

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Meeting of the Council held in the Council Chamber and in Remote Locations on Thursday, 5 February 2026 at 6.01 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Alderman A Grehan

Aldermen J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith,
M Gregg, A McIntyre and J Tinsley

Councillors J Bamford, R T Beckett, P Catney, K Dickson,
A P Ewing, A Givan, A Gowan, J Harpur, B Higginson,
G Hynds, C Kemp, U Mackin, B Magee, A Martin,
G McCleave, C McCready, Rt Hon N Trimble and
G Thompson

PRESENT REMOTELY:

Alderman S Skillen, Councillors D Bassett, S Burns, R Carlin,
D J Craig, S Lowry, D Lynch, M McKeever, R McLernon,
T Mitchell and N Parker

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Chief Executive
Director of Environmental Services
Director of Organisation Development & Innovation
Head of Finance
Head of Governance & Administration
Member Services Manager (Acting)
Member Services Officer
Technician
IT Officer

Commencement of the Meeting

At the commencement of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman A Grehan welcomed those present to the special meeting of Council, which had been convened to consider recommendations in connection with the striking of the district rate for 2026/2027. The special meeting was being live-streamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings.

The Chief Executive outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency.

Councillor A Givan entered the meeting at 6.03 pm.

1. **Apologies**

It was agreed that an apologies for non-attendance at the meeting be accepted on behalf of Alderman S P Porter, Councillors J Gallen and J Laverty, the Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing and the Director of Regeneration & Growth.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes for Adoption

Councillor D Lynch joined the meeting remotely at 6.03 pm.

3.1 Special Corporate Services Committee – 22 January, 2026

Update on the Change to the District Rates by Chairperson, Councillor B Higginson

In bringing forward the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee of 22 January 2026 for adoption, the Chairperson, Councillor B Higginson, advised that the minutes were a true and accurate record of what had been agreed at that meeting. However, due to the pausing of the non-domestic revaluation by the Finance Minister the previous week the District rates being proposed that evening differed from those proposed at the Special Meeting of the Corporate Services Committee on 22 January. Councillor Higginson asked Members to note this update in relation to the change in the district rates.

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Councillor J Bamford, and agreed that the minutes of the special meeting of the Corporate Services Committee held on 22 January, 2026 be confirmed and signed.

It was proposed by Councillor A Givan, seconded by Alderman A McIntyre, and agreed that the Chairperson's update on the change to the district rates be noted.

4. Report by the Chief Executive

4.1 District Rate and Draft Estimates of Income and Expenditure for 2026/2027

Councillor R Carlin and Alderman S Skillen joined the meeting remotely at 6.08 pm and 6.15 pm, respectively.

Members had been provided with a report and related appendices in connection with the Draft Estimates of Income and Expenditure for 2026/2027 for the various departments of the Council.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor. Alderman A Grehan, invited the Chairperson of the Corporate Services Committee, Councillor B Higginson, to address the Council.

During his address Councillor Higginson acknowledged that households and businesses continued to navigate real financial pressures. Councillor Higginson also acknowledged the encouraging signs with inflation and energy costs beginning to ease. He also welcomed the announcement by the Finance Minister

4.1 District Rate and Draft Estimates of Income and Expenditure for 2026/2027
(Cont'd)

in relation to the pausing of the revaluation of non-domestic properties, but added that the wider cost of living challenges remained very real within our communities.

Councillor Higginson referred to the rising costs faced by the Council and stated that despite these challenges the focus throughout this budget process had been to keep any increase in the district rate as low as possible, balancing fiscal responsibility with protecting the services that residents and businesses depend on every day. He also referred to, and elaborated on, the Council's £130 million capital investment programme which, he stated, continued to support the local economy, create jobs and strengthen communities. Councillor Higginson also highlighted the planned spend for the 2026/2027 financial year in relation to the capital programme.

In concluding Councillor Higginson having put forward the recommendations for the district as outlined in the report, indicated that the proposed increase would ensure that the Council continued to maintain one of the lowest district rates for households and businesses in Northern Ireland. He expressed thanks and appreciation to Members, the Chief Executive, Directors and Officers for their efforts, dedication and hard work throughout the estimates process.

Councillor J Bamford, Vice Chairperson of the Corporate Services Committee, seconded the proposals in relation to the district rates.

At this point Councillors G Hynds and P Catney put on record their concerns in relation to the proposed 4.25 % increase in the district rates. Both Members whilst having thanked the efforts of Officers in bringing forward the district rate proposals, made several comments in regard to their opposition of the proposed increase in the district rates. Other Members queried the suggestions made by Councillor Hynds and Councillor Catney and sought clarification, noting that no specific proposals relating to cuts or savings had been brought forward by either Member at the numerous previous meetings at which the draft estimates of income and expenditure had been discussed.

A discussion ensued during which other Members made a number of comments in response to the issues raised by Councillor Hynds and Councillor Catney.

Alderman J Tinsley, Councillor N Trimble and Councillor G McCleave, on behalf of their respective political parties, spoke in support the district rate proposals, and they too paid tribute to the Chief Executive, Directors and Officers who had worked hard over a number of months to ensure a low as possible rate rise for 2026/2027.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman A Grehan, expressed disappointment in regard to an issue raised during the discussion and indicated that the matter could be taken up with the Commissioner for Standards and the Chief Executive. The Right Worshipful the Mayor also reminded Members that all Members had the opportunity to scrutinise the draft estimates reports over the past number of months.

4.1 District Rate and Draft Estimates of Income and Expenditure for 2026/2027
(Cont'd)

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Councillor J Bamford, and, on a recorded vote being taken, agreed that:

- (a) approval be given to the suite of plans, policies, strategies and indicators contained within the estimates documents; and
- (b) the district rate for the financial year 2026/2027 be set at 4.25% for both the domestic and non-domestic rate.

There were 34 votes in favour of the above proposal and two votes against, the voting being as follows:

In Favour: Alderman J Baird, Councillor J Bamford, Councillor D Bassett, Councillor R T Beckett, Councillor S Burns, Councillor R Carlin, Councillor D J Craig, Councillor K Dickson, Alderman A G Ewart, Councillor A P Ewing, Alderman O Gawith, Councillor A Givan, Councillor A Gowan, Alderman M Gregg, The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Alderman A Grehan, Councillor J Harpur, Councillor B Higginson, Councillor C Kemp, Councillor S Lowry, Councillor D Lynch, Councillor U Mackin, Councillor B Magee, Councillor A Martin, Councillor T Mitchell, Councillor G McCleave, Councillor C McCready, Alderman A McIntyre, Councillor M McKeever, Councillor R McLernon, Councillor N Parker, Alderman S Skillen, Councillor G Thompson, Alderman J Tinsley and Councillor N Trimble

TOTAL: 34

Against: Councillor P Catney and Councillor G Hynds

TOTAL: 2

The Right Worshipful the Mayor acknowledged the efforts during the rate setting process, of the Chairperson of the Corporate Services Committee, Councillor B Higginson.

Conclusion of the Meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting, The Right Worshipful the Mayor thanked those present for their attendance and there being no further business, the Special Meeting concluded at 6.31 pm.

Mayor