

# Enright claims victory in fight over rates rise

## Council to use cash reserve

A DOWNPATRICK councillor claims he has been vindicated in a year-long battle to force Down Council to stop holding a multi-million pound cash reserve.

Councillor Cadogan Enright has spent the past 12 months trying to persuade other councillors and council officials that the reserves should be used to offset this year's rates increase.

External auditors have now confirmed Mr. Enright is correct in his argument and as a result the council is to begin spending the cash reserve, which currently stands at over £7.5m.



about this matter has been resolved.

"The bigger part now faced with estimates of 20-30 per cent of increases over the next 12 years and have been come around to my view to be able to an acceptable figure."

"We therefore have a £7m of reserves to use before the Mr. Neury and Mr. added.

The largest reserves, £3.7m, marked for Dec Drums are likely once it has been

## Independent thinking

# SAVING MILLIONS ON RATES

Prior to the last election I campaigned to reduce rates by using Council's excessive cash reserves which had peaked at £10.5 million in April 2010. I forced a vote on the Council's annual accounts and was outvoted by all other Councillors by a margin of 22 to 1 on the subject.

After the last election I again brought my concerns to the external auditor and audit committee, pointing out that I was a qualified accountant myself, and council's figures did not add up. I asked

the auditors to investigate the matter. In 2012 it was confirmed that we could have reserves as low as £1.7 million. Our reserves were the highest of any council outside Belfast and way ahead of neighbouring councils.

Here are the figures for rates that directly resulted from my stand over reducing Council's pile of cash – despite the biggest ever spending spree by the big parties in Council.

	Financial Year				Average
	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	
Down District rates	0.00%	1.99%	2.64%	0.00%	1.16%
Actual inflation rate in period	5.5%	3.70%	3.20%	2.60%*	3.75%

## A few examples of my work in Strangford

### Attracting Investment for Local Farmers



My work with local farmers organisations has attracted huge press coverage recently with Invest NI announcing research money and supporting our bid to become the 'UK Centre of Excellence'

for energy storage and microgrids to the London-based Technology Strategy Board.

This project aims to upgrade the National Grid from Strangford Village across to Ardglass and Killough. Creating a 'mini-grid' backed-up with new energy storage systems that will allow us to increase the amount of renewable energy we produce locally from about 40% of consumption up to 100% - potentially allowing us to export to the National Grid through Downpatrick. This has huge potential for local jobs in Strangford as well as income for local farmers in the surrounding area.

### Fighting off the DRD Attempt to Fence off New Quay

I campaigned last year to stop DRD's 2 meter fence around New Quay. I helped coordinate the Strangford Community Association's media efforts. I worked with real professionals on the Village Committee to undermine the DRD's case with the planning service. We finally exposed internal documents in the Down Recorder that showed permanent fencing on the Quay was not required by the legislation used to justify the application in the first place.



Now we are faced with a similar threat on the Lower Village Green from Council officials. They want to turn the seaward side into another car-park, and the remaining area into a fenced-off ornamental space like the Upper Green. The big parties are slow to support the community in Strangford Village on this issue – I worked strongly to support the village committee.

### Seeking Social Housing for Strangford Families



There are over 20 local Strangford families on the housing list. It is essential that locals are accommodated in the village.

The school is at the lower level of what would be considered sustainable, and we need young families

and children in the village not only for this reason, but also to support local shops, clubs, church and the social fabric of the village. Some people in the Links and Fairways had reservations about more traffic being forced down the narrow access road to Links and Fairways. Following consultation with local residents, I proposed an alternative plan to the Housing Executive that they are currently discussing with Roads Service and Planning.

### Getting a Commuter Service for Strangford

Until last year Strangford Village was without a commuter service to Belfast.



Villages like Killough or Ardglass had commuter services for years.

The problem extended to Raholp and Saul, both of which were also by-passed by most of the remaining Strangford services.

Following complaints from residents in Saul and Strangford, I presented Translink with a population analysis that convinced them to upgrade their service to the 3 villages, including a commuter service capable of getting you to Belfast via Downpatrick for 9 O'Clock.

Not Just at Election Time - ANYTIME