

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Monday 24 March 2025 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor T Howie

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor C Enright
Councillor O Hanlon	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor C King	Councillor A Mathers
Councillor D McAteer	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice
Councillor G Sharvin	

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor C Bowsie	Councillor A Quinn
Councillor D Taylor	

**Non-Committee Members
In Attendance:**

Councillor J Truesdale	Councillor H Young
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**Non-Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor T Andrews	Councillor K Feehan
Councillor D Finn	Councillor C Galbraith
Councillor R Howell	Councillor D Lee-Surginor
Councillor J Tinnelly	

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mrs J Kelly, Director of Corporate Services
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Miss S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager (Acting)
Mrs F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

**Also in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs A Reavey, Capaxo Management Consulting

SPR/047/2025: APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

Apologies were received from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment

The Chairperson welcomed Councillor Martin Hearty to the chamber.

SPR/048/2025: DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

Read:

Presentation from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding NCCR Overview.

Mrs Ward in presenting, provided some background regarding the NCCR project, highlighting that it had been conceived as part of the 2011 Newry Master Plan. She advised that the Master Plan had considered a number of initiatives in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC), various business organisations and the then Newry and Mourne Council.

Mrs Ward gave an overview of the overall plan, highlighting the Hill Street Public Realm, development opportunities for Daisy Hill Hospital, the Monaghan Street Public Realm, the Albert Basin development, the Arts Centre and associated development, the city-wide greenway and the Southern Relief Road. She noted that Council had been successful in delivering some of these and continued to deliver on others in accordance with the Master Plan.

Mrs Ward reminded Members about the site selection process and stressed that there had been significant work carried out between 2018 and 2019 in relation to a site analysis for the Civic Hub. She reiterated that 33 sites had been considered, 16 had been long listed and the final decision was that Abbey Way had been the highest scoring site and avoided any additional spend as the land was already under Council ownership.

Mr Mallon then spoke on the project to date, advising that the planning process had been ongoing since 2018 with the pre-application notice, and that continuous engagement with a range of sectors as detailed within the presentation had helped guide the proposals to date. He utilised images of the previous proposals, highlighting the amendments that had been made following feedback from the engagement process.

Mr Mallon then outlined the Regional Innovation Hub that was proposed to be cited within the Civic Hub, the Theatre & Conference Centre that would attract visitors from all over the District and beyond, and Newry City Park that would reflect the historical maritime port and outlined how this aligned with a number of Council strategies.

Mr Mallon then introduced Ms Angela Reavey to the Committee.

Ms Reavey advised the Committee that her background was in economics and that she had been a practicing accountant for over 30 years, advising that the last 20 years had been spent extensively developing business cases for local and central government. She confirmed that she had worked on a number of Belfast City Region Deals with Derry and Strabane Council, and Causeway and Coast Council.

The Chairperson thanked officers for their presentation and invited questions.

Councillor Mathers stated that it was important to remain focused on the delivery of these developments for the benefit of the whole District, but that the detail needed to be scrutinised while the projects were ongoing to help deliver the message that Newry was open for business. He advised that Newry was strategically placed on the main travel corridor between Belfast and Dublin, and these developments would bring employment benefits to the District, along with the positive promotion of the Council area.

Councillor Finn voiced her concern that the NCCR Programme Board had not had sight of the Full Business Case (FBC) and stressed that while she wanted to see progress made on the

projects, she was concerned that Council's own governance procedures had not been followed.

Mrs Ward noted Councillor Finn's concerns, stating that the draft FBC had been tabled for approval to submit to the Department, and would be tabled at a subsequent NCCR Programme Board prior to the minutes being ratified at the next Full Council meeting scheduled for 7 April.

Councillor Enright noted that while his Party was supportive of the NCCR as a whole, they had reservations regarding the Civic Hub. He stated that the Newry Masterplan dated back to 2011, which existed prior to the merger of Newry and Mourne Council and Down District Council and questioned its relevance in 2025. He stated that Downpatrick, Ballynahinch and Newcastle Masterplans had been overhauled since the Councils had merged and stated that the Newry Masterplan should also be overhauled. He further stressed that a second headquarters was not needed in Newry but noted that adequate office space was.

Mrs Ward advised that while the NCCR programme of works reflected the 2011 Newry Masterplan, she stressed that it was important to note that Council had given thorough consideration to the Civic Hub and that it was a decision of the newly formed Council in 2014 and 2015 to have two chambers due to the size of the District. She also stressed the importance of correct information being disseminated, noting that the aforementioned Masterplans had not been overhauled as stated, but that projects had been reprioritised against a delivery action plan. She advised that while nothing had been removed, the action plan was being progressed with updates tabled at Economy, Regeneration and Tourism meetings regularly.

Councillor Hanlon, in response to Councillor Finn's statement regarding sight of the FBC documents, noted that the item had been tabled regularly at this Committee and all Councillors were able to view the documents and attend the meeting if they wished. She further welcomed that the item was to be tabled at a subsequent programme board meeting but expressed her concerns regarding Council not having followed their own governance procedures and requested clarity on the process.

Councillor Bowsie welcomed any investment into the District, noting that there were some good concepts proposed within the Civic Hub, but highlighted his concerns regarding parking. He referenced recent Sinn Féin motions regarding parking in Newry, questioned the benefit of the proposed shuttle bus and stressed the need for more clarity with regard to parking in the area. He further questioned the need for a second Council Chamber, stating that Downpatrick was the County capital, and that the Downpatrick chamber was more than adequate for the District's needs.

Councillor Byrne then noted his concern regarding governance procedures given the statement from Councillor Finn regarding the programme board meetings and proposed a recess to discuss these. This was seconded by Councillor Sharvin.

The meeting did then recess – 6.35pm
The meeting did then resume – 6.56pm

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor McAteer, it was agreed that discussion on item 4 – NCCR Full Business Case be adjourned to a Special Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting to be held on Thursday 3rd April at 5pm.

ITEMS RESTRICTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART 1 OF SCHEDULE 6 OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT (NI) 2014

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor King, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to exclude the public and press from the meeting during discussion on the following matters which related to exempt information by virtue of Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 6 of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 – information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the Council holding that information).

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O'Hare, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

The Chairperson advised the following had been agreed whilst in closed session:

SPR/050/2025: **PROCUREMENT STRATEGY FOR WARRENPOINT WELLBEING HUB**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Procurement Strategy for Warrenpoint Wellbeing Hub. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor McAteer, seconded by Councillor Sharvin, it was agreed to proceed with the procurement strategy and change in design team fees as detailed in the Officer's Report.

SPR/051/2025: **RESIDUAL WASTE CONTRACT**

Read: Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Residual Waste Contract. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor Reilly, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to approve the extension of the Contract for the Treatment of Residual Waste with the current contractor from 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.

There being no further business, the Meeting concluded at 7.05pm

For adoption at the Council Meeting to be held on Monday 7 April 2025.

Signed: **Councillor Tierna Howie**
 Chairperson

Signed: **Josephine Kelly**
 Director of Corporate Services