

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL**Minutes of Meeting of the Regeneration & Growth Committee held in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn and in remote locations on Thursday, 3 April 2025 at 6.00 pm****PRESENT IN THE CHAMBER:**

Alderman A Grehan (Chairperson)

Alderman A G Ewart MBE (Vice Chairperson)

Aldermen J Baird and M Gregg

Councillors A Gowan, J Harpur, C Kemp, J Lavery BEM, D Lynch, U Mackin, A Martin, C McCready and N Parker

REMOTE ATTENDANCE:

Councillors J Gallen

OTHER MEMBERS:

Councillors D J Craig (Remote) and G Hynds (Chamber)

IN ATTENDANCE

Director of Regeneration & Growth

Acting Director of Environmental Services (Remote)

Head of Economic Development

Head of Planning & Capital Development

Head of Assets

Environmental Health Manager

Member Services Officers (BS and EW)

IT Officer

Commencement of Meeting

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, extended a welcome to all present at the April meeting of the Committee and reminded those present that the meeting was being audio recorded unless the item was being considered under confidential business. The Chairperson also outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

1. **Apologies**

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance on behalf of Councillor T Mitchell and

2. **Declarations of Interest**

During the course of the meeting Councillor A Gowan declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of item 6.2 **Acquisitions Update in Small Settlements** in view of his membership of the Board of Governors of Anahilt Primary School.

2. Declarations of Interest (Cont'd)

A completed Declaration of Interest form was completed by Councillor U Mackin in respect of a non-pecuniary interest in relation to item 4.1 Tourism Event in Royal Hillsborough- 31 May 2025 in view of his membership of the Board of Governors of Beechlawn School.

3.0 Report of the Director of Regeneration & Growth

3.1 Notice of Motion – Hilden Mill

The Director of Environmental Services (Acting) and the Environmental Health Manager were in attendance for this item of business.

The undernoted Notice of Motion on the subject of Hilden Mill, had been proposed by Councillor G Hynds and seconded by Councillor D J Craig, at the meeting of Council held on 25 March 2025. The Notice of Motion had been referred to the Regeneration & Growth Committee for consideration.

“This Council recognises the profound historical, architectural and cultural significance of Hilden Mill, a landmark site in our community established in 1823 by the Barbour family. Notes with concern its ongoing deterioration since closure in 2006, exacerbated by repeated arson attacks, vandalism and neglect, which threaten to erase this invaluable piece of our history. We further acknowledge the recent proposal by PJK Developments to demolish most of the listed structures, a move that, while driven by economic considerations, risks permanent loss of heritage if not balanced with preservation efforts or decisive public intervention.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

- Declare its commitment to protecting Hilden Mill’s historical and architectural integrity, ensuring that any development or ownership transition preserves key elements of the site, and their cultural context, for future generations.
- Continue to engage with the property owners to ensure that any options which may come forward are sound and respect the heritage assets. Subject to Planning considerations these could include commercial, recreational/cultural uses and in part, a housing scheme. As a proactive approach, this Council will assist and support third party application for funding by prioritising Statutory Consent.
- Explore external funding sources to support the restoration and adaptive reuse of Hilden Mill, ensuring it becomes a vibrant, sustainable part of our community.
- Offer to facilitate discussions or negotiations between the owners of Hilden Mill and the Northern Ireland Executive to explore an economically viable way of developing the site to safeguard the site’s heritage.

3.1 Notice of Motion – Hilden Mill (Cont'd)

- Urge the current owners to implement immediate and robust security measures, such as enhanced fencing, CCTV, and monitoring, to prevent further vandalism and damage while a long-term solution – private or public – is developed.
- Encourage public consultation and input from the local residents, heritage groups, and stakeholders to shape the future of Hilden Mill, ensuring it reflects the needs and pride of our community under any ownership scenario.

This Council believes that Hilden Mill's preservation is not only a duty to our past but an opportunity to enrich our future. We call for urgent action – whether through partnership with private developers or proactive public takeover – to prevent a 'legacy of decay' and to transform this world-famous site into a source of pride, economic benefit, and community vitality."

Councillor G Hynds presented his Notice of Motion and elaborated on a number of points contained within his Motion. He spoke of how this Motion was particularly personal to him, having lived in Hilden and on the Low Road all his life.

Councillor D J Craig, having seconded the Notice of Motion, spoke in favour of the Motion. He too spoke about his family ties to the Hilden Community.

Councillor N Parker, on behalf of the Alliance Party, also spoke in favour of the Notice of Motion.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth and the Environmental Health Manager responded to questions from Councillor Parker on the role of the Council in relation to the monitoring of the Hilden Mill site and in regard to any engagement with the current owners of the site. The Director advised that the Council continued to have a series of engagements with Historic Environment Division (HED) and the developers, as well as other parties. He advised that there had been five planning applications submitted to the Council since 2017 in relation to this site. He also stated that the Council had a statutory duty to protect and enhance its heritage assets.

The Environmental Health Manager provided an update on the extent of the engagement with the agent and the local contractor in regard to protection of the site.

The Notice of Motion, as proposed by Councillor G Hynds and seconded by Councillor D J Craig, was put to the meeting and agreed unanimously.

Councillors D J Craig and G Hynds left the meeting at this point, as did the Acting Director of Environmental Services and the Environmental Health Manager.

4.0 Report of Head of Economic Development

4.1 Tourism Event in Royal Hillsborough – 31 May 2025

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with a major tourism event in Royal Hillsborough on Saturday 31 May 2025 and which would be a combination of the following three events:

- Hillsborough Fort Guard investiture of warrants
- Royal Hillsborough Farmers Market
- Tour Operator familiarisation trip

The Head of Economic Development confirmed that it was unlikely that all the measures outlined in the report would be required and that Officers were looking at the most appropriate options for inclusion in the final event plan.

It was noted that subject to Members' approval a single Event Management Plan would be prepared with co-signatures from each of the event organisers, and considered by the Council's Safety Advisory Group which involves the statutory agencies.

During consideration of this item Councillor D Lynch left the meeting at 6.22 pm and returned at 6.23 pm.

The Head of Economic Development and the Director of Regeneration & Growth responded to questions from the Committee in connection with:

- traffic issues on the day of the event,
- the on-going use of Beechlawn School's car parking facilities, and
- consultation with residents from Park Street

The Head of Economic Development undertook to provide the Vice-Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, with an updated position in relation to the traffic management plan and the Council's use of Beechlawn School's car park.

Director also advised that a report on BRCD project relating to Royal Hillsborough would come forward in the next couple of months, which would address some of the issues raised.

Councillor G Hynds returned to the meeting at 6.27 pm.

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that:

4.1 Tourism Event in Royal Hillsborough – 31 May 2025 (Cont'd)

- a) the update on the combined event scheduled for Saturday, 31st May 2025 be noted, and
- b) the Committee agrees to participate in the Investiture of the Hillsborough Fort Guard and wider event programme.

A member of the Committee expressed appreciation to the Officers concerned for their efforts to date on this significant tourism event.

4.2 Labour Market Partnership (LMP): Easement Bid

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the Council's bid for an additional £30,000 from the Department for Communities, who had identified an easement budget surrendered from other LMPs, to develop a bolt-on to the existing Pathways to Employment for Individuals with a Disability Programme. This programme was being delivered by Stepping Stones NI following a public procurement exercise.

A list of additional activity that this programme would cover was set out in the Officer's report.

It was noted that the submitted bid for additional funding had been approved by DfC, with a Letter of Offer issued on 24 February 2025 to cover the activities set out in the report. A condition of the funding had been that the project must be delivered in full by 31 March 2025. On this basis, and in order to secure and deliver the additional funding opportunity, it had been agreed to accept the Letter of Offer and procure the additional services from Stepping Stones NI in line with the current contract for disability inclusion provision.

Alderman J Baird left the meeting at 6.31 pm.

It was proposed by Councillor J Harpur, seconded by Councillor A Gowan, and agreed to recommend that the Council provides retrospective agreement to accept the offer for an additional £30,000 funding for the activity outlined via the existing "Pathways to Employment for Individuals with a Disability" Programme contract, delivered by Stepping Stones NI as part of the 2024/25 LMP Action Plan.

4.3 LCCC Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Job Fairs

The Head of Economic Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the LMP's most recent job fair in Lagan Valley LeisurePlex on Thursday 27th February 2025. It was noted that the event had been well attended with a high level of satisfaction with all employers involved, there being 437 attendees at the event with 63 employers showcasing over 650 jobs on offer on the day.

4.3 LCCC Labour Market Partnership (LMP) Job Fairs (Cont'd)

An infographic on the outcome of the jobs fair had been appended to the Officer's report.

Alderman J Baird returned to the meeting at 6.34 pm.

The Head of Economic Development elaborated on one of the key issues in connection with the on-going challenge in competing with students' interest in academia as opposed to progression into employment. It was noted that Officers were therefore looking at how the jobs fair model might be re-focused, enhanced or built upon, particularly at a time of full employment in the local economy.

It was also recognised that the Council's LMP programmes could be further integrated and any future events addressing community need, social enterprises as well as the hard to reach Labour Market groups.

The Head of Economic Development noted a number of comments from a Member in connection with future job fair events being dedicated solely to schools.

It was proposed by Councillor J Lavery, seconded by Councillor C Kemp, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the update report and statistics outlined in the attached infographic be noted
- b) the Council supports future job fair-type events, and
- c) the following factors for future events be considered:
 - sectoral focus on key growth sectors within the local economy
 - engagement with potential new investors / employers to support future labour market growth
 - support entrepreneurial growth in line with other Council provision
 - ensure future events complement further education provision and support within the area

Two Members commended the Council Officers for their efforts in ensuring very successful job fair events in both the Dundonald International Ice Bowl and the Lisburn LeisurePlex.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Lisburn Castlereagh Business Awards 2025 Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan paid tribute to the success of the Lisburn Castlereagh Business Awards which had taken place in La Mon Hotel on Friday, 28 March 2025 and welcomed the positive feedback from businesses who had attended on the

5.1 Lisburn Castlereagh Business Awards 2025 (Cont'd)

night. The Chairperson put on record the Committee's thanks to the Head of Economic Development and his team for their efforts which had ensured an exceptional event.

The Vice-Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart, concurred with the sentiments expressed by the Chairperson and he too commended the efforts of the Officers concerned.

At a later point in the meeting Councillors C Kemp and C McCready also added their praise on the excellent business awards event. Councillor Kemp described the event as a great showcase of local businesses.

5.2 Economic Operators Registration and Identification (EORI) Scheme – New Rules for Trade between NI and GB Alderman J Baird

Alderman J Baird referred to new EORI rules affecting NI businesses trading certain goods with GB which stated that from 1 May 2025 NI businesses now require an EORI number to trade certain goods. Alderman Baird was aware that many businesses were unaware of this change in trading rules.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth advised that the Economic Development Manager was aware of this recent EORI rule and was preparing an article for the next issue of the e-Zine publication.

Alderman J Baird proposed that in light of this development and also in regard to the recent announcements by President Trump regarding the introduction of US trade tariffs the Council considers what measures it could take to assist local businesses navigate these changes going forward, such as workshops and information bulletins. The proposal was seconded by Councillor C McCready and agreed.

The Director addressed the Committee on the issues raised and undertook to come back with proposals on appropriate workshops in respect of Alderman Baird's proposals. He also advised that it would be necessary to involve the relevant business experts in these workshops.

The Head of Economic Development referred to the previous decision of the Committee to host a breakfast morning with Invest NI and advised that a date in early May had been identified. It was intended to include an item on that agenda on the subject of dual market access issues, which would tie in with the issues raised.

5.3 Signage re Toilet Provision in City Centre
Councillor C McCready

The Head of Economic Development responded to comments from Councillor C McCready in relation to the design of the signage for toilet provision in the City Centre, it being noted that the first stage of the procurement process had been completed and that the second stage would be initiated within the next two weeks. The design options would come to the Committee at the earliest opportunity.

5.4 Hillsborough Public Realm Scheme
Councillor C McCready

In response to Councillor C McCready's request for an update on the Hillsborough Public Realm Scheme the Director of Regeneration & Growth advised that a project board meeting would take place next Tuesday, 8 April where the progress of planning would take priority. He also advised that he had had the opportunity to speak with DfI Roads Officials at the Special Meeting of Council on Monday 31 March 2025 and had sought reassurances in relation to the public realm works in Hillsborough.

Councillor McCready thanked the Director for his efforts on regard to the Hillsborough Public Realm Scheme.

At a later point in the meeting the Director responded to comments and questions from Councillor U Mackin in connection with a major event in Hillsborough on 13 July 2026 and the need for all parties involved to work around the planned works. The Director advised that the Council in partnership with HRP was working closely with all parties on this event and also on the major tourism event in Hillsborough. The Director advised that any works planned would have regard for these planned events.

5.5 Moira Public Realm Scheme
Councillor C McCready

In response to Councillor C McCready's request for any update on the Moira Public Realm Scheme the Director of Regeneration & Growth advised that whilst this project was on the Council's Works Programme, it was not considered a key priority. He indicated that the Downshire West DEA workshop would be an appropriate forum for such a discussion and accordingly wished to defer any discussion to the DEA workshop.

5.6 National Association of Councillors (NI Region) - Learning and Development
Workshops re Councils Local Enterprise Champions
Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, reminded Members that at its previous meeting, the Committee had approved the attendance of one representative from each political party from within the Regeneration and Growth Committee at the above learning and

5.6 National Association of Councillors (NI Region) - Learning and Development Workshops re Councils Local Enterprise Champions (Cont'd)

development workshops. Nominations had been sought through the Party Group Leader nomination protocol but the consensus from Party Group Leaders was that places be offered outside of the Regeneration & Growth Committee and that, if necessary, a reserve list be maintained.

The Committee agreed to the change in seeking nominations for the above workshops from outside of the Regeneration & Growth Committee.

5.7 Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council's Tourism Strategy - Briefing Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, drew the Committee's attention to a briefing session in regard to the Council's Tourism Strategy on Tuesday, 8 April from 5.00 to 5.30 pm, which was taking place prior to the launch of the Strategy on 11 April. All Members of Council had received an invitation to attend this briefing session.

5.8 Go Succeed Meet the Buyer Event, Larchfield Estate Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan

Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, referred to the recent Meet the Buyer Event which had taken place in Larchfield Estate on 20 March 2025 and asked the Vice Chairperson, Alderman A G Ewart to update the Committee on this event.

The Vice-Chairperson stated that this event had been a huge success and welcomed opportunity for local businesses from across Lisburn and Castlereagh to display their products to retail and hospitality buyers. He particularly welcomed the fact that Tesco had six buyers attending the event on the day.

6. Confidential Report from Director of Regeneration & Growth

The Chairperson, Alderman A Grehan, advised that confidential reports were required to be considered under confidential business due to containing information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

In Committee

It was proposed by Councillor J Laverty, seconded by Alderman M Gregg, and agreed that the Confidential Reports be considered "in Committee" in the absence of press or members of the public. The audio recording was paused at this stage in proceedings.

6.1 Updated Service Level Agreement with Belfast City Council for the operation of the Northern Ireland Planning Portal
(Redacted report to be published March 2026)

The Head of Planning & Capital Development's report highlighted the background and key issues in connection with the updated Service Level Agreement with Belfast City Council for the operation of the Northern Ireland Planning Portal. The Head of Service pointed out that the reference in paragraph 1 (under 'background') 'June 2023' should read 'June 2030.' He also responded to questions from the Committee on key issues contained in the report.

The Committee had been furnished with a copy of the draft Service Level Agreement with Belfast City Council.

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the updated Service Level Agreement be approved, and
- b) authority be delegated to an authorised officer to sign the agreement as it is necessary for the operation of planning applications service which is an income-generating service.

6.2 Acquisitions Update in Small Settlements
(Redacted report to be published post ratification by Council)

The Head of Assets presented this item of business.

Councillors J Gallen, N Parker and J Harpur left the meeting at 7.04 pm 7.09 pm and 7.12 pm respectively.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth responded to comments raised by a Member relating to the two updates as set out in the report circulated. The Director also provided clarification on some of the issues raised.

Councillor A Gowan left the meeting during consideration of this item of business having declared an interest in relation to the update on Anahilt Nursing Home (7.19 pm).

Following discussion it was proposed by Councillor U Mackin, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that:

- a) the Officer's recommendations in connection with the two updates be not accepted,
- b) Officers engage with the elected representatives from the Downshire East DEA with a view to bringing forward new proposals taking account of the issues raised by Members, and

6.2 Acquisitions Update in Small Settlements (Cont'd)

c) a report thereon be brought to the Committee for consideration in due course.

Councillor A Gowan returned to the meeting at 7.32 pm.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Alderman M Gregg, seconded by Councillor U Mackin, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

Conclusion of Meeting

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and there being no further business for consideration the meeting was concluded at 7.32 pm.

Chairperson