

**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, 7 May, 2026 at 6.00 pm**

<b>PRESENT IN THE CHAMBER:</b>	Councillor C Kemp (Chairperson)
	Councillor J Harpur (Vice Chairperson)
	Aldermen J Baird, A G Ewart MBE, M Gregg and A McIntyre
	Councillors K Dickson, A Gowan, U Mackin, A Martin, T Mitchell and C McCready
<b>PRESENT REMOTELY:</b>	Councillor J Lavery BEM
<b>OTHER MEMBER IN THE CHAMBER:</b>	Councillor G Hynds
<b>IN ATTENDANCE</b>	Director of Regeneration & Growth Director of Finance & Corporate Services Head of Assets Head of Economic Development Head of Communities Member Services Manager (Acting) Member Services Officer IT Officer

**Commencement of Meeting**

The Chairperson, Councillor C Kemp, extended a welcome to everyone in attendance at the May meeting of the Regeneration & Growth Committee.

The Chairperson 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 D Lynch.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. Report of Head of Economic Development

#### 3.1 Fleadh 2026 – Opportunities for Lisburn and Castlereagh

The Vice Chairperson, Councillor J Harpur, entered the meeting during this item of business (6.05 pm).

The Committee considered a report outlining the background and key issues in connection with opportunities for Lisburn and Castlereagh during the week-long Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann 2026 which was taking place in Belfast from Sunday 2 August to Sunday 9 August 2026. It was noted that this was the first time the Fleadh event had been hosted in Belfast and this event was recognised as the world's largest celebration of Irish music and culture and is expected to attract circa 800,000 visitors to the greater Belfast region.

In addition to the Officer's report, the Committee had been provided with a paper outlining a programme of events across Lisburn and Castlereagh that had been developed by the Economic Development, Communities, and Parks & Amenities teams to complement the Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann. The Head of Economic Development elaborated on how the local programme would showcase the district including community participation involving some of the Park Life Programme events.

An equality screening document and a rural needs assessment had also been appended to the Officer's report.

At the outset Alderman A McIntyre put on record his thanks to the Head of Economic Development and the teams from the various Units for their efforts in regard to the programme of local events.

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

- issues around consistency in process and precedents for any future events
- management of the estimated footfall at the fringe events
- any impact of the outside bar and mobile eateries on local traders
- collaboration with Belfast City Council as the organisers of the Fleadh 2026 in regard to their promotion of the Lisburn and Castlereagh's fringe events
- timings for the fringe events against the main events in Belfast

The Head of Economic Development discussed the commercial opportunity to be gained as a result of the fringe events.

The Director emphasised that the Council would not be funding a third party organisation in regard to the four main fringe events.

### 3.1 Fleadh 2026 – Opportunities for Lisburn and Castlereagh (Cont'd)

It was proposed by Alderman A McIntyre, seconded by Councillor K Dickson, and agreed to recommend that the creation of the Lisburn and Castlereagh Fleadh 2026 Fringe Programme as outlined in the report circulated, be agreed.

The Head of Communities left the meeting at 6.26 pm.

### 3.2 USA 250 – Strategic Engagement Opportunities

The Committee considered a report by the Head of Economic Development which outlined the background and key issues in connection with strategic engagement opportunities to take place during 2026 being the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of American Independence .

The Head of Economic Development reminded Members that at the October meeting of the Committee, Members had noted that Council was exploring ways to mark USA 250 through activity aligned with Destination Royal Hillsborough, wider Council tourism assets and local businesses.

In addition to the Officer's report, the Committee had also been furnished with an equality screening document and a rural needs assessment.

The Head of Economic Development noted comments from the Committee in connection with:

- the possibility of funding from the Department for Communities for the strategic engagement opportunities in connection with USA 250
- the business breakfast event, hosted by the Council, that took place in January 2026
- timelines for various proposed events
- the significance of Lisburn's historical connections with the American Linen industry in Paterson, New Jersey.

Alderman A G Ewart proposed that a committee of Elected Members, including those interested Members from other Councils and Officers be convened in order to endeavour to expedite and progress the engagement opportunities with USA contacts. Councillor U Mackin seconded Alderman Ewart's proposal.

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Councillor U Mackin, and agreed to recommend that the Officer's recommendations be agreed, namely:

- Officers continue engagement with Tourism NI, Historic Royal Palaces, the US Consulate, NI Chamber and neighbouring Councils to shape potential collaborative opportunities

### 3.2 USA 250 – Strategic Engagement Opportunities (Cont'd)

- Officers continue efforts to establish appropriate contacts in North Carolina and other relevant US locations with further reports being provided to the Committee in due course
- Officers continue to explore the potential for issuing a formal civic invitation to Hillsborough, North Carolina, subject to establishing appropriate contacts and engagement
- the progress to date in relation to USA 250 and the potential for a trade-focused visit to the US by Lisburn and Castlereagh businesses as part of a wider NI initiative be noted
- the opportunity to engage with a planned North Carolina business delegation visit to Northern Ireland in August 2026 be noted, and
- Officers explore potential Council involvement in associated events, including engagement at Hillsborough Castle

In addition to the Officer's recommendations, it was further agreed to recommend on a proposal by Alderman A G Ewart and seconded by Councillor U Mackin, that a committee of Elected Members and Council Officers, including those interested Members from other Councils, be established in order to progress and expedite the engagement opportunities as outlined.

The Head of Assets left the meeting during consideration of this item of business at 6.40 pm and returned at 6.44 pm.

## 4. Any Other Business

### 4.1 Report on Free Car Parking during December 2025 and January 2026 Director of Regeneration & Growth

The Director of Regeneration & Growth advised the Committee that Officers across the Directorates had been working on the relevant data arising out of the free car parking in Council-owned car parks in Lisburn City Centre during Saturdays in December 2025 and January 2026 and that a report in this regard would be brought to the Environment & Sustainability Committee in June 2026 for consideration and discussion.

### 4.2 Open Reach Director of Regeneration & Growth

The Director of Regeneration & Growth reported that Openreach had contacted the Council in regard to providing a briefing to Members on the extent of its infrastructure and future plans. The Director advised that it intended that a workshop for Members be

4.2 Open Reach (Cont'd)  
Director of Regeneration & Growth

arranged and that an invitation would be furnished to Members of the Committee in due course.

4.3 Expansion of Belfast Bikes Scheme  
Councillor J Harpur

Councillor J Harpur referred to conversations he had had with his colleagues on Belfast City Council regarding the expansion of the Belfast Bike Scheme and plans for the scheme to be extended up to Upper Ormeau and as well as further east of the City which, he stated, was close proximity to Castlereagh South and Castlereagh East. Councillor Harpur requested that Officers bring a report on costings for the Belfast Bike Scheme to be introduced in these DEAs as Active Travel was a significant part of Belfast as alternative ways to travel.

The Director of Regeneration & Growth advised that he would bring forward a report in this regard in due course and assured the Member that discussions were on-going with Belfast City Council. The Director also advised that this project remains on the Council's Works Programme.

4.4 New Businesses in Lisburn  
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds having advised that he had called in with a new business that had opened in Lisburn about four weeks ago to ask about any support the new business had received. Councillor Hynds enquired about what actions or support the Economic Development team provided to new businesses that opened up in the town.

The Head of Economic Development advised that contact with new businesses would be the remit of Lisburn City Centre Management team. He also discussed the wider packages of support for new businesses through the Go Succeed programme which provides support with business-planning, training and mentoring and also potentially grant funding. The Head of Economic Development having acknowledged that it may be worthwhile having collective dialogue, also indicated that the Economic Development team would not always be aware of new businesses setting up in Lisburn and often rely on word of mouth.

4.5 Controlled Explosion in Lambeg  
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds put on record his thanks to the Chief Executive, Directors and Council staff and also the PSNI for their efforts the previous evening in assisting residents relocate due to the controlled explosion on a suspected explosive device in the Hillview area.

## 5. Confidential Business

The Chairperson, Councillor C Kemp, advised that the 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 Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Alderman J Baird, 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 and the member of the press left the Council Chamber (6.55 pm).

### 5.1 Confidential Report from the Head of Economic Development

#### 5.1.1 Local Economic Partnership (LEP) Update and Programme Governance (Redacted report to be made available on programme completion)

The Committee considered a report outlining the background and key issues in connection with an update on the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and programme governance.

The following documents had been appended to the report:

- a note of the meeting which took place on Monday 13<sup>th</sup> April 2026
- three associated updated Business Cases
- minutes of the most recent LEP meetings

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

- retrospective approval for the projects and associated Business Cases, as circulated, be approved,
- the appended minutes of the LEP meetings and the update on the LEP funding be noted,
- the inclusion of a cross-party civic delegation as part of the wider RoI trade programme to support strategic engagement with local government and business stakeholders be approved

5.2 Confidential Report from the Director of Regeneration & Growth

5.2.1 Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2026/27

(Redacted report to be published when funding has received Ministerial approval, it is anticipated this will be May 2026)

The Director of Regeneration & Growth's report outlined the background and key issues in connection with the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme 2026/2027.

The Committee had been furnished with a copy of correspondence from DAERA which provided an update on the above grant scheme 2026/27.

It was agreed that:

- the update on the Rural Business Development Grant Scheme, together with the correspondence from DAERA be noted, and
- Members utilise local constituency networks to promote this funding opportunity to appropriate third parties in advance of the formal call.

It was noted that the Economic Development Manager would pass on any interested business contacts to the Programmes team with the view that these contacts would be invited to attend the various workshops in relation to this funding opportunity.

5.3 Confidential Report from the Head of Assets

5.3.1 Unit 2B and Unit 9, Omnipark, Dundonald BT16 1YG

(Redacted report to be published on ratification by Council)

The Head of Assets' report outlined the background and key issues in connection with Unit 2B and Unit 9 at the Omnipark Dundonald.

It was proposed by Councillor T Mitchell, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that the sub-leases, as outlined, be approved.

6. Any Other Business (Confidential)

6.1 Road Resurfacing in Royal Hillsborough  
Director of Regeneration & Growth

It was proposed by Alderman A G Ewart, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to recommend that the course of action, as outlined by the Director, be approved.

6.1 Road Resurfacing in Royal Hillsborough (Cont'd)  
Director of Regeneration & Growth

Councillor G Hynds put on record his concerns regarding transparency in the absence of a written report in regard to the above matter. The Director of Regeneration & Growth explained that this had been a recent approach by Dfl who required an urgent decision that the Council were willing to make a contribution to their scheme. The Director also explained the context given the extent of the quote that the Council had received for a similar scheme following the Member's request.

A number of Members expressed support for this course of action as outlined by the Director.

Resumption of Normal Business

It was proposed by Councillor A Martin, seconded by Alderman J Baird, and agreed to come out of Committee and normal business was resumed.

Conclusion of Meeting

The Chairperson thanked everyone for their attendance and wished everyone a lovely Easter. There being no further business for consideration the meeting was concluded at 7.18 pm.

---

Chairperson