

LISBURN & CASTLEREAGH CITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee held remotely and in the Council Chamber, Island Civic Centre, The Island, Lisburn on Tuesday 3rd February 2026 at 6.00 pm.

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (COMMITTEE):

Councillor T Mitchell (Chair)

Councillor A Givan (Vice-Chair)

The Right Worshipful The Mayor
Alderman A Grehan

Deputy Mayor
Alderman H Legge

Alderman A McIntyre

Councillors T Beckett, J Craig, J Gallen, B Higginson,
C Kemp, G McCleave, G Thompson and The Hon N Trimble

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (COMMITTEE)

Alderman S Skillen

Councillor K Dickson

PRESENT IN COUNCIL CHAMBER (NON-COMMITTEE)

Councillor G Hynds

PRESENT IN A REMOTE LOCATION (NON-COMMITTEE)

Alderman J Tinsley

IN ATTENDANCE:

Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing
Head of Communities
Head of Sports Services
Head of Parks & Amenities (Acting)
Member Services Officers (RN & EW)

Commencement of Meeting

The Chair, Councillor T Mitchell, welcomed everyone to the meeting and extended a particular welcome to Mrs Kelly Irwin who had recently been appointed as Acting Head of Parks & Amenities, and wished Kelly well in her new post.

The Chair also welcomed visitors seated in the public gallery, one of who was a student visitor from the Council area.

The Chair reminded Members that the meeting would be audio recorded unless the item on the agenda was to be considered under confidential business. Unauthorised recording was not permitted, as per 8.5 of the Council's Standing Orders. Mobile phones were to be turned off or on silent mode for the duration of the meeting.

The Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing outlined the evacuation procedures in the case of an emergency. The Chair asked that any Member entering or leaving the meeting alert the Member Services Officer accordingly so that this might be accurately reflected in the minutes.

Alderman S Skillen joined the meeting on a remote basis during the housekeeping announcements. (6.02 pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies for non-attendance were accepted and recorded on behalf of Councillors R Carlin and S Lowry.

2. Declarations of Interest

The following Declarations of Interest were made:-

Item 4.1 of Report of Head of Communities – “Inclusive Communities Support Fund – Outcome of Assessments 2026/2027”

- Alderman S Skillen as (i) her place of employment had applied for funding and (ii) she had assisted a number of groups in their applications for funding. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.

Item 4.2 of Report of Head of Communities – “Community Bursary Scheme 2025/2026 - Updated Outcomes to Date”

- Councillor T Mitchell as a Shareholder in Ballymacash Sports Academy. Pecuniary interest. As item is for noting only, Councillor Mitchell indicated – subject to Committee approval - he would not vacate the Chair. There were no objections to this course of action.
- Alderman S Skillen as (i) her place of employment had applied for funding and (ii) she had assisted a number of groups in their applications for funding. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.

Item 4.3 of Report of Head of Communities – “Community Cohesion Fund – Outcome of Assessments 2025/2026”

- Alderman S Skillen as (i) her place of employment had applied for funding and (ii) she had assisted a number of groups in their applications for funding. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.

Item 4.4 of Report of Head of Communities – “Community Festivals Funding 2026/2027”

- Councillor C Kemp as (i) a committee member of St Joseph’s GAC, Glenavy and (ii) as Director of Glenclare Community Group. Non-pecuniary interest. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.
- Councillor T Mitchell as a Shareholder in Ballymacash Sports Academy. Pecuniary interest. Councillor Mitchell as Chair of Committee indicated that – subject to Committee agreement - he would not vacate the Chair, nor would he take any part in discussion. There were no objections to this course of action.
- Councillor G McCleave as a family member plays for and is a member of St Joseph’s GAC, Glenavy. Non-pecuniary interest. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.
- Alderman A McIntyre as he had delivered a tour for Lisburn Féile. Pecuniary interest. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.
- Alderman S Skillen as (i) her place of employment had applied for funding and (ii) she had assisted a number of groups in their applications for funding. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.

Item 4.5 of Report of Head of Communities – “Community Support Grant – Outcome of Assessments 2026/2027”

- Councillor C Kemp as Director of Glenclare Community Group. Non-pecuniary interest. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.
- Councillor T Mitchell as a Shareholder in Ballymacash Sports Academy. Pecuniary interest. Councillor Mitchell as Chair of the Committee indicated that – subject to Committee agreement - he would not vacate the Chair, nor would he take any part in discussion. There were no objections to this course of action.
- Alderman A McIntyre as he had delivered a tour for Lisburn Féile. Pecuniary interest. Would be leaving the meeting for this item.

3. Report of Director of Leisure & Community Wellbeing

3.1 Requests to use Council's Parks & Open Spaces

In addition to the narrative report, copies of applications from the undernoted organisations in regard to the use of Council parks and open spaces had been provided, together with the Equality screening document:-

Organisation	Facility Requested	Purpose of Use	Date & Time
Railway Street Presbyterian Church	Wallace Park Bandstand	Easter Dawn Service	Sunday 5 th April 2026 (6.30 am – 7.30 am)
Lisburn Baptist Church	Wallace Park Bandstand	Easter Dawn Service	Sunday 5 th April 2026 (8.30 am – 9.00 am)
Moira Community Multi-Denominational Church	Moira Demesne Wildlife Garden	Easter Dawn Service	Sunday 5 th April 2026 (6.55 am – 7.35 am)
Cancer Focus NI	Wallace Park Lisburn with the use of the Bandstand as a stage with a small PA system for pre-race announcement	Fun Run for Charity	Sunday 22 nd March 2026 (12 noon – 2.00 pm)

It was proposed by Councillor J Craig, seconded by Councillor B Higginson and agreed to recommend that - subject to compliance with all usual booking requirements such as the provision of adequate insurance cover and the necessary risk assessments:-

- the requests referred to above for the use of Council parks and open spaces be acceded to;
- the Bye-Laws be set aside so as to enable the above-mentioned events to progress.

3.2 Department for Communities Consultation on the NI Executive Disability Strategy 2025-2035 (Closing date: 20th March 2026)

The above consultation is available at [Consultation on the NI Executive Disability Strategy 2025-2035 | Department for Communities](#).

Relevant documents and details of public consultation engagement events had already been furnished to Members.

3.2 Department for Communities
Consultation on the NI Executive Disability Strategy 2025-2035
(Closing date: 20th March 2026) (Continued)

It was proposed by Councillor J Gallen, seconded by Councillor G McCleave and agreed to recommend that:-

- at its meeting to be held on the 24th February 2026, the Council be requested to delegate authority to the March 2026 meeting of the Communities & Wellbeing Committee to approve the response to the Northern Ireland Executive's Disability Strategy 2025-2035 for onward submission to the Department for Communities;
- any comments which Members may wish to have considered for inclusion in the draft response be forwarded to Officers by the 18th February 2026.

It was further agreed that - prior to their inclusion in the final draft response – any comments made by Members be provided to the Committee.

Councillor K Dickson joined the meeting on a remote basis during the Director's presentation of this item. (6.07 pm)

3.3 Lagan Valley Regional Park - Update

The Director reported extensively on the history of Lagan Valley Regional Park since its designation in 1967 in terms of its objectives, key role within the Council's strategies, governance and funding.

The Director advised of a decision by the Board of Lagan Valley Regional Park (LVRP) to take steps to wind-up the limited company and charitable status of the LVRP and in this regard, the following items of correspondence had been provided:-

- letter dated the 5th January 2026 from the Chair of LVRP to the Council's Chief Executive in regard to Wind-Up Procedures for LVRP;
- letter dated the 23rd January 2026 from the Minister of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs to the Chair of LVRP responding in regard to the decision of the Board of LVRP to take steps to wind up the limited company and charitable status of the LVRP;
- letter dated the 29th January 2026 from the Council's Director of Leisure and Community Wellbeing to the Minister of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs setting out the key role of LVRP in the Council's activities and taking up the Minister's offer to engage with the Council.

3.3 Lagan Valley Regional Park – Update (Continued)

It was agreed to recommend that the Director's report and the three items of correspondence set out above be noted.

It was further agreed on a Proposal made by Alderman A McIntyre and seconded by Councillor J Craig that the Council engage with the Department for Infrastructure (DfI) so that they might be urged to provide funding for the maintenance of Lagan Valley Regional Park rather than such maintenance being dependent on the work of volunteers, and also recognising that the LVRP is a statutory consultee for the planning process which comes under the remit of the DfI.

Councillor A Givan placed on record his appreciation of the contribution made by the Council's representatives on the Lagan Valley Regional Park over the years, the current representatives being Councillors A Martin and U Mackin. Councillor J Craig stated that Councillor Givan himself had in the past been a member of Lagan Valley Regional Park and that his contribution also should be placed on record.

During discussion of this item:-

- Alderman J Tinsley joined the meeting on a remote basis. (6.10 pm)
- Councillor B Higginson left and returned to the Chamber. (6.10 pm and 6.15 pm respectively)

4. Report of Head of Communities

4.1 Inclusive Communities Support Fund
Outcome of Assessments 2026/2027

Alderman S Skillen left the meeting on a remote basis immediately before this item commenced. (6.18 pm)

The Head of Communities reported extensively on the Inclusive Communities Support Fund in terms of its objectives, available funding, the number of applications received during the application process and the outcomes thereof.

In addition to the narrative report, Members had been provided with copy of a table of outcomes of assessment under the Inclusive Communities Support Fund for 2026/2027.

Given that there would be an underspend of available funding of £38,350.00 following the award of funding to the successful groups, the Director had written to The Executive Office (TEO) setting out Officers' intentions as to how this underspend would be utilised, ie in order to uplift and support other funding mechanisms that are overspent.

4.1 Inclusive Communities Support Fund
Outcome of Assessments 2026/2027 (Continued)

The Head of Communities reported that TEO had verbally confirmed acceptance of this course of action, however written confirmation was awaited.

It was proposed by Councillor G Thompson, seconded by Councillor A Givan and agreed to recommend that:-

- the allocated amount of funding for each successful applicant be approved;
- all applicants (particularly unsuccessful and low scoring applicants) receive feedback and support from Officers as required.

4.2 Community Bursary Scheme 2025/2026
Updated Outcomes to Date

In addition to the narrative report, the Committee had been provided with a table of outcomes of applications to the Community Bursary Scheme for the period April 2025 – December 2025. Authority to approve applications had been delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee in consultation with the Head of Communities.

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Alderman A McIntyre and agreed to recommend that the report and outcome of applications be noted.

4.3 Community Cohesion Fund – Outcome of Assessments 2025/2026

The Head of Communities reported extensively on the Community Cohesion Fund in terms of its objectives, available funding, the number of applications received during the application process and the outcomes thereof.

In addition to the narrative report, Members had been provided with copy of a table of outcomes of assessment under the Community Cohesion Fund for 2025/2026. Authority to approve applications had been delegated to the Chair and Vice-Chair of the Committee in consultation with the Head of Communities.

The resultant underspend of £520.00 would be absorbed into the Council's Good Relations Programme 2025/2026.

The Head of Communities responded to Members' questions and confirmed that one-to-one feedback was given to unsuccessful applicants.

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Alderman A McIntyre and agreed to recommend that the report and outcome of applications be noted.

4.4 Community Festivals Funding 2026/2027

Alderman A McIntyre and Councillors C Kemp and G McCleave left the Chamber immediately prior to discussion of this item. (6.22 pm)

The Head of Communities reported extensively on the Community Festivals Fund in terms of its objectives, the number of applications received during the application process, the outcome thereof and information sessions to engage with the public. It was noted that a Letter of Offer regarding funding had not as yet been received from the Department for the Communities so the projected amount from the DfC was being taken at risk.

In addition to the narrative report, Members had been provided with copy of a table of outcomes of assessment under the Community Festivals Fund for 2026/2027.

As a number of events in this work-stream aligned with the Dispersal Fund, which was underspent, the Director had written to The Executive Office advising that it would be the intention of officers to use some of the underspend in the Dispersal Fund to strengthen the Community Festivals Fund. The Head of Communities reported that TEO had verbally confirmed acceptance of this course of action, however written confirmation was awaited.

The Head of Communities responded to Members' questions.

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Councillor J Craig and agreed to recommend that:-

- the allocated amount of funding for each successful applicant based on weighted score be approved;
- in the event of the external funding from the Department for Communities and the Executive Office not materialising, the resultant shortfall of £62,873.03 would be taken from in-year underspend or uncommitted reserves;
- all applicants (particularly unsuccessful and low scoring applicants) receive feedback and support from Officers as required. This would include training on the building of capacity to complete applications.

The Right Worshipful The Mayor, Alderman A Grehan, asked that engagement take place with Orchardville Football Club (an inclusive football club for young adults with a disability) in an effort to secure them funding from any available source.

4.5 Community Support Grant – Outcome of Assessments 2026/2027

Councillor G McCleave returned to the Chamber immediately before this item commenced. (6.29 pm)

The Head of Communities reported extensively on the Community Support Grant in terms of its objectives, the number of applications received during the application process, the outcome thereof and information sessions to engage with the public. It was noted that a Letter of Offer regarding funding had not as yet been received from the Department for the Communities so the projected amount from the DfC was being taken at risk.

As a number of events in this work-stream aligned with the Dispersal Fund, which was underspent, the Director had written to The Executive Office advising that it would be the intention of officers to use some of the underspend in the Dispersal Fund to strengthen the Community Support Grant Fund. The Head of Communities reported that TEO had verbally confirmed acceptance of this course of action, however written confirmation was awaited.

In addition to the narrative report, Members had been provided with copy of a table of outcomes of assessment under the Community Support Grant for 2026/2027.

The Head of Communities responded to Members' questions.

It was proposed by Councillor B Higginson, seconded by Councillor G Thompson and agreed to recommend that:-

- the allocated amount of funding for each successful applicant based on weighted score be approved;
- in the event of the external funding from the Department for Communities and the Executive Office not materialising, the resultant shortfall of £74,435.84 would be taken from in-year underspend or uncommitted reserves;
- all applicants (particularly unsuccessful and low scoring applicants) receive feedback and support from Officers as required.

Councillor A Givan placed on record his thanks to the Head of Communities and her team for the substantial amount of work associated with the evaluation of grant applications.

The Head of Communities explained the ways by which funding methods are shared with community groups, organisations etc.

4.6 Draft Good Relations Action Plan 2026/2027

Immediately before commencement of this item, the following Members returned to the meeting at 6.35 pm:-

- Alderman A McIntyre and Councillor C Kemp to the Chamber;
- Alderman S Skillen on a remote basis.

In addition to the narrative report, the following documents had been provided:-

- Commissioning Letter dated the 5th December 2025 from The Executive Office inviting the Council to submit an application for funding under The Executive Office's District Council Good Relations Programme for 2026/2027;
- the Council's Draft Good Relations Action Plan for 2026/2027;
- Equality Screening document;
- Rural Needs Impact Assessment.

The Head of Communities advised that in the event of significant amendments being required to the Action Plan following its review and the budgetary position of the Executive Office, it would be brought back to the Committee.

The Head of Communities responded to Members' questions and gave an assurance that the rural areas would be actively engaged with.

An extension to the closing date for the receipt of the draft action plan had been secured to allow Council approval of the draft.

It was proposed by Councillor C Kemp, seconded by Alderman S Skillen and agreed to recommend that the 2026/2027 Good Relations Action Plan and associated budget as presented be approved.

5. Any Other Business – Non-Confidential

5.1 Lisburn & Castlereagh Sports Expo
Lagan Valley LeisurePlex - 7th February 2026 (10.00 am – 3.00 pm)
Councillor T Mitchell (Chair of Committee)

The Chair, Councillor T Mitchell, referred to the flyer which had been distributed to those Members present in the Chamber in regard to the Lisburn and Castlereagh Sports Expo being held at the Lagan Valley LeisurePlex on Saturday 7th February 2026, and encouraged them to attend.

5.2 Carryduff Running Club
5k and 10k Runs on Sunday 1st March 2026
Councillor J Gallen

Councillor J Gallen referred to the inaugural “Run The Duff” 5k and 10k Runs which Carryduff Running Club was holding on Sunday 1st March 2026 and commended the Club for this initiative.

5.3 Policy on Cancellation of Football Fixtures
Councillor B Higginson

Councillor B Higginson enquired if the Council policy on cancellation of football fixtures had been changed as he was aware that recent fixtures at the Cairnshill pitches had been cancelled by the Council at very short notice. It had previously been the case that the referee would have taken the decision to cancel a fixture.

The Director confirmed that the policy had not changed, however the Adverse Weather Policy would have been considered for the use of the pitch. The Director advised that she would ask her team to pick this matter up with Newtownbreda Football Club.

5.4 E-Scooters in Wallace Park and Bow Street, Lisburn
Councillors N Trimble and G Hynds

Councillor N Trimble referred to the dangers posed to pedestrians by E-Scooters which were prevalent both in Wallace Park and in Bow Street, Lisburn. A user of Wallace Park had understood from the Council that a Risk Assessment was to have been carried out in Wallace Park but – to -date – the user had not been updated on this matter.

The Director would ask her team to pick this matter up with Councillor Trimble off-line.

Councillor G Hynds concurred with the comments of Councillor Trimble and referred to the prevalence of E-Scooters in Bow Street also. Councillor Hynds asked if the Lisburn & Castlereagh PCSP could look at this matter.

Alderman J Tinsley left the meeting on a remote basis during discussion of this matter. (6.45 pm)

5.5 Thornleigh Drive, Lisburn – Parking
Councillors G Hynds and T Mitchell (Chair)

Councillor G Hynds referred to cars associated with local schools which were parked at Thornleigh Drive, Lisburn. The parked cars were creating problems in regard to traffic flow in the area. Councillor Hynds was aware that the PSNI and the Lisburn & Castlereagh PCSP were aware of this, but he wished to highlight it again.

5.5 Thornleigh Drive, Lisburn – Parking (Continued)
Councillor G Hynds and T Mitchell (Chair)

The Chair, Councillor T Mitchell concurred with the comments of Councillor Hynds as he too had received complaints about this matter.

5.6 Works to Playparks
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds expressed his thanks to the Director and her team for the works carried out to parks at Huguenot Drive, Riverbank, Hill Street and Hilden, Lisburn.

5.7 Glenmore Activity Centre – Flood Defence Measures
Councillor G Hynds

Councillor G Hynds referred to the flood defence measures which had been installed at Glenmore Activity Centre and stated that they appeared to be very effective.

6. Any Other Business – Confidential

There were no confidential items included in the agenda for consideration. However the Chair, Councillor T Mitchell, invited Members to indicate if they had any items of a confidential nature which they would wish to raise.

There were no items of a confidential matter raised by Members.

The Chair, Councillor T Mitchell, thanked those present for their attendance and - there being no further business - the meeting concluded at 6.47 pm.

MAYOR/CHAIR