Causeway Coast & Glens Borough Council

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING HELD THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2026

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MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF COUNCIL HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON THURSDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2026 AT 7.00PM

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor Huggins

Present : Alderman Boyle, Coyle, Fielding, Hunter, Knight-McQuillan, S McKillop, Scott

Councillors Anderson, C Archibald, N Archibald, Bateson, Callaghan, Elder, Holmes, Kane, Kyle, Mairs, McGurk, MA McKillop, McMullan, McQuillan, Peacock, Schenning, Watson, Watton, Wilson, Wisener

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive
U Harper, Senior Democratic Services Officer

In attendance : A Lennox, ICT Manager
L Boyd, ICT Officer
C McTaggart, ICT Officer

Public [1]no.

Key – **C** = Attended in the Chamber
R = Attended Remotely

The Mayor welcomed members of the press and public in attendance and provided guidance in relation to Council's Remote Meetings Protocol and audio recordings procedure.

1. THE MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor stated:
I want to take a minute to pause and remember Sergeant Norman Irwin BEM, who passed away on 2nd September at the good old age of 107.

Norman was a proud Second World War veteran who served with the Coleraine Battery, Royal Artillery, and REME, seeing service across North Africa and Italy. During the war he also played an important role in protecting the Suez Canal and served in eight countries in defence of freedom.

Beyond his military service, Norman devoted himself to his community. He helped establish the Coleraine Winemakers Club, was a founder of Coleraine

Rotary Club and the Agivey Anglers Association. He gave many years of voluntary service, earning the British Empire Medal in recognition of his contribution.

I know a few members here tonight have, like myself, been privileged to meet Norman. Across the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough, Norman was respected not only as a war veteran, but as a gentleman whose warmth, wisdom, humour and commitment to community life enriched countless lives. His legacy of service, resilience and civic pride should not and will not be forgotten.

As we reflect on his extraordinary life and service, our thoughts are with Norman's family, his friends and all those who had the privilege of knowing him. Norman will be laid to rest this coming Saturday. I ask Members to join me in observing one minute's silence in memory of Norman Irwin BEM.

*** Members observed one minute's silence in memory of Mr Norman Irwin BEM.**

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Callan, Alderman McAuley, Councillor Kennedy, Councillor Storey and Councillor Wallace.

CHANGE TO ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Mayor advised that Councillor Bateson's Notice of Motion would be heard first. She sent her best wishes to Councillor Bateson's son.

3. TO CONSIDER A NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR BATESON SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR PEACOCK

Citation previously circulated.

"Recognition of Martin O'Neill That this Council recognises and celebrates the outstanding sporting achievements of Martin O'Neill, a native of Kilrea, whose distinguished career has brought immense pride and recognition to Kilrea and the wider Causeway Coast and Glens Borough. Council notes his exceptional contribution to football both as a player and manager, including winning two European Cups with Nottingham Forest, captaining at the 1982 FIFA World Cup, and enjoying major managerial success with clubs including Leicester City, Celtic and Aston Villa. Council further notes his recent return to management with Celtic, culminating in the remarkable achievement of winning the league title at the age of 74, demonstrating his enduring leadership and contribution to the game. Accordingly, this Council calls on officers to explore

*appropriate ways to formally recognise Martin O'Neill's contribution and legacy within the Borough, including: * the installation of a commemorative plaque or civic recognition in Kilrea; and/or * the awarding of the Freedom of the Borough. Council further agrees to engage with local stakeholders, sporting organisations and the O'Neill family as part of this process."*

Councillor Bateson addressed Council:

I'm very proud to propose this motion to confer the Freedom of the Borough upon one of our own, Martin O'Neill. There are very few people from anywhere who can say that they have reached the very highest level of their profession, remained there for decades, and built a reputation recognised around the world. There are fewer still who can say that more than half a century after their career began, they are still adding new chapters to that story; but that is Martin O'Neill.

For all the great stadiums, famous clubs and international occasions that have been part of his life, his story began here in Kilrea. That is something that should be a source of enormous pride, not only to the people of Kilrea, but right across Causeway Coast and Glens. Martin's achievements as a player alone would have been enough to secure his place in football and history. He was part of that remarkable Nottingham Forest side that rose to become champions of Europe, winning in the European Cup twice in successive seasons. He was capped 64 times at international level and captained at the 1982 World Cup in Spain.

When his playing career ended, an equally remarkable managerial career followed. From Wickham Wanderers to Leicester City, from Celtic to Aston Villa, Sunderland, the Republic of Ireland and Nottingham Forest, Martin has managed at the highest levels of the game and has done so with the intelligence, determination and personality for which he has become so well known. At Leicester City, he delivered two League Cups. As manager of the Republic of Ireland, he took the team to Euro 2016 and into the knockout stages of the tournament.

But it is at Celtic where, for many of us, Martin O' Neill's name is most fondly remembered. His first spell at Celtic began with a domestic treble in his very first season. Over five years, he delivered three League titles, three Scottish Cups and a League Cup. And of course, there was that unforgettable European run in 2003 when Martin led Celtic all the way to the UEFA Cup final in Seville.

As a proud Kilrea man myself, I grew up in the town during those years. To see Martin O'Neill from Kilrea standing in the touchline at Celtic Park, managing Celtic and leading the club to that level of success had a real impact on me. Martin O'Neill was a huge part of the reason I fell in love with Celtic growing up, and that love for the club has stayed with me ever since.

On a personal level, it is a particular honour for me to be standing here tonight, proposing that a man and someone I looked up to growing up should receive the highest civic honour that this Council can bestow.

Remarkably, at an age when most people would be forgiven for wanting a slightly quieter life, Martin returned to Celtic last season. At 74 years of age, he guided the club to another Scottish Premiership title in the Scottish Cup, once again demonstrating the leadership drive that has defined his career. More than five decades after leaving home to pursue a career in football, a man from Kilrea was still lifting major silverware at the highest level. That is an extraordinary achievement.

The Freedom of the Borough is the highest civic honour that this Council can bestow. It should therefore be reserved for people whose achievements are truly exceptional and whose association with this place has brought distinction and pride to the Borough. Martin O'Neill undoubtedly meets that standard. However, tonight's motion is about more than medals, trophies, and famous victories; it is about recognising what those achievements mean to the place from which he came. Young people growing up in Kilrea and anywhere across this Council area can look at Martin O'Neill's story and see that coming from a small town does not place any limit on what you can achieve.

From Kilrea to a European Cup winner, from the streets and playing fields of his hometown to captaining on the greatest stage in world football. From beginning a managerial career in the lower reaches of the game, to managing some of its great clubs and competing on the European stage. After more than half a century in football, he is still competing, still succeeding and still making headlines. For those of us from Kilrea, there's something very special to be able to say that he came from here.

That is why I also welcome the commitment within this motion to consider a permanent civic recognition of Martin's achievements in his native Kilrea. It is important that future generations understand the remarkable sport and history associated with their own community and know the stories of the people who emerged from it. Martin O'Neill has given the people of Kilrea many reasons to be proud over the course of his life and career.

Tonight this Council has an opportunity to demonstrate that pride. It is a fitting recognition of an extraordinary career, an extraordinary contribution to football, and above all, one of Kilrea's finest sons.

I therefore ask Council to support this motion and, following its adoption, ask that Officers engage with Martin and his family at the earliest opportunity to agree a suitable date for the conferral of this honour. I also ask that the ceremony take place in Kilrea itself. After a career that has taken Martin O'Neill

from Kilrea to some of the greatest stages in world football, I can think of no more fitting place to honour him than back where the remarkable journey began.

Councillor Peacock addressed Council:

It's important that we as a Council acknowledge that we are so lucky to have so many sporting heroes and advocates from our Council area. Over the years, we've been lucky enough to, in various different ways, honour people like the Dunlop family - Michael, Joey, Robert and William, Hannah Scott, Harry Gregg, and now tonight Martin O'Neill and Coleraine FC.

Martin spent more than half a century at the highest levels of football, and it's only right that we as a Council honour all the sporting prowess and advocacy that Martin has taken on over his lengthy career and continues to do so even at the age of 74. I'm delighted to second this motion.

Councillor Wilson stated that there are not many people in the world of football that could boast such glittering achievements. He noted Martin O'Neill winning a league title in the Scottish Premier League in 1974. He praised his managerial style and punditry. He noted that for him, as a huge international football fan and a Northern Ireland fan, Martin O'Neill's achievements for "our wee country" was peak football and part of a glittering career. He stated that the DUP would love to support to the motion and asked the proposer if he would note within it that Martin O'Neill was captaining Northern Ireland at the 1982 FIFA World Cup.

Councillor MA McKillop stated her support for the motion. She described Martin O'Neill as a legend who has brought so much joy to supporters all over the world, not only in his football but his impressive achievements as a manager. She noted that Council had recently had a presentation from the Build our Bridge group from Kilrea and suggested that a new bridge could be named after Martin O'Neill.

Councillor Mairs reflected on the impact that Martin O'Neill has had on young people here. She stated that for many young people growing up in the Borough, it matters enormously to see a local reach the top of their profession. She stated that football is so much more than 90 minutes on a pitch, as it can provide a sense of ambition, belonging, friendship, discipline, and confidence for young people. She went on to say that Martin's journey is not just an inspiration to our young people in Causeway Coast and Glens, but a reminder that no matter where you come from, hard work and ambition can take you wherever you need to be. On behalf of herself and her colleagues, she thanked Martin O'Neill for everything that he has achieved, for the pride that he has brought, and for the example that he has set for all our young people.

Councillor Holmes stated that the Ulster Unionist Party are very happy to support this motion. He reflected on Martin O'Neill's glorious career and described him as "captain fantastic" on the night of 25th June 1982 in Valencia. He stated that the Freedom of the Borough is a fitting tribute to bestow upon him.

*** Councillor Schenning joined the meeting in the Chamber at 7.16pm.**

Alderman Coyle stated the SDLP's support for the motion and noted that he and Martin O'Neill went to the same school, which was a great start in life.

Councillor Watton stated that he first met Martin O'Neill when he was 18 and described him as a gentleman who was the best midfielder for Northern Ireland. He noted that he won 64 caps for Northern Ireland and captained the team for years and stated that the motion should refer to this. He stated that Martin O'Neill deserves all the recognition he can get.

The Mayor asked Councillor Bateson if he was content to amend the motion to state: "captaining Northern Ireland at the 1982 FIFA World Cup". Councillor Bateson stated that he was content with that.

Proposed by Councillor Bateson
Seconded by Councillor Peacock

*- Recognition of Martin O'Neill That this Council recognises and celebrates the outstanding sporting achievements of Martin O'Neill, a native of Kilrea, whose distinguished career has brought immense pride and recognition to Kilrea and the wider Causeway Coast and Glens Borough. Council notes his exceptional contribution to football both as a player and manager, including winning two European Cups with Nottingham Forest, captaining Northern Ireland at the 1982 FIFA World Cup, and enjoying major managerial success with clubs including Leicester City, Celtic and Aston Villa. Council further notes his recent return to management with Celtic, culminating in the remarkable achievement of winning the league title at the age of 74, demonstrating his enduring leadership and contribution to the game. Accordingly, this Council calls on officers to explore appropriate ways to formally recognise Martin O'Neill's contribution and legacy within the Borough, including: * the installation of a commemorative plaque or civic recognition in Kilrea; and/or * the awarding of the Freedom of the Borough. Council further agrees to engage with local stakeholders, sporting organisations and the O'Neill family as part of this process.*

The Mayor stated that the Notice of Motion, as amended, was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED – That Council Support The Notice of Motion as amended.

4. TO CONSIDER A NOTICE OF MOTION PROPOSED BY COUNCILLOR WISENER SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR HOLMES AND ALDERMAN HUNTER

Citation previously circulated.

"To The Chief Executive, Mayor and Elected Members of Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. We are writing to formally request that Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council confer the Freedom of the Borough upon Coleraine Football Club. This is in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the Borough, its sporting excellence and profound cultural and community impact, particularly in light of the club's 100th anniversary in 2027. Founded in 1927, Coleraine Football Club, has for nearly a century stood as one of Northern Ireland's most respected and successful sporting institutions. Throughout its history, the club has represented the town and the wider Borough with distinction at regional, national and European levels, bringing positive recognition to Coleraine and inspiring pride across generations. Beyond the pitch, Coleraine FC has long been a cornerstone of community life within the Borough. It has played a vital role in promoting youth engagement, through grassroots programmes, encouraged inclusion, wellbeing, and cross community participation through sport. All this whilst supporting schools, charities, and community initiatives. The upcoming centenary year of 2027 represents an historic milestone, not just for Coleraine FC, but for the Borough itself. Conferring the Freedom of the Borough at this time would be a fitting and enduring tribute to a club that has faithfully served its community for 100 years, and continues to do so with integrity, ambition and respect and have rendered exceptional and sustained service to the area. Few organisations embody this principle more fully than Coleraine Football Club. Freedom of the Borough would not only honour the club's remarkable past but would stand as a powerful symbol of the Borough's appreciation for the role sport plays in shaping unity and pride within our community."

Councillor Wisener addressed Council:
"Members will already have seen the citation. Tonight I just want to add a few words, some personal, some factual, and other observations surrounding Coleraine Football Club.

The first match I attended was in 1974. My father and uncle took me to a far-off place called Portadown. I had never heard of the place, and I had really no idea of the magnitude or significance of the match. It was the penultimate game for the then manager Bertie Peacock after a 13-year reign of what was known as the 'glory years' for the club. Coleraine needed one point from their last two

games to win the Irish League for the first time in their history. They drew the match 1-1 and history was made. That was their first and only time to win the league, although they equal Linfield and Glenavon on being runners up on 11 occasions. I remember the crowd with their blue and white scarfs going onto the pitch at the final whistle and I found it hard to believe that there were so many people from Coleraine at that match.

In 1961, chairman Jack Doherty persuaded Bertie Peacock to sign for Coleraine after he left Celtic. It would prove to be one of the most important transfers in the club's history. In 1965, Coleraine won the Irish Cup for the first time, defeating Glenavon 2–1 at Windsor Park. Coleraine thus gained its first experience of European football, against Soviet outfit Dynamo Kiev, becoming the first football club from the United Kingdom to play behind the Iron Curtain. Coleraine also won the first two Blaxnit all-Ireland cups in 1969 and 1970. Coleraine faced Kilmarnock in the 1970 Fairs Cup, and after a 1–1 draw in the first leg, the Bannsiders pulled off an historic 3–2 victory thanks to a Des Dickson hat-trick. It is ironic that prior to taking on the role of manager of Coleraine, Bertie was the manager of Northern Ireland. I say ironic because we discussed another football great from the Borough who was the manager of the Republic of Ireland.

Over the past 99 years, Coleraine has won 51 domestic trophies. They have played in 45 European matches. I remember going to some of these matches, but two stick in my mind. The first was the match against Tottenham Hotspur. I think it is the only match I have attended at the Showgrounds were the away supporters outnumbered the home support. Every Spurs supporter in Ireland must have been there. Some of the greatest players in the world were playing that day. The other match was the away match to Dundee United. Coleraine had a great team at the time and lost 1-0 at home. Buses, cars and minibuses filled the boat, and everyone headed for Dundee. There was a great atmosphere in the ground that night. Unfortunately, it was a 3-1 loss.

Coleraine Football Team is a big part of the Community in the Borough. It has one of the biggest fan bases in the Premiership. The supporters are very important to the club. If you go to a match on a Saturday and go into the Club House, in the right corner are the Spirit of 74 group, predominately men from or still living in Millburn or Harpurs Hill. In a quiet way they support local charities every year. Along the window you see the same faces on the seats facing the ground. In the Railway End Stand, you will see the same faces every week and I suspect it is the same all around the ground.

I cannot talk about Coleraine Football Club without mentioning some very special people, The Friends of Coleraine. In August 2005, the Inland Revenue filed for a winding-up order against Coleraine due to debts of £1.3 million. The Friends of Coleraine worked tirelessly to persuade the High Court to postpone

the hearing to allow them to put together a business plan to show that the club could be viably run. The club were liquidated on 9 August 2006 after they were allowed to enter administration, and a steering committee was set up to run the new club Calver Holdings Ltd. In the grounds there is a plaque on the wall outside the clubhouse naming the Friends of Coleraine.

Finally, this Saturday, thousands will be going to watch the Coleraine vs. Limavady match. A sell out! Brilliant achievement by Limavady coming up.

For the past 99 years Coleraine Football Club has been part of the fabric in Coleraine and the surrounding towns, and the Coleraine fans have been part of the fabric of the Bannsiders. My proposal is that this be recognised in their 100th anniversary year."

Councillor Holmes seconded the motion and stated that, as Coleraine Football Club heads into their centenary year, it is only fitting to bestow on them the highest award a Council can offer. The club has played an important role in the town and local area and is ingrained in many, many lives. He reminisced about the local heroes from the club and its successes over the years. He stated that the Freedom of the Borough is the highest award we can offer but is hopefully not the only prize for Coleraine in 2027.

Alderman Hunter stated that she is fully behind the awarding of the Freedom of the Borough to Coleraine Football Club. She reflected on the impact of the club on the community across the Borough and stated that the local people have been the backbone of the club. She noted the health and wellbeing benefit that the club brings by giving people something to look forward to. She referred to the supporters, the groundsmen and all the people behind the scenes who contribute to the sense of community. She stated that the club reaching 100 years demonstrates its dedication.

Councillor Kyle stated that, having been involved with the club for a number of years as a sponsor and as a former director, he has seen first-hand the positive impact Coleraine Football Club has on our local community. He stated that it is particularly poignant to mark the history and future of the club given that the upcoming year marks its 100th anniversary, with the club having been founded in an Orange Hall back in June 1927. He confirmed that TUV heartily endorse granting the Freedom of the Borough to Coleraine Football Club.

Alderman Boyle stated the Alliance Party's support for the motion. She stated that Coleraine Football Club is woven into the fabric of our town and into our hearts and our minds. Being in the town when they won the Irish Cup match was a very special experience, not least because of the build up with so many businesses and groups supporting them before the match. She reflected on the intergenerational aspect of supporting the club. The club has given our

community so many memories and has played an important role in bringing people together and providing opportunities for young people and supporting the wider community. She stated that it is fitting for all the reasons outlined this evening to recognise the contribution of Coleraine Football Club and everyone who has made the club what it is today.

Councillor N Archibald stated her support for the motion. She said that, as someone from Coleraine, she knows that the club is about much more than football; it is part of our town's identity and is part of our memories. She reminisced about going to the showgrounds with family and supporting the club with friends and how that experience has been passed down through the generations. For nearly 100 years, Coleraine FC has carried the name of our town with pride. She spoke of the role that the club plays for the community - giving young people opportunities, bringing people together and providing a place where people can feel connected. She stated that, as someone from the town, she knows the importance of having a sense of local pride and belonging, and with the club approaching its centenary in 2027, it's something particularly special about recognising the contribution that the club plays. The Freedom of the Borough will recognise not only the football club, but the generations of players, volunteers, staff, supporters and families who have given so much to the club and to our community.

Councillor MA McKillop stated her support for the motion. She stated that, as we look to the 100 year celebrations next year, Council should think about how it can contribute to the celebrations. She stated that it is an honour to award the club the Freedom of the Borough.

Councillor Elder stated that, as a lifelong Bannsider and season ticket holder, she wholeheartedly supports the proposal to award Coleraine Football Club the Freedom of the Borough. She stated that Coleraine Football Club is so much more than a football club; it is part of the fabric of the town, bringing generations together to share pride, belonging and the love of the game. For many of us, supporting Coleraine is a family tradition with friendships and memories made on the terraces that last a lifetime. Its contribution reaches well beyond what happens on the pitch, by providing opportunities for young people, and supporting local charities and community initiatives. She stated that the club has an important place in the life of our Borough and behind that contribution are the players, the staff, the volunteers and the loyal supporters who have sustained it through the years. As the club approaches its centenary in 2027, the Freedom of the Borough would be a fitting recognition of almost 100 years of sporting achievement and service to our community and of the people who have made Coleraine FC what it is today.

Councillor Anderson stated that he is Coleraine born and bred, so Coleraine FC has always been his local team. He reminisced about the club’s achievements

and that it is wonderful to see the club being so successful. He stated that he hopes that, in its 100th year, the club will bring home its second Irish League title.

Councillor Schenning stated the SDLP's support for the motion and noted the passion from the Bannsiders in the Chamber.

Councillor Watton stated that he has been a season ticket holder for many years and reminisced about attending matches over the year. He stated that the club is very much part of people's lives in this town and that it is a totally cross-community club. He expressed his support for the motion.

The Mayor stated the Notice of Motion was unanimously agreed.

RESOLVED – That Council Support The Notice of Motion.

This being all the business, The Mayor thanked everyone for their attendance and the meeting concluded at 7.39pm.

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Mayor