

THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024

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No.	Item	Decision	Estimated Timescale for completion
1.	The Mayors' Business	<i>Received</i>	
2.	Apologies	<i>Alderman Boyle, Callan, Hunter Councillors Chivers, Kennedy, McCully, McShane, Nicholl, Watson</i>	
3.	Declaration of Members' Interests	<i>Councillor Kane</i>	
4.	Deputation – Housing Executive - Housing Investment Plan, Grainia Long, Chief Executive, Mark Alexander, Causeway Area Manager and Louise Clarke Head of North Place Shaping in attendance	<i>Received</i>	
5.	Minutes of The Council Meeting held Tuesday 5 November 2024 (adjourned)	<i>Confirmed as a correct record</i>	
6.	Minutes of Planning Committee Meeting held Wednesday 23 October 2024	<i>Received and Noted</i>	
7.	Minutes of Environmental Services Committee meeting held Tuesday 12 November 2024	<i>Adopted and recommendations therein approved</i>	

8.	Minutes of Finance Committee Meeting held Thursday 14 November 2024	Adopted and recommendations therein approved	
9.	Minutes of Leisure and Development Committee meeting held Tuesday 19 November 2024	Adopted and recommendations therein approved	
10.	Minutes of Corporate Policy and Resources Committee meeting held Tuesday 26 November 2024	Adopted and recommendations therein approved	
11.	Matters for reporting to the Partnership Panel	None	
12.	Conferences	None	
13.	Correspondence		
(i)	Brenda Kilpatrick, Engagement Development Worker, Voice of Young People in Care, dated 11 October 2024	That Council light Civic Buildings on the evening of Friday 21 February 2025 and plant a tree in a public space, in honour of the care experienced community	
(ii)	Jennifer Macrory, Public Appointments Unit, Department for Infrastructure, dated 19 November 2024	Noted	
(iii)	Susie McCullough, Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council, dated 12 November 2024	Noted	
(iv)	The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Office, dated 21 November 2024	Noted	
14.	Consultation Schedule	Noted	
15.	Seal Documents		
(i)	Grave Registry Certificates, No's 5874 to 5889 inclusive;	Seal Affixed (Items i – ii)	

(ii)	Modification Agreement Under Sections 76 and 77 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 relating to land at 1 Moneyvart Cottage, Layde Road Cushendall, BT44 0NQ		
16.	Notice of Motions		
16.1	Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Holmes, seconded by Alderman Hunter (abbrev. Negative impact of the budget on the farming and agricultural industry)	<i>That Council support the Notice of Motion</i>	
16.2	Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Storey, seconded by Alderman McAuley (abbrev failure by the Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget)	<i>That Council support the Notice of Motion</i>	

THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER ON

**TUESDAY 3 DECEMBER 2024 IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE
RECONVENED COUNCIL MEETING, AT 7.20PM**

In the Chair : The Mayor, Councillor McQuillan

Present : Alderman Coyle, Fielding, John McAuley, Knight-McQuillan,
S McKillop, Scott, Stewart

Councillors Anderson, C Archibald, N Archibald, Callaghan,
Holmes, Huggins, Kane, Kyle, Mairs, Jonathan McAuley,
McGlinchey, McGurk, MA McKillop, McMullan, Peacock,
Schenning, Stirling, Storey, Wallace, Watton, Wilson, Wisener

Officers Present : D Jackson, Chief Executive
M Quinn, Director of Corporate Services
A McPeake, Director of Environmental Services
P Mulvena, Director of Leisure and Development (R)
D Wright, Chief Finance Officer
J Mills, Council Solicitor, Land and Property
J Keen, Committee and Member Services Officer

In attendance : G Long, Chief Executive NIHE (Item 4)
M Alexander, Causeway Area Manager NIHE (Item 4)
L Clarke, Head of North Place Shaping NIHE (Item 4)
F O'Connor, North Regional Manager NIHE (Item 4) (R)
A Kennedy, Assistant Director Asset Management NIHE (Item 4) (R)
M Halliday, Assistant Director of Project Delivery, NIHE (Item 4) (R)
C O'Carroll Planning Officer, North Place Shaping, NIHE (Item 4) (R)

Press 4 no. (R) 1 (C)

A Lennox, Mobile Operations Officer
M Kennedy, ICT Technical Support Officer

Key – (R) = Attended Remotely

The Chief Finance Officer undertook a roll call.

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

1. THE MAYOR'S BUSINESS

The Mayor stated:

“Firstly, I had the privilege of attending and supporting several significant awards including the Causeway Coast and Glens Sports Awards where our local athletes were supported for their hard work and achievements. It is always inspiring to see how much talent and dedication exists within the area. Likewise, I was pleased to be involved with the Social Enterprise Awards recognising the incredible impact of social enterprises across our region and the Causeway Chamber Awards which honoured our thriving local businesses. I was also lucky enough to attend the Food to Go Awards where we saw the best of different food outlets the North has to offer. Mental health has also been a central focus this month. I had the honour of attending Dunloy’s first ever men’s mental health night, a powerful and much needed event that sparked important conversations and something I hope to encourage in all areas in my time left as Mayor. Additionally, I spoke at the AGM of Mindwise about mental health, underscoring how critical it is for us to continue supporting these conversations and breaking down the stigmas. Another highlight of the month was turning on the Christmas lights across the Council between myself and the Deputy Mayor, we have now turned on Dunloy, Ballycastle, Coleraine, Ballymoney and Limavady. It was such a joyful way to bring the community together and raise the Festive Spirit. All in all, it’s been a month full of celebration, reflection and continued effort to support the well-being of our community and I am grateful for the collective energy and commitment that different areas across the Council show, and I’m looking forward to what our Council offers in 2025”.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were recorded for Alderman Boyle, Alderman Callan, Alderman Hunter, Councillor Chivers, Councillor Kennedy, Councillor McCully, Councillor McShane, Councillor Nicholl, Councillor Watson.

3. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS’ INTERESTS

Councillor Kane declared an Interest in Item 13 Correspondence – Brenda Kilpatrick, Engagement Development Worker, Voice of Young People in Care, dated 11 October 2024.

4. DEPUTATION – HOUSING EXECUTIVE - HOUSING INVESTMENT PLAN, GRAINIA LONG, CHIEF EXECUTIVE, MARK ALEXANDER, CAUSEWAY AREA MANAGER AND LOUISE CLARKE HEAD OF NORTH PLACE SHAPING IN ATTENDANCE

The Mayor invited the Housing Executive representatives to present their deputation.

Chief Executive, NIHE, thanked the Mayor for the invitation to present the Housing Executive's annual housing investment plan.

Chief Executive, NIHE stated that working alongside Council as community planning partners has been a positive experience. Chief Executive, NIHE, stated that the Housing Executive had worked with Members in relation to delivering the Community Plan under the themes of a healthy, safe community, action to enhance interagency cooperation and to address and respond to the needs of those experiencing chronic homelessness. There is also a need to support a sustainable, accessible environment by working with Housing Associations locally identifying suitable sites. In terms of overall investment and breaking that up across the 10 year breakdown the Housing Executive, as a landlord, have 57,000 households locally and manage 6454 homes.

Last year the Housing Executive spent £84.36m and that ranges across the totality of the Housing Executive's investment. Nearly £32,000,000 was spent on housing benefits, that's an important feature of our housing system. We are delighted to see the level of investment in new build social housing, there was a record level of investment for this Council in the last year at £27.12m and you'll see that now coming forward in the next number of years in terms of what that gives in terms of new build. The other areas worth focusing on are the supporting people projects which are enabling, supporting and helping people with their housing costs or with housing support.

The Housing Executive's response maintenance budget remains at £8.7 million. The planned maintenance budget is £5.2 million. The social housing development programme is the new build programme, the Housing Executive doesn't build accommodation they commission social housing through housing associations. There were 277 new homes under construction in March of this year, looking to the future, 664 new social homes are programmed. In terms of the housing for all programme within this Council Area 5 housing for all schemes have been completed and an additional 5 potential schemes are at the pre allocation stage.

There is a growth in the number of applicants on the waiting list, and a growth in the numbers in housing stress. In the last year there were 411 houses allocated. The housing need is not being met which shows the need for more housing and new builds. There is a fundamental review of allocations, which is a programme of reform and policy change that is underway. Over the next number of years that fundamental review will lead to better use of Housing Executive stock and making sure the right people are in the right homes. Single person households make up 45% of the waiting list so that has to inform the type of homes that are being brought forward.

Chief Executive, NIHE, stated that an important part of their role is to assess housing needs to get the numbers right in terms of housing, the scale and the nature of housing need and to get the right balance in terms of measuring housing need. In terms of the five year social housing development programme performance, it is important to get the right balance in terms of the rural and urban housing split. Chief Executive, Housing Executive, outlined the targets for the next five years and summarised what had been achieved in the previous 5 years in relation to allocating houses and that identifying rural housing sites is a priority.

Chief Executive, NIHE, considered the projected spend for this year. There was a number of aspects of spend not detailed in the presentation but the Chief Executive, NIHE, confirmed they are still happening. The figures for housing benefit and the new build programme also have not been included as they have not been spent yet, these will be included next year. Chief Executive, NIHE, referred to the planned maintenance figures to highlight the target has been increased from £5m to almost £12m. Planned maintenance and stock improvements are the much-needed investment in people's homes. Having had two or three years of either a small rent increase or an inflationary rent increase has given the Housing Executive the opportunity to invest because rent pays for services.

Chief Executive, NIHE, advised the focus on the need for temporary accommodation locally is not unique to this Borough. Every Council area is different in terms of demand, but since the pandemic there has been significant growth and demand for temporary accommodation. There is a target in terms of ensuring that the Housing Executive are not placing families with children in hotels and B&B's and where it is necessary it is for the shortest period possible. Chief Executive, NIHE, stated some of the challenges faced across all of the Council areas include major adaptations to some of their own stock where households require adaptations due to illness or disability. Some delays have been seen in this area due to difficulties in the contracting environment.

As a final point the Chief Executive, NIHE, stated the Housing Executive is focused on energy efficiency across Northern Ireland where more than £50m has been spent on energy efficiency interventions and investment in homes giving the Retrofit Programme and a programme of low carbon heating installations.

In response to questions the Chief Executive, NIHE, provided an update on the Housing Strategy and stated that Minister Hargey announced changes to borrowing for the Housing Executive in 2020. Minister Lyons has been proactively engaged in driving things forward. The Housing Executive is building on its capacity to build knowledge and skills, mapping sites and ramping up capacity. The Housing Executive is ready to go once borrowing power has been approved.

The Chief Executive, NIHE, stated she has no concerns regarding risks to housing benefit.

In response to questions, the Chief Executive, NIHE, advised that the housing supply strategy has been published. The Chief Executive of the Housing Executive has met with NI Water and there are a number of issues with NI Water infrastructure; there is a focus on finding a suitable design for the housing need that exists. The Chief Executive, NIHE, advised consideration is being given to buying back property and leasehold properties in order to ease the housing need.

The Chief Executive, NIHE, confirmed the importance of the points system in place and advised it is in place because there is a housing need. There is a fundamental review underway, the only answer to the questions surrounding meeting housing need is to build more houses. The Chief Executive, NIHE, advised that the point system is based on individual household housing circumstances rather than the location.

The Chief Executive, NIHE, advised that the Housing Executive is open in terms of methodology of assessing need and allocating houses and are open to challenge. She advised that she is agreeable consider other tried and tested models, housing is an important issue which needs to be addressed correctly. In terms of the affordable warmth scheme the level of funding expected was not provided so households had to be prioritised in order of need. The Chief Executive, NIHE, advised that there are growing numbers of homeless young people. A youth homeless action plan has been launched, a member of staff in the Housing Executive is in this role and would be content to present to Council regarding the action plan and the work being carried out.

Causeway Area Manager, NIHE, confirmed new communities are staying in hotels under the asylum scheme. Causeway Area Manager, NIHE, confirmed that education can be provided and that he is impressed by how the Borough has welcomed the new communities into the area and provided an example of how they have been included in local football tournaments. Causeway Area Manager, NIHE, confirmed that the Housing Executive can look at things Members would like to do in order to assist new communities in the area.

In response to questions, the Head of North Place Shaping, NIHE, advised that the Planners within the Housing Executive identify the number of sites available for development and give consideration to several factors including zoned housing areas within settlement limits, streetviews, GIS, brown sites, planning history and will rank the sites in order of priority. The Housing Executive will work with Housing Associations to provide housing where possible.

The Head of North Place Shaping, NIHE, provided an outline of the Housing for All programme which encourages a mix of identities in sites/developments. There is a number of sites identified for the Housing for All programme. The Head of North Place Shaping, NIHE, advised the housing need in rural areas in Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council is higher than in other Council areas and that there is an Affordable Housing Policy in place. The Head of North Place Shaping, NIHE, stated that those in need of housing need to put their name on the list to show there is a need for housing.

The Mayor thanked the representatives from the Housing Executive for their presentation.

- * **Chief Executive NIHE, Causeway Area Manager NIHE, Head of North Place Shaping NIHE left the Chamber at 8:34pm**
- * **North Regional Manager NIHE, Assistant Director Asset Management NIHE, Assistant Director of Project Delivery, NIHE, Planning Officer, North Place Shaping, NIHE left the meeting remotely at 8:34pm**
- * **The Mayor declared a recess at 8:34pm.**
- * **The meeting reconvened at 8:45pm**

5. MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD TUESDAY 5 NOVEMBER 2024 (ADJOURNED)

Copy, previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor MA McKillop
Seconded by Councillor Schenning and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of The Council Meeting held Tuesday 5 November 2024 (adjourned) were confirmed as a correct record.

6. MINUTES OF PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD WEDNESDAY 23 OCTOBER 2024

Copy, previously circulated.

RESOLVED – that the Minutes of the Planning Committee Meeting held Wednesday 23 October 2024 were received and noted.

7. MINUTES OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2024

Copy, previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Mairs
Seconded by Councillor MA McKillop and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Environmental Services Committee meeting held Tuesday 12 November 2024 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

8. MINUTES OF FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD THURSDAY 14 NOVEMBER 2024

Copy, previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Huggins
Seconded by Alderman Scott and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held on Thursday 14 November 2024 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

9. MINUTES OF LEISURE AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER 2024

Copy, previously circulated.

Proposed by Councillor Holmes
Seconded by Councillor Schenning and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Leisure and Development Committee Meeting held Tuesday 19 November 2024 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

10. MINUTES OF CORPORATE POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE MEETING HELD TUESDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2024

Proposed by Alderman Knight McQuillan
Seconded by Councillor Stirling and

RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held Tuesday 26 November 2024 are adopted and recommendations therein approved.

Alderman Fielding referred to Item 8 Update on Progress - Causeway Coast and Glens Community Plan and requested that in relation to introducing a Dementia Safeguarding Arm Bands Scheme, that before any approach would be made to other Councils that Council engages with Age Concern Causeway.

11. MATTERS FOR REPORTING TO THE PARTNERSHIP PANEL

There were no matters to report to the Partnership Panel.

12. CONFERENCES

There were no Conferences to report.

13. CORRESPONDENCE

Copy, previously circulated, was presented by as read 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:

(i) Brenda Kilpatrick, Engagement Development Worker, Voice of Young People in Care, dated 11 October 2024

Extract

CARE DAY is the world's biggest celebration of children and young people with care experience. This group includes children and young people who are or were cared for by foster carers, or other family members, and those who live in children's homes. They deserve to be celebrated, on CARE DAY, and every day.

CARE DAY in the UK and Ireland is a joint initiative across five children's rights charities, and led in Northern Ireland by VOYPIC – Voice of Young People in Care. CARE DAY 25 will take place on Friday 21 February, and will be the tenth CARE DAY in the UK and Ireland.

To celebrate this milestone, we are asking your council to mark the occasion with the following activities:

We would be grateful if your council would light civic buildings on the evening of Friday 21 February 2025. Where possible, we would ask it to be multi-coloured, to reflect the Care Day halo. If this is not possible, we would ask it to be yellow, the main colour of the VOYPIC logo.

In recognition of this being the tenth CARE DAY, we are asking councils to plant a tree in a public space, in honour of the care experienced community. This

includes those currently in care, those who have been in care, and those who will experience care in the future.

I would be grateful if these requests could be shared with members of your council at your meeting of 5 November, just following Care Leavers' Week (23 October – 3 November 2024).

VOYPIC is the charity for children and young people with lived experience of care in Northern Ireland. Created in 1993 by a group of young people in care and the professionals that supported them, VOYPIC has over 30 years of experience promoting the rights and voice of children in care and care leavers.

We work to ensure every child in care feels safe, valued and loved, and that every young person leaving care does so with dignity and respect, and thrives into adulthood.

I would like to thank you for your consideration of our request, and for your support for our work and the young people we serve.

Councillor Schenning spoke in support of Council completing the activities outlined in the report.

Proposed by Councillor Schenning
Seconded by Alderman Stewart and

RESOLVED – That Council light Civic Buildings on the evening of Friday 21 February 2025 and plant a tree in a public space, in honour of the care experienced community.

(ii) Jennifer Macrory, Public Appointments Unit, Department for Infrastructure, dated 19 November 2024

Further to the Minister's letter of 30 September 2024 (attached), the Department is reviewing again the status of Councillors on the Drainage Council of Northern Ireland and are seeking further nominations from the Council. Department for Infrastructure currently still hold two vacancies with another three appointments terms due to end on 31 December.

Councillor Mervyn Storey's application is currently being held due to unavailability during the last round of interviews was being held. Councillor Dermot Nicholl was successful previously in being appointed to the Drainage Council.

Jennifer Macrory has requested that this opportunity be recirculated amongst Council Members urgently with a view to nominate any other councillor who may be interested as soon as possible so interviews can be arranged.

Previous decisions of Council

At the Corporate Policy and Resources Committee 25 June 2024 / Council Meeting 27 June 2024, Council resolved to approve the nomination of Councillor Mervyn Storey (DUP) and Councillor Dermot Nicholl (Sinn Féin) to be put forward to apply to the Drainage Council for Northern Ireland.

(iii) Susie McCullough, Chief Executive, Ards and North Down Borough Council, dated 12 November 2024

Extract

At the meeting of Ards and North Down Borough Council on 30th October, Council stated a position that it was strongly opposes the UK Government's recent Winter Fuel Payment policy change.

Further, Council has agreed to write to the Prime Minister to urge the Government to reverse this harmful decision, which will have a far-reaching and devastating impact on pensioner households across the UK. It also seeks assurance that, at the very least, the Pension Credit minimum income guarantee will be increased, ensuring that more low-income pensioner households, particularly those who narrowly miss out, become eligible for pension credit.

Council have also resolved that I write to the other Councils in Northern Ireland urging them to do the same. I would therefore ask if you would report this request to your elected Members for consideration. I would also welcome a response to this request so that I may report back to our members in due course.

(iv). The Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Office, dated 21 November 2024

Extract

Thank you for your letter dated 30 September regarding the pause of the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deal. I apologise for the delay in responding.

As you may have seen, I was delighted that during her Budget statement on 30 October the Chancellor confirmed that the short pause on the UK Government's contribution to the Mid South West and the Causeway Coast and Glens Growth Deals has been lifted.

As you know, in the weeks running up to the Budget I met with councils and local representatives and I am grateful to all those who have provided detail on the deals and their intended impact on regional growth. I look forward to working with the Department of Finance and delivery partners as the deals progress through the necessary steps towards implementation, collectively ensuring that they continue to deliver growth in Northern Ireland.

This Government is committed to working with the Northern Ireland Executive and businesses to make the most of the huge economic opportunities that now lie ahead.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Council consider the correspondence.

Council NOTED the correspondence, ii - iv.

14. CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

Copy, previously circulated.

Open Consultations

- The Executive Office Draft Programme for Government 2024-2027 'Our Plan: Doing What Matters Most'- Documents submission by 2 December 2024 (Circulated to Elected Members 25 November 2024)
- Department for the Economy Proposals to Amend the Insolvency (Northern Ireland) Order 1989, The Company Directors Disqualification (Northern Ireland) Order 2002 and the Insolvent Partnerships Order (Northern Ireland) 1995 submission by 1 January 2025
- Department of Education Department of Education Budget 2024/25 - Equality Impact Assessment submission by 10 January 2025
- Department of Justice Consultation on Repeal of The Vagrancy Act 1824 and the Vagrancy (Ireland) Act 1847 submission by 21 January 2025
- Department for Communities Equality Assessment Consultation on Anti-Social Behaviour Housing Proposals submission by 3 February 2024
- Department for Communities Consultation on the Gender Pay Gap Information Regulations submission by 14 February 2025
- Department of Education Review of Free School Meals and Uniform Grant Eligibility Criteria submission by 14 February 2025
- Ulster University Equality Screening of Ulster University's New and Revised Policies - Public Consultation submission by 24 February 2024

Available to View

- Department of Finance DoF Equality Screening for Part E (Fire safety) changes to Building Regulations
- Health and Social Care – Business Services Organisation Equality Screening
- HSC NI Publication of Quarterly Screening Report Screening exercises undertaken for the period Jul–Sep 2024

Council NOTED the consultation items.

15. 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 5874 to 5889 inclusive;
- (ii) Modification Agreement Under Sections 76 and 77 of the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 relating to land at 1 Moneyvart Cottage, Layde Road Cushendall, BT44 0NQ

Proposed by Councillor Kane

Seconded by Councillor Callaghan and

RESOLVED – that the Sealing of documents, as listed, be approved (Items i-ii).

16. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

The Mayor permitted both Notice of Motions to be considered at the Council Meeting.

16.1 Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Holmes, seconded by Alderman Hunter

That Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council recognises the negative impact that is reverberating across the Farming and Agriculture Industry caused by the first Budget by the new UK Labour Government.

That this Council recognises the added challenges posed by the Budget, particularly the changes to Agriculture Property relief, to the continuance of Family Farming; further recognises the intrinsic value of Farming and Agriculture to regional and national food security, and further commits to writing to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to call on him to engage with the Chancellor at the earliest opportunity and demonstrate his absolute support for Farmers affected by this Budget.

In addition the Council will write to the Chancellor to further outline the impact on local family farms and ask her to overturn this detrimental element of the budget.

16.2 Notice of Motion Proposed by Councillor Storey, seconded by Alderman McAuley

That this Council condemns the failure by the Government to prioritise farming families and the rural economy as part of the Autumn Budget; notes with deep concern the decisions to introduce new thresholds for Inheritance Tax and Agricultural Property Relief, which will jeopardise succession planning on farms, create barriers for new entrants to agriculture and discourage investment in many farm businesses; further notes that these policies undermine the aim of increasing food security and promoting more sustainable and efficient farming practices; is equally alarmed that the Chancellor has opted not to ringfence farm support budgets or uplift levels of funding in line with inflation; calls on the Minister for

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to bring forward proposals to mitigate the impact of these damaging policies on local farms, as well as avoid significant increases in food prices; and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister of Finance to deliver an early and concrete commitment to farming families that current levels of financial support will not only be maintained but increased in the next financial year.

The Mayor invited Councillor Holmes to present his Notice of Motion.

Councillor Holmes stated:

The the motion is before Members. On the 30th of October, Chancellor Richard Reeves, championed the New Labour Government's first budget as fixing the foundations for the farming community, however, it has rocked it to its very core. As Churchill might have put it, never has so much damage been done by so few to so many. The farming community is still in shock. Solicitors and accountants are still debating the ramifications, and farmers look at their farms and wonder what they are farming for. Agricultural Property Relief has been vital to maintain viable family farms across the generations. It has been abused by the mega wealthy, using it for tax avoidance. Labour says they are doing this to go after the mega wealthy and make it easier for family farms. But after the changes made with 50% relief for the mega wealthy, it's still the best tax avoidance in town. Only now there were more land coming available as farms are forced to sell to pay the taxman. Most farming families are asset rich and cash poor, but that asset is rarely realised and when it is capital gains tax is paid. A small farm that would barely support a pensioner will now hit the threshold. Yes, that threshold can be raised to two parents just alive and various stars in line with viable family farms will easily exceed this by the time stock, machinery and buildings are added to land values. Farm incomes are absolutely through the floor. Since World War 2, government policy has driven food volumes up and prices down. The average returning capital employed is 0.5%. That means you need £1,000,000 of assets to generate £5000 of income. To put the ROC in perspective, retail ROC is 5 to 15% and manufacturing can be 25% and above, the bank interest alone on £1,000,000 would be £50,000. For farming, would take £5m of assets to generate the national minimum wage. Never mind the fact the farmer will be working 70 to 80 hours a week in doing so. Farming is tough and it's lonely, accident rates are high at 21 times the oil industry average, suicide rates are higher than the national average, incomes are low. The only thing a family farm is going for is its assets. And now this lying Labour government are coming for them. Why do farmers stick at it? Why don't you just stick with the assets and live off the interests? It's a very good question. But walk onto a farm where there's small children. Look at them out in they're wee wellington boots playing through the mud, watch them carrying buckets of milk, petting lambs, trying to push the silage up in a toy Massey Ferguson. Look at the pride in their faces when you go up and sell well reared cattle at the market. That's why they farm. It's in the blood. This government may know the price of a pint of milk, but they certainly don't know its cost.

The Mayor stated that Council would hear both Notice of Motions together as they are both in relation to the same issue and both the proposers and seconders are agreeable.

The Mayor invited Councillor Storey to present his Notice of Motion.

Councillor Storey stated:

Thank you, Mr Mayor, and I concur with the comments from the previous speaker, Councillor Holmes. And obviously we have a situation where we have now, sadly, a Labour government who not being content to put their hands in the pockets of our pensioners and raid their income then I have seen the farming community as an easy target and obviously this will jeopardise succession planning on farms, but before I say any more than that, I think it would be remiss of us not to place on record our appreciation to the work of the Ulster Farmers Union, an organisation that very successfully galvanised the farming community a few days ago to one of the largest gatherings that we've seen for some time on any particular issue in Northern Ireland, and the Ulster Farmers Union spreads across all parts of Northern Ireland and as an advocate for the benefits of and the the work of the farming community. I don't think there's any of us whether we are urban or rural in this Chamber tonight who doesn't benefit from our farming community, and I know sometimes farmers can be the brunt of our our jokes and we can jibe with them. I've 2 brothers in laws who are farmers and so I'm sure the Christmas season no doubt will bring the annual fun that there comes as a result of of their stoke and trade. However, the seriousness of what they now face is not the same as any other crisis that families will face or individuals will face, because this is about their future. And so what this Government, not surprisingly, always tell us they are the party of the people and for the working man, well, they certainly must have excluded the farmers because there is no more work in man or woman than those who live and labour on our farms, yet this Government has decided that it was in their best interest to attack them. I don't think we should take as in any way as being an idle threat in terms of the continuity of food supply in Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom. We all take too much for granted, been able to have our milk and have our beef and all the food that is provided for us by our farming community. I think that it is incumbent on us collectively as public representatives to send out a message to this Government, not only in the issue of our pensioners and what has happened with the winter fuel payment, but also our farmers to say to this Government and is not acceptable and is the wrong thing to do and if Keir Starmer would pay more attention to the farmers than the frames of his glasses, and whoever it is supplies his pin stripped suits he would maybe recognise that farmers don't have the same lifestyle that he lives with, and yet he was he would try to tell us that he was a man of the people. Well, I think that any person is judged by their actions, not just by their words and the actions of this Government have been deplorable, they have been totally at variance with the promises that were made in terms of how they would protect our rural communities. And so I think both motions clearly indicate the seriousness of the situation, and I would ask colleagues in the Council tonight to support this and send out from this Council Chamber not a message that is in any way nuanced or a very clear message - we support our farmers, we support the Ulster Farmers Union and what they're doing, we wish them well in their campaign. They, along with their other colleagues in the rest of the United Kingdom to see this decision reversed and our farmers given the dignity and given the place that they deserve as one of the key component drivers in providing for us all on a day and daily basis. Thank you, Mr Mayor.

The Mayor invited Alderman McAuley to speak in support of the Notice of Motion.

Alderman McAuley stated:

Just to reiterate some of the points that's already been made. That's an opportunity for Causeway Coast and Glens Council to deliver a strong message to the Prime Minister and his disastrous Labour Government, as well as the Alliance Minister for Agriculture on behalf of farmers in Northern Ireland because photo shoots and designer rally boots, Barber coat and a flashy bow tie alongside fluffy words of no real substance from him not going to cut it. He needs to do more as there's a strong feeling within the rural community that neither him nor his party are true friends of the farmer and that's hard to argue against whenever we look at their voting record on some of the agricultural matters. The Agricultural Minister may have run out of the Acorn Centre, but will not be able to run forever from the farmers. As for the Labour Government the budget blow has betrayed farmers and businesses across United Kingdom. Agriculture isn't just a cornerstone of Northern Ireland's economy, it's a fundamental part of local communities and rural life. Farmers are devastated, but they're also very angry, and that's that was obvious with the 6000 men, women and children who attended the Ulster Farmer Farmers Unions rally. But it is encouraging to see the support for them both here and at the mass protest in Westminster. So it's clear to me and my colleagues that the whole country is united in solidarity and prepared to fight to defend the way of life that, as other people have said, it's been passed through generations. Farmers simply can't stand by and watch the Labour Government destroy their heritage and undermine the provinces largest industry, which not only creates employment but it produces food for over 10 million people throughout the UK. Farmers are in this for the long haul. All we're asking for this Chamber and Council, is that we do our bit to apply as much pressure as possible. We've heard the term no farmers no food, it's really is that simple. The Government needs to keep its pre election promises and implement policies that support our farmers rather than hinder and drive them out of business. It's essential to prioritise the sustainability of our agricultural sector not only to preserve rural communities but to ensure the prosperity of our nation and food security for future generations. And it's for that these reasons that I'm glad to second my colleagues notice of motion. I would urge everyone else here tonight to support and show that we do stand in solidarity with our farming communities.

Councillor Peacock spoke in support for both Notice of Motions. Councillor Peacock stated there is the risk of pushing small farms into financial distress and making it difficult to pass farms on to the next generation, this affects this generation of farmers and generations to come. As representatives of a large rural constituency it is important to advocate for policies that support family farms and stable funding for the agricultural sector. It is important to commend those who have taken to the streets to protest the inheritance tax.

Councillor Kane stated he has no personal financial interest in this debate but is the son of a farming family. This is a punishing budget for farmers and past the decisions that are made on taxation are a matter for the UK Government.

Councillor Kane highlighted the impact of this decision on family farms in Northern

Ireland and expressed concern on the implications for young people who are studying agriculture and are looking at those innovative ways of new forms of sustainable farming leading us into the next generation of farming leaders.

Councillor Wilson concurred with the previous speakers. Councillor Wilson referred to the disconnect between the Government and the people on the ground including changes at the local hospital, the economy in relation to the Growth Deal, housing need and now the farming community. Councillor Wilson stated that Councillors need to be the voice for the local people and get the connection restored again. Councillor Wilson stated that unfortunately Alderman Hunter could not attend the meeting and stated there is a strength and depth of feeling from her and her peers in farming community and we want to fully support both these motions.

Councillor Watton referred to the Labour manifesto stating that this particular tax was never mentioned. Councillor Watton expressed frustration with the decision taken on inheritance tax and the impact on the farming community.

Alderman S McKillop concurred with previous speakers. Alderman S McKillop advised farmers are already under significant stress due to policy and policy changes they need additional support before this policy change. Farmers are custodians of the landscape and typically work to preserve the natural beauty and ecological integrity of the land. The Government should recognise the value of farmers in maintaining the rural landscape and our tourism industry. Additional restrictions will further burden farmers and make it more difficult for them to sustain their livelihoods. Farmers are under immense stress and we need to support them.

Alderman Coyle spoke to support the Notice of Motions stating that we all need the farmers and use their products, no one can do without the the food they produce. Alderman Coyle highlighted how farmers are already under a lot of strain, many needing second jobs which also adds to the stress.

Councillor Kyle concurred with the sentiment of the two Notice of Motions. He welcomed the cross community and cross party support. Councillor Kyle stated as someone who has recently been bereaved in a farming household, he understands the impact that involves. The last thing farming families need is an unexpected tax bill to what is already an asset. Farmers see themselves as custodians of the land, much of which has been handed down from generations before, and the hope it is cared for for generations to come. Farming families have already been hit with falling income, rising costs, TB concerns with cattle from badgers, raising bureaucracy from Stormont and locally and under our control, more stringent planning regulations. Councillor Kyle welcomed the Notice of Motions and appeal to those, particularly within Planning in the Chamber, to

take more leniency into account when farming families apply for planning permission to extend or to add to their existing farming, arrange to try and have some longevity for the years to come.

The Chief Executive stated that there are two Notice of Motions on the table, provided a summary of what the two motions were asking for and stated they can both be combined by way of correspondence. The Chief Executive advised that procedurally it would be better to vote on them separately to get agreement.

The Chief Executive stated that Alderman Hunter was not in attendance at the meeting and asked for a seconder for the Notice of Motion in her absence. Councillor Wilson seconded the Motion.

RESOLVED – That Council support the Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Holmes, seconded by Councillor Wilson.

RESOLVED - That Council support the Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Storey, seconded by Alderman McAuley.

This being all the business the meeting closed at 9:17pm

Chair