



**Minutes of meeting for Newtown Residents Association  
Newtown Salvation Army Worship & Community Centre at 4 Normanby Street,  
Monday 18th May 2026 at 7.30pm - 9pm**

**Present:** Merio Marsters (Chair), Rhona Carson (Secretary), Steve Cosgrove (Minutes), Sam Somers (Treasurer), Neville Carson, Andrew Wilson, Jane Paterson, Stephen Pritchard, Kevin Sinnott, Keith Powell, Daphne Pilaar, David Jenkins, Hilary Watson, Malcolm Menzies, Laura Zhong, Don McDonald, Sam Chandler, Tommy Berridge, Kathy Benseman, Steve Dunn, Cheryl Robilliard, Manomita Das, Kerry Finnigan, Meta Beyers, Graeme Carrol, Duncan McLean, Paul Forrest, Peta Baker, Kassie McLuskie, Wendy Blue, Carol Comber, Michelle Wolland, Rosita D'Souza, Paul D'Souza, Cr Laurie Foon, MP Julie Anne Genter.

**Guest Speakers:** Vania Szymkowiak - WREMO, Jamuna Rotstein - WCC Community Engagement Flood Recovery Team, Sehai Orgad - WCC City Safety & Wellbeing Manager, Joel Berryman - WCC City Safety Adviser, Sergeant Melanie Paddon - NZ Police, Constable Des Foo - NZ Police,

**Apologies:** Warwick Taylor, Robin Payne, Tolis Papazoglou, Millie Lambess - WCC Harm Prevention Team Leader, Cr Nureddin Abdurahman, Bernard O'Shanessey, Christina Laban (DCM), Jan Gould.

**Minutes from the previous meeting:** It was noted April meeting cancelled due to flooding; Motion - March minutes be approved.

- 1st: Malcolm Menzies
- 2nd: Sam Somers

Carried.

### **Financial**

- No major change since last meeting.
- Charity status is still pending.
- Bank signatories at the bank are still to happen.

### **Wellington Regional Emergency Management Office:**

Following up from the Disaster in April - Vania Szymkowiak (WREMO) addressed the meeting. She provided maps for people to record house numbers and impacts to capture callouts. Acknowledged meeting held in Berhampore, night before and a great turn out. Newtown clean up and community responses were quick.

Noted that Island Bay no longer has a Residents' Association, residents are lost to get support, Island Bay Community Centre swamped and coordinating community queries which they are not resourced for.

Jamuna Rotstein (WCC Flood Recovery Team) - reinforced the value of letting Council know if you have had any issues, to get a better understanding of the community needs and to coordinate support.

A key problem was that the Council had no ability to respond to the required volumes of phone calls at the time (circa 3am) when the flooding hit.

Suggestions:

- Call centre limited and under-resourced;
- Council contracts an external contact centre to which calls can be transferred when overwhelmed. It was noted that they have Council staff answering the phone phones most of the time.
- There might be a role for Civil Defence to take Council phone calls in an emergency. An automatic escalation process should be part of a strategic plan;

There was considerable discussion about how systems can respond to something so intense in a local area. Our weather forecast only goes down to a four km square.

Laurie Foon acknowledged the work of the City Safety and Wellbeing Team.

### **WCC City Safety:**

Sehai Orgad reviewed earlier calls to build on the City Safety Plan, and referred to the [City Safety and Wellbeing Briefing Report](#). Pōneke Promise in 2010 focussed in the CBD/Courtney Place. This Council has allowed more funding for safety initiatives.

The Council has about 120 cameras around the city streets, and is working on being proactive rather than reactive. The various support networks, including Māori wardens, Pacifica and Ethnic patrollers and others, work together. An example of output is well-lit and visible support stations, three on trial in the CBD. They are affected and people are using them, and have been shown to deter offenders as well as support actual and potential victims.

Specifically to Newtown, Council has written three papers towards a Newtown Safety Team. This work is ongoing. The Newtown Safety project ran from October 2025 and closed in January 2026. The team continue to work with the Police.

See these WCC reports -

### [Advice on Addressing Safety Concerns in Newtown;](#)

#### [Newtown Safety Close-out\\_report](#)

Joel Berryman (WCC City Safety Adviser)- Newtown people started raising concerns about safety in Newtown in 2023. The ongoing Council role involves co-ordinating between Police, DCM, Wellington City Mission, Salvation Army and other agencies.

Council pays attention to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design - CPTED - looking at the physical environment is their responsibility.

During the Newtown project many activities were enhanced including upgrading CCTV and street lighting. There is now a dedicated street cleaner in Newtown, Monday to Friday. De-escalation workshops and mental health training were made available.

There is more information about the CCTV cameras and a link to a location map, here: <https://wellington.govt.nz/community-support-and-resources/safety-in-wellington/community-safety/closed-circuit-television>

Connecting with Police about anti-social behaviours, identified from the survey disruptive behaviours, physical drug use, aggressive begging, intimidation. Council has limited power regarding moving people on. No bylaw against begging. Section 164 notice if you have personal belongings, obstructing a public place. Council can give notice but can take away belongings that are creating the obstruction and will be moved.

HMDT (Homelessness Multi-Disciplinary Team) Hui involve all Pōneke services supporting people who are chronically hanging around on the street. There are often drug and mental health issues to consider.

### **NZ Police update:**

Mel Paddon is currently filling in for Sergeant Mike Bryne for Community Policing, based at Kilbirnie. Des Foo is part of the team, working in Newtown. Their role is about prevention rather than acute responses. Mel is working on a plan including a wider range of agencies. She noted that people often say they think Newtown is a dangerous place at night, but the stats say there are very few calls to Newtown at night. Newtown has a lot more resources that bring people here, support services eg: hospital, social services. Police see the problems.

Duncan McLean (Newtown Heart) noted that the presentations had not mentioned retailers, who were being affected by people disrupting them from the street. He has witnessed low-level drug dealers intimidating beggars on the street, taking their money for drugs and moving to another area. 112 empty shops in Newtown is part of the problem, hard to attract new business and rents are high.

Sehai outlined a key initiative Homelessness Coordination Service target services to create a focus on individual cases, identify systemic gaps from Council briefing back from March.

There was discussion about calling the Police - this is recommended whenever there is concern about what is happening on the streets. Sometimes calling 111 seems like over reacting, but calling 105 means a long delay. Should there be a response level in between the two? Mel advised that 111 is always a reasonable call. Staff will respond if they can, depending on the urgency of other jobs getting attention at the time, eg: if a car is available, they will drive by. Advised to call and build a case even if previous cases are closed.

It is noted begging is quite distinct to abusive behaviour, two different things. A thought and a need to address more services to support mental health behaviour.

It was noted that there has been a drop in the number of whānau groups of parents and children walking along Riddiford St - the supposition is that they are avoiding the area because some of the behaviour worries them.

Don't be afraid to call for the Police, encouraged to call 111. Will do their best to get out to attend callouts. Thank and acknowledge WCC Officers and the Police Officers for their input, and left the meeting after this discussion.

#### **SMART Newtown:**

Jane Patterson (Chair of the Newtown Community Centre Trust) spoke about Smart Newtown - Anna Symons (NCC Kaiwhakahaere) and Jane submitted to the Oral Submissions on the Council District Plan today. It was noted that Smart Newtown is part of our disaster resilience path, but needs to be funded by the Council. Sharing stories of how Smart Newtown has been a huge need. A need and a good time to organise a community response to funding cuts to Smart Newtown. A good starting point is to send email to all Councillors: [councillors@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:councillors@wcc.govt.nz)

#### **Carrara Park update & mural:**

Rhona updated the meeting on progress of the Carrara Park toilets, specifically saying that the Association has been invited to nominate an artist to create a mural for the end wall facing the Park entrance. Paul Forrest has put forward his proposal, the meets the councils brief, talks about options for the artwork - and that it would be good to hear the ideas from other artists. The toilets are currently being constructed offsite and expected delivery June/July. Paul is likely to begin early Spring, August/September.

#### **Member of Parliament update:**

Julie Anne Genter encouraged people to contact her electorate office, with matters like central government, housing, immigration, visa, citizenship needing help, and can go to her electorate office. Having been assisting post-floods, Student Army from Vic University can help.

Government budgets due and a lot of stuff happening, could provide updates.

#### **WCC Councillors update:**

Laurie Foon addressed the meeting on behalf of herself and Councillor Nureddin Abdurahman. They are very busy regarding flood recovery work - [recoveryenquiries@wcc.govt.nz](mailto:recoveryenquiries@wcc.govt.nz)  
Other current activities centre around the District Plan deliberations, and the transition to Tiaki Wai.

Noted that Wellington Water is not responding to leaks and advised to email details to Cr Foon.

Council Amalgamation is another medium term consideration. Our Mayor supports the concept but there are a lot of things to consider. There seems to be very little evidence of potential cost reduction through this process, but serious concern about lack of democratic representation. Maori wards could be affected, forced to have or not have.

Duncan shares variable speed regulations on Green Street, a dead end street, it seems senseless and a waste of money and time. It was noted this is a Government requirement.

**Meet the Candidates update:**

Set for Tuesday 13th October at Salvation Army Community Centre, 4 Normanby Street, Newtown. More details to follow.

**City Parking**

Community feedback regarding Newtown East and West parking changes.

**Meeting closed at 9:05pm**