

Chairperson's Report 2025

Good evening, everyone,

It gives me great pleasure to present the Chairperson's Report for Melmount Community Forum, covering the period from August 21st, 2024, to today.

Overview

The past year has once again demonstrated the strength, resilience, and impact of Melmount Community Forum in our community. Despite ongoing challenges across many areas, we have continued to serve the people of Ballycolman, Strabane and the wider area with dedication, innovation, and heart.

Projects and Activities

Over the past year, we delivered a wide range of successful projects and initiatives including:

- Gas Installation – We completed the full renovation of our eating system, enabling us to better support community engagement initiatives, host community programmes, and support our residents at times of hardship. Especially at times when they must choose between heating and eating due to income struggles.
- Youth Engagement – Through after-school clubs, summer schemes and school visits in partnership with the Community Rescue Service, we've worked to empower and educate young people on safety, wellbeing, and civic responsibility.
- Community Safety – We continued to work alongside local councillors and Statutory agencies to address community concerns such as oil theft, anti-social behaviour, Drugs and cold calling. Our safety campaigns and workshops reached hundreds of residents.
- Welfare and Support Services – Our team provided vital assistance with form-filling, benefit advice, and crisis intervention, helping many individuals and families navigate difficult situations.
- Environmental and Clean-Up Campaigns – Volunteer led clean-up days and planting projects improved the local environment and fostered a sense of pride in our respective localities.

Partnerships and Collaboration

Strong partnerships continue to be the cornerstone of our work. We are proud to have collaborated with:

- Western Health and Social Care Trust
- Foyle Drugs & Alcohol Forum
- RNI:D
- DFC/JBO
- USEL

- Emergency Services
- Triax
- Extern
- Neighbourhood Health Improvement Project
- PCSP - DCSDC
- Strabane Health Improvement Project
- Youth Action
- Community Rescue Service
- Housing Executive
- Derry City & Strabane District Council

These relationships have enabled us to achieve more and advocate effectively on behalf of our community.

Concerns Regarding Community Engagement

Melmount Community Forum wishes to formally express its disappointment at the ongoing lack of meaningful community engagement from both the Education Authority Youth Department and the PSNI in addressing key community issues, particularly those relating to youth engagement and deterrence. Despite repeated attempts to foster collaborative working, there has been minimal visible involvement or sustained commitment from either body. The Forum stresses the urgent need for coordinated partnership working to support local youth, deter anti-social behaviour, and respond effectively to community concerns.

Governance and Finance

The Forum continues to be governed by a committed voluntary committee and supported by an amazing duo (Ivan & Brenda) who go far and beyond their contractual requirements in support of the Forum and its members. In fact, their voluntary contribution far outweighs that of their employed hours which is a credit and shows the calibre of the two individuals concerned when it comes to community support. The Melmount Community Forum would not be the anchor stone it is within our community without our staff and dedicated volunteers. This year we welcomed new volunteers to our committed team, strengthening our capacity and vision.

Our finances remain stable thanks to successful funding applications and prudent financial management. We are grateful to our funders and supporters who have enabled our continued growth and impact.

Looking Ahead

The coming year presents both opportunities and challenges. We aim to:

- Expand our support services

- Launch a dedicated Community First Responder Scheme in Strabane in partnership with NIAS and the Community Rescue Service
- Improve accessibility to our premises and digital services
- Strengthen our fundraising efforts to ensure long-term sustainability
- Design a five year community engagement proposal

Thanks and Acknowledgements

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to:

- All committee members, past and present, for their dedication and leadership
- Our volunteers, who continue to give their time generously
- Our staff team for their professionalism and compassion
- Our community partners and funders for their ongoing support
- Most importantly, to the residents who trust and engage with our services

Your faith in Melmount Community Forum inspires us every day.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony McLaughlin', written in a cursive style.

Tony McLaughlin

Chairperson

Melmount Community Forum

August 2025