Members voted For; 17 Members voted Against; 0 Members Abstained

Using her Casting vote the Mayor voted Against

The Mayor declared the Amendment lost and the Notice of Motion carried.

RESOLVED – That Council support the Notice of Motion.

Recorded Vote Table

For (17)	Alderman Boyle, Brown Stewart, Coyle
	Councillors C Archibald, N Archibald, Bateson, Chivers, Kane, Mairs, McCully, McGlinchey, McGurk, McMullan, McQuillan, Peacock, Schenning, Watson
Against (17)	Alderman Hunter, Knight-McQuillan, John McAuley, S McKillop, Scott

	Councillors Anderson, Callaghan, Elder, Holmes, Huggins, Kennedy, Kyle, Jonathan McAuley, Margaret-Anne McKillop, Storey, Watton, Wilson
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There being no further business, the Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 8:40pm.

Mayor