

NEWRY MOURNE AND DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting held on Thursday 23 April 2026 at 6.00pm in the Council Chamber, Downshire Civic Centre

In the Chair: Councillor O Hanlon

**In Attendance in
Chamber:**

Councillor P Byrne	Councillor M Hearty
Councillor T Howie	Councillor A King
Councillor C King	Councillor A Lewis
Councillor A Mathers	Councillor S O'Hare
Councillor H Reilly	Councillor M Rice

**Committee Members in
Attendance via Teams:**

Councillor D Taylor

**Officials in Attendance
in Chamber:**

Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive
Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration and Tourism
Ms S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment
Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities
Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects & Procurement
Mr C Haughey, Assistant Director Healthy Living
Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of People & Legal
Mr C Sage, Assistant Director Sustainability
Ms M Hughes, HR & OD Manager
Ms S Taggart, Democratic Services Manager
Ms F Branagh, Democratic Services Officer

SPR/045/2026:

APOLOGIES & CHAIRPERSONS REMARKS

An apology was received from Councillor McAteer

The Chairperson advised that in an effort to be more transparent, many of the reports were tabled in open session while the appendices were in closed session. She asked that should Members have any questions regarding an appendix that they wait until the meeting was in closed session to raise any queries.

Councillor Hanlon extended condolences on behalf of Council to Councillor Tinnelly on the very sad and untimely passing of his daughter, Aoife. She stated that the thoughts and prayers of the Council community were with him and his family at that difficult time.

She also extended sincere sympathies to Councillor McAteer on the recent loss of his father.

SPR/046/2026:

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Rice declared an interest in Item 10 – Killeel Town Hall.

SPR/047/2026: ACTION SHEET OF STRATEGY, POLICY & RESOURCES MEETING HELD ON 12 MARCH 2026

Read: Action Sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting held 12 March 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor O'Hare, it was agreed to note the action sheet of Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 12 March 2026.**

FOR DISCUSSION / DECISION

SPR/048/2026: ELECTED MEMBER DEVELOPMENT CHARTER

Read: Report from Mrs M ward, Chief Executive, regarding Elected Member Development Charter. **(Copy circulated)**

Ms Taggart noted that the report was taken as read and outlined that Council had originally committed to the charter in 2016 with cross-party support, led by the Elected Member Development Steering Group. She explained that the accreditation had since lapsed and efforts to re-establish the steering group had been unsuccessful. She confirmed that party leaders had considered the matter and agreed that it was not the appropriate time to pursue reattainment, highlighting that the framework was structured, resource-intensive, and not best suited to members' immediate needs.

Ms Taggart advised that the focus would instead focus on developing a flexible and responsive Elected Member Training Plan tailored to current and future challenges, while not ruling out potential reattainment of the charter in the future.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne seconded by Councillor C King, the following was agreed:**

- **That Council does not proceed with reattainment of the Member Development Charter at this time.**
- **That officers develop and bring forward an Elected Member Training and Development Plan, tailored to the current and future needs of Councillors, with the plan being presented to a future SP&R Committee for consideration and approval.**

SPR/049/2026: EXPRESSION OF INTEREST – WARRENPOINT SQUARE RETAIL UNIT 2

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Expression of Interest – Warrenpoint Square Retail Unit 2. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Sage outlined the report which sought approval to proceed to undertake an expression of interest for the lease of the retail unit situated at unit 2 of Warrenpoint Square.

In proposing the report, Councillor Mathers noted his delight at seeing this movement as the unit had been lying vacant for some time.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to proceed with an expression of interest for the lease of retail unit 2 at Warrenpoint Square public toilet block.**

SPR/050/2026: **EMERGENCY WORKS – CANAL BANK CAR PARKS, NEWRY**

Read: Report from Mr C Sage, Assistant Director of Sustainability, regarding Emergency Works – canal Bank Car Parks, Newry.
(Copy circulated)

Mr Sage outlined the report, which aimed to update and inform Members of the emergency appointment of a contractor to carry out repair works at Canal Bank 2 and 3 car parks in Newry. He explained that a section of the retaining wall, along with part of the car park at Canal Bank 3, had subsided into the Newry River on Easter Sunday, 5 April 2026, and that due to the associated safety risks, the Chief Executive, in consultation with party leaders, had determined that it was necessary undertake emergency measures to immediately appoint a contractor to make the area safe.

In proposing the report, Councillor Mathers queried whether any consideration had been given to the volume of traffic on the stretch of road and any potential further damage that could arise in another adjacent section of the wall.

Mr Sage advised that as part of the repair works, traffic management would be required given the high volume of traffic in the area. He confirmed that there was currently no evidence of further damage as advised by the current contractor who had assessed the area and was completing a design package for repair.

Councillor Mathers noted that the original damage was not obvious until it was too late and queried how safe the wall was along the full stretch of the river.

Mr Mallon advised that when the damage had been noted, the car park had been immediately closed with safety fencing being set well back from the damage and would be in place until the design solution had been completed. Regarding any repair work, he advised that a design team had been engaged to consider short-, medium- and long-term solutions for repair and had hopes these would be completed in the coming days to have a finalised cost estimate. He also confirmed that Council had reached out to both DFI Rivers and Translink to discuss how risks and structural integrity could be assessed collaboratively, alongside the sharing of any information regarding surveys and inspections on the relevant sections of wall under each Department's ownership.

Councillor Taylor noted his concern regarding further potential damage, and asked Council to impress on the relevant authorities to work collaboratively to establish and confirm difficulties as a matter of urgency.

Councillor Reilly stated that he was impressed at the speed at which Council could work in Newry but expressed his disappointment that he believed no action had been taken regarding Annalong Harbour or Cranfield Beach, which he stated he had raised on numerous occasions.

Councillor Hanlon advised Councillor Reilly that his issue was potentially something that he could address with the relevant officers following the meeting.

Councillor Byrne thanked and congratulated officers for the speed at which they actioned the emergency, and commended Council for their response when any emergency situation arose.

Mrs Ward stated that the reason for the quick movement was the issue had arisen on a busy thoroughfare, adjacent to the main transport hub for Newry and quick action was needed given the potential health and safety risks. She confirmed that Council had discussed Cranfield and Annalong Harbour and appreciated that any response may seem slow but confirmed that they had been discussed on a number of occasions and would be considered again as Council looked to budget setting for the new financial year.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Mathers, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the appointment of a contractor to carry out emergency repair works at Canal Bank 2 and 3 car parks in Newry.**

SPR/051/2026: DOWNPATRICK REGENERATION

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Downpatrick Regeneration. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon outlined the report, which detailed projects put forward for consideration by the Downpatrick Regeneration Working Group (DRWG), which had arisen from the living high streets that had been piloted several years ago. He confirmed the report detailed designs for Dunleath and The Grove regeneration projects, alongside a proposal to allocate funding to the regeneration of Irish Street in partnership with the Department for Communities (DfC).

Councillor Hanlon welcomed the report and the proposals as outlined by Councillor Campbell initially at DRWG. She proposed that Council sought assurance from the Department that they were as committed to the Irish Street proposal as Council were, should the Committee approve the proposed funding. This was seconded by Councillor Mathers.

Councillor A King welcomed the proposals, especially the Irish Street Project which would reconnect Irish Street with the wider town and would enhance both daytime and evening economic activity within the town.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor A King, it was agreed to approve the following:**

- **The allocation of funding and the appointment of the technical support to assist with the delivery of the Grove Peace Plus Project in Downpatrick as set out in Appendix 1.**
- **The allocation of funding and appointment of the technical support to assist with the delivery of the project to link the skate park and Dunleath Park in Downpatrick as set out in Appendix 1.**

- **The allocation of funding to the Irish Street project in Downpatrick as set out in Appendix 1, and the procurement for the Irish Street development, subject to approval from Dept for Communities.**

It was also agreed on the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Mathers, that Council seek assurance from the Department for Communities that they are committed to the Irish Street project given the level of funding that Council has agreed to spend.

SPR/052/2026:

BRCD TOURISM PROJECT – OUTLINE BUSINESS CASE

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding BRCD Tourism Project – Outline Business Case. **(Copy circulated)**

Mr Mallon outlined that the report provided background on the BRCD journey undertaken since August, during which Members had been engaged in developing concepts to deliver against the BRCD objectives. He noted that three elected member workshops had been held in September, November, and January, facilitated by a tourism consultant, with concept proposals presented in March 2025 and confirmed that officials had also engaged with BRCD partners and the Tourism NI Board, with proposals receiving a positive response. He confirmed that approval had been secured from the BRCD Executive Board to progress to Outline Business Case (OBC) stage, alongside confirmation of support from Tourism NI.

Mr Mallon advised that officials had since engaged a multidisciplinary team of specialists, including various technical and professional disciplines, to help develop robust conceptual design proposals informed by masterplan information, project objectives, and budget constraints and confirmed that the report sought Committee approval for the appointment of a multidisciplinary team to deliver the OBC for the BRCD tourism project.

In proposing the report, Councillor Rice stated that the appointment of a multidisciplinary team represented a positive step forward for the district, signalling momentum in delivering high-quality tourism with long-term economic and social benefits. He highlighted the redevelopment potential of areas such as Kilbroney Forest Park and agreed that specialist expertise was needed to shape a sustainable vision that enhanced natural assets while creating opportunities for visitors, local businesses, and the wider community.

Councillor Rice noted that the proposed investment in the district had the potential to boost tourism, support job creation, and improve long-underfunded areas. He also referenced the opportunity to link the BRCD project with the Narrow Water Bridge to enhance north–south tourism and unlock wider economic benefits and further stressed the importance of retaining BRCD funding within the district and stated that he looked forward to monitoring the development of the proposals through the next stages.

Councillor Reilly noted his concern regarding the cost of the OBC and queried whether Council knew for certain that the scheme would be accepted by both BRCD and Tourism NI.

Mrs Ward advised that all propositions had to progress through phases of development, from concept proposal and OBC stage, and stressed that as noted in the report, all partners were content with the strategy as presented and were content to proceed straight to OBC.

Councillor Reilly stated that if the relevant partners were content then he was content to second the proposal but expressed his hope that he did not regret his support.

Councillor Byrne stated that Council needed to take every possible action to retain the BRCD funding within the District and stated that the proposal was a good project following Council having launched its tourism brand. He acknowledged Councillor Reilly's point and stated that in order to secure the funding that the OBC needed to be as strong a submission as possible and therefore needed full support across the Council Chamber. He queried whether the BRCD funding was still time bound, whether Council would have the latest project start date and whether this would have any implications for the funding.

Mrs Ward advised that timeframes had been discussed with all partners, and while Council's submission could potentially be behind on the OBC stage, it was hoped that the OBC would be complete by the end of the calendar year and then enter the approval process. She highlighted that BRCD partners had given approval to bypass the strategic outline case and proceed straight to OBC stage.

Councillor Byrne queried the process regarding the OBC, and how Members could have an input on this.

Mrs Ward advised that should approval be granted for the OBC that Council's intention was to establish a new programme board of Councillors to ensure that Members were on the journey to complete the OBC, alongside relevant stakeholders.

Councillor Howie noted her Party's support of the project, in principle, but stressed her concern about costs given Council had previously cost public money not knowing all the facts.

Mrs Ward confirmed that Council did not lose public money due to not knowing all the facts and stressed rather that Council had worked through the appropriate governance process with all facts fully declared and agreed by Members at every stage. She stated that if Council wanted to deliver on this plan, then the Council chamber had to get behind it and reiterated that full engagement at programme board level would be constructive.

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Rice, seconded by Councillor Reilly, it was agreed to approve the appointment of a multidisciplinary team to deliver the Outline Business Case for the BRCD Tourism project at the fee estimate as set out in Appendix 1. It was also agreed to note the draft press release at Appendix 2.**

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

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Lewis, 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 Lewis, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed the Committee come out of closed session.

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

SPR/053/2026: **DUNDRUM PITCHES**

Read: Report from Mr A Patterson, Director of Active & Healthy Communities, regarding Dundrum Pitches. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Lewis, the following was agreed:

- To utilise the required capital budget for essential works to Dundrum football pitches.
- To approve the business case for the works and appointment of a contractor following a competitive tendering process in line with Council’s Procurement Policy.

Having previously declared an interest, Cllr Rice left the meeting for discussion on the following item – 6.34pm

SPR/054/2026: **KILKEEL TOWN HALL**

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Kilkeel Town Hall. **(Copy circulated)**

As there was dissent in the Chamber, the item was put to a recorded vote, the results of which were as follows:

FOR	9
AGAINST	3
ABSTENTION	0

Cllr Rice was not present for the vote, having previously declared an interest.

AGREED: On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to continue the open market process to achieve the best price.

Cllr Rice rejoined the meeting at this stage – 7.06pm
Cllr Reilly left the meeting at this stage – 7.06pm

SPR/055/2026: **REQUEST FOR EASEMENT AT THE BANKS RECREATION AREA, DUNDRUM**

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Request for Easement at the Banks Recreation Area, Dundrum. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor O’Hare, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to grant an Easement for a foul sewer pipe under that portion of Council facility known as The Banks Recreation Area, Dundrum as show by a red dashed line on the map attached to the report, to the party named in this report for nil consideration, subject to Departmental Consent.**

SPR/056/2026: DEED OF DEDICATION FOR NEWRY CITY PARK

Read: Report from Ms E Kirk, Assistant Director of Legal and People, regarding Deed for Dedication for Newry City Park. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to the signing and sealing of the Deed of Dedication as a necessary requirement of the Contract for Funding for Newry City Park with the Department for Communities.**

SPR/057/2026: NCCR THEATRE CONFERENCE REVIEW

Read: Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding NCCR Theatre Conference Review. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Mathers, it was agreed to approve the procurement of a specialist advisor to support Council in the development of the preferred operating model**

SPR/058/2026: CASTLEWELLAN FOREST PARK NLHF PROJECT

Read: Report from Mr C Boyd, Assistant Director of Capital Projects & Procurement. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED: **On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor O’Hare, it was agreed to approve the allocation of additional capital funding as detailed in sections 1.1, 2.2 and 4.1 of the officer’s report. It was also agreed that a paper**

be brought to the next Committee Meeting outlining the compensation events and the reporting structures for the project. It was further agreed that minutes and action sheets of the project are tabled going forward at Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meetings.

SPR/059/2026:

STRATEGIC CAPITAL PROJECTS DIRECTOR

Read:

Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding Strategic Capital Projects Manager. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne, it was agreed to approve the appointment of a Strategic Capital Projects Director as detailed within the officer's report.

SPR/060/2026:

WASTE MANAGEMENT RESOURCES

Read:

Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Waste Management Resources. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor A King, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to approve the recommendations outlined in sections 2.2, 2.3 and 2.4 of the officer's report to engage in waste, infrastructure and data specialists to assess current Waste Collection and Recycling Services and make recommendations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency as required by the Extended Producer Responsibility for packaging (pEPR) regulations with resource requirement outlined at section 4.1 of the report.

SPR/061/2026:

SOLACE POLICY OFFICER POST

Read:

Report from Mrs M Ward, Chief Executive, regarding SOLACE Policy Officer Post. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Byrne, seconded by Councillor Lewis, it was agreed to approve, under the Chief Executive Structure, the creation of an additional post and associated recruitment for one full time equivalent staff resource, funded through SOLACE NI contributions by all 11 Councils.

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

SPR/062/2026:

HILLTOWN HRC LEASE

Read:

Report from Mrs S Murphy, Director of Sustainability & Environment, regarding Hilltown HRC Lease. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the contents of the report.

SPR/063/2026:

MINUTES OF THE NEWRY CITY CENTRE REGENERATION PROGRAMME BOARD MEETING HELD FRIDAY 6 FEBRUARY 2026

Read:

Minutes of the Newry City Centre Regeneration Programme Board Meeting held Friday 6 February 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the minutes.

SPR/064/2026:

FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING

Read:

Report from Mr C Mallon, Director of Economy, Regeneration & Tourism, regarding Financial Assistance Funding. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Hanlon, seconded by Councillor Rice, it was agreed to note the shortfall in the funding available for successful applications under Financial Assistance Call 1 – Revenue.

It was also agreed that officers look at measures to address the shortfall to ensure all successful applicants are awarded funding with a paper for noting being tabled at the next Strategy, Policy & Resources Committee Meeting.

FOR NOTING

SPR/065/2026:

MINUTES OF MOURNE MOUNTAIN GATEWAY PROJECT MEETING HELD 2 APRIL 2026

Read:

Minutes of Mourne Mountain Gateway Project Meeting held 2 April 2026. **(Copy circulated)**

AGREED:

On the proposal of Councillor Lewis, seconded by Councillor Howie, it was agreed to note the minutes.

NEWRY, MOURNE & DOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL
RECORDED VOTE

DATE: 23/04/2026 VENUE: Downshire Civic Centre

MEETING: SPR Committee

SUBJECT OF VOTE: Proposal from Councillor C King, seconded by Councillor Byrne to continue the open market process to achieve the best price.

COUNCILLOR	FOR	AGAINST	ABSTAIN	ABSENT
P Byrne	1			
C Enright				1
O Hanlon	2			
M Hearty	3			
R Howell	4			
T Howie	5			
A King	6			
C King	7			
A Lewis		1		
A Mathers	8			
D McAteer				2
S O'Hare	9			
H Reilly		2		
M Rice				3
D Taylor		3		
TOTALS	9	3		3