

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Monthly Meeting of Council held in the Council Chamber, Lagan Valley Island and Remote Locations on Tuesday 23 June, 2026 at 6:04 pm

PRESENT IN CHAMBER:

The Right Worshipful the Mayor
Councillor B Higginson

Deputy Mayor, Alderman A McIntyre

Aldermen J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, O Gawith, H Legge and S P Porter.

Councillors J Bamford, R T Beckett, S Burns, R Carlin, P Catney, D J Craig, K Dickson, A P Ewing, A Givan, A Gowan, J Harpur, G Hynds, J Lavery BEM, S Lowry, D Lynch, U Mackin, T Mitchell, C McCready, M McKeever, N Parker and N Trimble

PRESENT REMOTELY:

Aldermen S Skillen and J Tinsley

Councillors C Kemp, B Magee, G McCleave, R McLernon and G Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE:

Lisburn & Castlereagh City Council

Chief Executive
Director of Environmental Services
Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing
Director of Organisation Development and Innovation
Director of Regeneration and Growth
Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Head of Governance & Communications
Member Services Officers (EW & BS)
Technician
IT Officer

At the outset The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, addressed the issue of the outcome of the Jeffrey Donaldson case. He stated that:

“Following the conclusion of the criminal proceedings involving Jeffrey Donaldson, our thoughts are first and foremost with the victims and all those affected by these deeply distressing events. The courage and resilience shown by those who came forward and endured a lengthy legal process should be recognised. Their determination has ensured that justice has been served and that the rule of law has prevailed. No individual is above the law regardless of the position they hold or the prominence they may have had. Everyone is equal before the law and equally subject to it. At this time, we remember the victims and their families, and we hope that yesterday’s verdict brings them some measure of comfort and support as they move forward.”

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, commended the Chief Executive on the swift removal of photographs that included Jeffrey Donaldson. The Mayor then sought approval from Members to write to the relevant authorities asking for the removal of Jeffrey Donaldson's knighthood and his place on the Privy Council. This was proposed by Alderman S P Porter and seconded by Councillor D J Craig.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, welcomed those present to the June meeting of Council.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor reminded Members that the meeting was being livestreamed to enable members of the public to hear and see the proceedings. The Mayor pointed out that, should the meeting go into committee to consider confidential business, any members of the press and the public in attendance would be required to leave the Council Chamber for the duration of those matters.

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

The Right Worshipful the Mayor requested that all mobile phones be put on silent or switched off for the duration of the meeting and pointed out that, in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders, whilst the meeting was being live-streamed, unauthorised recording was not permitted.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, on behalf of the council, wished to pass on condolences to Robert Lamont and his family on the sudden passing of his son, James Lamont.

Prayers

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, welcomed Reverend N Dark to the meeting of Council. Rev Dark addressed the Council and said a prayer, during which he too offered condolences to Robert Lamont on the passing of his son James.

The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, thanked Rev Dark for his attendance and contribution, following which he left the meeting.

1. Business of The Right Worshipful the Mayor

1.1 Mayor's Engagements

The Council noted a number of engagements attended by The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, and the Deputy Mayor, Alderman A McIntyre, since the last meeting of Council.

2. Apologies

It was agreed to accept apologies for non-attendance at the meeting on behalf of Aldermen M Gregg and A Grehan, Councillors D Bassett, J Gallen and A Martin.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Council Minutes

4.1 Council Meeting – 26 May, 2026

4.2 Annual Meeting of Council – 5 June, 2026

It was proposed by Alderman H Legge, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 26 May, 2026 and the minutes of the Annual Meeting of Council held on 5 June, 2026 be confirmed and signed.

5. Matters Arising

5.1 Council Meeting – 26 May, 2026

5.1.1 Delays in Postal Deliveries throughout Lisburn and Castlereagh Area

Alderman A Ewart referred to his Notice of Motion on the subject of delays in postal deliveries throughout the Lisburn and Castlereagh area, and as set out in his Notice of Motion, a letter had been sent to the Royal Mail Head Office in London. He advised that a response had now been received and that Member Services would now progress the All-Party meeting as outlined in his Notice of Motion. It was noted that a delegate from Royal Mail would be travelling from London on this occasion.

6. Deputations

There were no deputations.

7. Business Required by Statute

(i) Signing of Legal Documents

It was proposed by Councillor P Catney, seconded by Councillor A Givan, and agreed that the following legal documents be signed at the meeting:

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Robert James Carlisle & Dorothy Jean Carlisle, 128 Hillhall Road, Lisburn, BT27 5JA – Release of Registered Burden of Land, Folio Number: DN 275286
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Northern Ireland Office, Erskine House, 20-32 Chichester Street, Belfast, BT1 4GF – Lease of Additional Property by Reference to an Existing Lease at Bradford Court, Upper Galwally, Belfast
- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Eurofire Systems Ltd, Unit 15 Antrim Business Park, Enkalon Industrial Estate, 25 Randalstown Road, Antrim, Co. Antrim, BT41 6LJ – T25/26-074 – Tender for PPM & RM 05 – Fire Protection Equipment

7. Business Required by Statute (Cont'd)

- Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and Audience Systems Limited, 19B Washington Road, West Wilts Trading Estate, Westbury, BA13 4JP – T25/26-084 – Tender for Replacement Bleacher Seating System in Lagan Valley Island

8. Adoption of Minutes of Committees**Communities and Wellbeing Committee****2 June, 2026**

Proposed by Councillor T Mitchell

Seconded by Councillor A Givan

Councillor T Mitchell advised that the minutes of the Communities and Wellbeing Committee were still subject to the Call-In procedure until 10.00 am on Wednesday, 24 June 2026.

Environment and Sustainability Committee**3 June, 2026**

Proposed by Alderman O Gawith

Seconded by Councillor S Burns

Regeneration and Growth Committee**4 June, 2026**

Proposed by Councillor C Kemp

Seconded by Councillor J Harpur

Matters Arising7.1.2 Page 322Local Economic Partnership – Capital Project

Councillor J Lavery advised that he had declared an interest in Item 7.1.2 Local Economic Partnership – Capital Project on the evening.

Corporate Services Committee**10 June, 2026**

Proposed by Alderman S P Porter

Seconded by Councillor R McLernon

Governance & Audit Committee**11 June, 2026**

Proposed by Councillor M McKeever

Seconded by Alderman S P Porter

Councillor M McKeever advised that the minutes of the Governance & Audit Committee were still subject to the Call-In procedure until 10.00 am on Thursday, 25 June 2026.

Planning Committee**11 May, 2026**

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of 11 May, 2026 had been circulated for noting only as these minutes had been agreed at the subsequent meeting of the Planning Committee on 13 April, 2026. It was proposed by Alderman J Tinsley, seconded by Councillor G Thompson, and agreed that their contents be noted.

9. Report from Chief Executive

9.1 Requirement to enter into a Section 76 planning agreement for a planning application on lands approximately 80 metres west of 1-15 Ayrshire Road and approximately 120 metres north of 2 and 4 Woodbrook Manor, Lisburn (LA05/2024/0714/F)

It was proposed by Councillor P Catney, seconded by Alderman O Gawith, and agreed that approval be granted to the signing and sealing of the above agreement by the Mayor and Chief Executive.

9.2 Notice of Motion on Transparency – Video Recording of Committee Meetings and Amendments to Standing Orders

The Chief Executive's report outlined the background and key issues in connection with Councillor Hynds' Notice of Motion on Transparency, the recommendation of the Corporate Services Committee in relation to the video recording of Committee meetings, and also in relation to proposed changes to Standing Orders and related protocols.

In order that the amendments to Standing Orders could be considered, it was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Councillor G Hynds, and agreed unanimously to suspend Standing Order 27.2 for the duration of this item of business.

It was proposed by Councillor G Hynds, seconded by Councillor K Dickson, and agreed that Standing Orders and related protocols be amended as set out in the Chief Executive's report and as detailed in the appendix as circulated.

Alderman S P Porter, and Councillors G Hynds, K Dickson, and P Catney welcomed this report and thanked the Chief Executive, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services and officers involved for bringing this report forward.

9.3 Summer Arrangements for Council Business

The Council considered a report by the Chief Executive outlining the background and key issues in relation to summer arrangements for Council business.

It was proposed by Alderman J Baird, seconded by Councillor A Ewing, and agreed to delegated authority being granted up until 18th August 2026, as outlined in the Chief Executive's report, with all decisions reported back to Council in August 2026.

10. Reports from Members on Boards

There were no reports from Members on Boards.

11. Reports on Decisions Subject to the Reconsideration Procedure

There were no reports on decisions subject to the reconsideration procedure.

12. Notices of Motion

12.1 Protecting Free Speech and Democratic Participation Councillor G Hynds

Aldermen A Ewart, S Skillen and J Tinsley and Councillor T Mitchell left and returned to the meeting during this item of business.

A copy of the undernoted Notice of Motion in the name of Councillor G Hynds, had been circulated to Members with the notice convening the meeting:

“This Council recognises that freedom of expression is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of a free and democratic society. The ability of individuals to express lawful opinions, engage in robust debate and hold those in positions of authority to account is essential to democratic participation.

Council notes public concern regarding the recording, handling or retention of information relating to lawful speech where no criminal offence has occurred, and concerns that complaints, investigatory or regulatory processes relating to lawful expression may, in some circumstances, have a chilling effect on democratic participation and public debate. While recognising the importance of appropriate standards, accountability and safeguarding mechanisms, Council believes such processes should be exercised fairly, proportionately and with proper regard for freedom of expression.

Accordingly, this Council:

1. Affirms its commitment to freedom of expression, open democratic debate and the right of individuals to express lawful opinions without fear of disproportionate or unnecessary interference.
2. Calls upon public authorities to ensure that any recording, handling or retention of information relating to lawful speech is necessary, proportionate and respectful of fundamental rights and freedoms.
3. Believes that standards, complaints and regulatory processes should be conducted fairly and proportionately, without creating an unnecessary chilling effect on lawful political speech, democratic participation, public scrutiny or public debate.
4. Supports the principle that policing and public authority resources should be focused primarily on the prevention, investigation and detection of criminal activity and genuine threats to public safety.
5. Requests that the Chief Executive write to the Minister of Justice, the Chief Constable of the PSNI, the Northern Ireland Policing Board and the Minister for Communities outlining this Council's support for freedom of expression, democratic participation and proportionate public authority processes, and seeking assurance that the protection of lawful free speech remains a central consideration in the development and implementation of relevant policies and procedures.

12.1 Protecting Free Speech and Democratic Participation (Cont'd)

This Council reaffirms its belief that a healthy democracy is one in which lawful speech is protected, disagreement is tolerated, robust debate is encouraged, and citizens are free to participate in public life without fear of disproportionate scrutiny, investigation or sanction.”

The Notice of Motion was proposed by Councillor G Hynds and seconded by Alderman S P Porter.

Councillor G Hynds informed the Council that he proposed the motion on the fundamental issue of freedom of expression and democratic participation and made a number of comments in support of his motion, including:

- Free speech is not a privilege granted by a government institution or public bodies. It is the fundamental right and one of the cornerstones of a free and democratic society. The true test of our commitment to free speech is not whether we defend views we agree with, it is where we are prepared to defend the right of people to express lawful views that we may disagree with, find controversial or even offensive.
- Across society there is a growing concern that the balance between protecting people from harm and protecting freedom of expression is becoming increasingly blurred. Many people are concerned about the recording, monitoring, retention of information relating to lawful speech where no criminal offence has occurred. Many are concerned that complaints, investigations and regulatory processes can have a chilling effect on participation in public life. Those concerns deserve to be heard, not dismissed.
- This motion is not about defending criminality, it is not about excusing hate crime, it is not about removing legitimate protections and it is not about giving anyone a licence to do absolutely anything that they want.
- Disagreement is not violence, debate is not violence, offence is not violence, and in a free society lawful speech should never be treated as though it were a crime.
- In a democratic society lawful speech should not be treated as though it was unlawful speech. The answer to disagreement is debate, the answer is persuasion, the answer is allowing people to hear different arguments and make up their own minds. Democracy does not require agreement, it requires freedom to disagree.
- As elected representatives every Member in this chamber has the responsibility to speak on behalf of the people who sent us here. People should be free to hear different views and decide for themselves. We do not all have to agree, we do not all have to think alike, we should be able to disagree, sometimes strongly and still respect one another's right to be heard.

12.1 Protecting Free Speech and Democratic Participation (Cont'd)

- Many of the people we should be encouraging into public life are not career politicians, they are ordinary men and women with jobs, families and life experience gained outside politics. Like all human beings they say things they regret, change opinions over time and learn from experience, yet there is a growing perception that people can be judged, condemned or defined years later by a single comment often stripped out of context and used as a weapon against them. We risk discouraging exactly the sort of people we should be encouraging to step forward and serve their communities.
- The protection of life, the prevention of violence and the investigation of general criminal activity must never take second place to disputes over lawful speech. Most people would expect the protection of life and the investigation of general criminal activity to take precedent over the monitoring or recording of lawful speech where no crime has been committed.

Councillor G Hynds concluded by stating that this motion does not ask Members to support any particular ideology, party or viewpoint, it simply asks that freedom of expression, democratic participation and proportionality remains central considerations for those entrusted with public authority.

Councillor G Hynds commended this motion to the Council and asked Members to support it.

Alderman S P Porter, having seconded the Notice of Motion, thanked Councillor G Hynds for bringing forward this very worthwhile and sensible Notice of Motion. Alderman Porter stated that as a Council there should be free speech, political opinion, putting forward discussions, hopefully in a robust but also in a way that is respectful. It is fundamental that free speech is a cornerstone of a democratic society. It is time for free speech and also to let the public know that we will listen, even when it comes to critical speech. In closing, Alderman Porter quoted Jordan Peterson, "Freedom of speech is not just another right, it is the mechanism to which all rights are protected."

Councillor K Dickson spoke in favour of the notice of motion and stated that Alliance would always champion freedom of speech and freedom of expression. The ability to speak freely to disagree openly and to hold authority to account are not threats to any healthy democracy, it is the very thing that makes one possible.

Councillor N Trimble also spoke in favour of the notice of motion and stated that where citizens are free to participate in public life without fear is the core issue of any free speech argument or debate.

In closing, Councillor G Hynds thanked Members for their contributions in support for his notice of motion.

12.1 Protecting Free Speech and Democratic Participation (Cont'd)

The Notice of Motion as proposed by Councillor G Hynds and seconded by Alderman S P Porter, was put to the meeting and agreed unanimously.

13. Confidential Business

There was no confidential business for consideration.

14. Any Other Business

14.1 Grass Cutting
Alderman S P Porter

Alderman J Tinsley and Councillor B Magee left the meeting during this item of business (6.58 pm).

Councillor J Harpur left and returned to the meeting during this item of business (6.58 pm and 7.00 pm respectively).

Alderman S P Porter conveyed his dismay and frustration, year after year, at the lack of grass cutting by DfI in the Lisburn and Castlereagh area. He commented that when grass had been cut recently there had been a large quantity of rubbish found. Alderman Porter welcomed the efforts of Council staff for having dealt with this matter swiftly.

A number of Members reiterated Alderman Porter's comments and were also of the opinion that while the long grass was unsightly for residents, it was also a health and safety, and a road safety issue.

It was proposed by Alderman S P Porter, seconded by Councillor T Mitchell, and agreed to seek an urgent cross-party meeting with senior management from DfI to discuss the ongoing grass cutting issue.

14.2 Electric Powered Scramblers
Councillor D J Craig and Councillor N Parker

Councillor D J Craig raised the issue of the presence of electric powered scramblers in Wallace Park and commented that it was very alarming to receive emails and photographs of electric powered scramblers racing through the park recently.

Councillor N Parker reiterated Councillor Craig's comments. She commented that residents had communicated to her about such activity in the council's parks and wished to thank the Head of Parks & Amenities (Acting) and the PCSP for reacting quickly and corresponding with the PSNI, who have assured that upon reporting they would act swiftly.

Councillor P Catney commented that e-bikes are legal and should not be confused with e-scramblers. He also commented that the illegal use of e-bikes was a policing matter.

14.3 Mayoral Reception
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds thanked The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, for the recent reception he had hosted for Derriaghy Football Club which was very much enjoyed by all in attendance.

14.4 Seymour Street Methodist Church
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds commented that the congregation of Seymour Street Methodist Church had been very happy to welcome The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson at their recent fundraising event.

14.5 Lisburn Half Marathon, 10K and Fun Run 2026
Councillor T Mitchell

Councillor T Mitchell passed on his thanks to the Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing, to the Head of Sports Services and all the Officers and staff for their efforts in this year's Lisburn Half Marathon, 10K and Fun Run which he stated had been a huge success.

Councillor Mitchell stated that this had been the first time he had ran on the new route which he described as an excellent route and a flatter course.

14.6 Lambeg Orange and Blue Flute Band 40th Anniversary
Alderman S P Porter

Alderman S P Porter welcomed the huge turnout for Lambeg Orange and Blue Flute Band's 40th Anniversary parade and wished the band every success. He requested that The Right Worshipful the Mayor writes to the Band, on behalf of the council, congratulating them on their 40th anniversary and wishing them every success in the future; and thanking the Band for everything they do and have done.

At a later point in the meeting Councillor G Hynds wished to be associated with Alderman Porter's comments. He too paid tribute to the professionalism of Lambeg Orange and Blue Flute Band.

14.7 Lisburn Credit Union
Councillor P Catney

Councillor P Catney, having referred to a meeting with Lisburn Credit Union recently, requested that The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, extend an invitation for a mayoral reception to the Board of Lisburn Credit Union to recognise the good work they do within the community.

Conclusion of Meeting

At the conclusion of the meeting The Right Worshipful the Mayor, Councillor B Higginson, thanked those present for their attendance and wished everyone a very good summer break.

There being no further business for consideration, the meeting was terminated at 7.18 pm.

Mayor