

**An Estate Strategy for  
Ards and North Down Borough Council  
for the period 2020-2025**



**Ards and  
North Down  
Borough Council**

November 2018

## **Foreword:**

Ards and North Down Borough is going through an important period of positive transformation with a refreshed focus on communities and people, economic regeneration and tourism, the quality of our environment and the core services which we provide.

Central to this transformation is the need for prudent resource management, ensuring long-term financial stability, value for money and sustainable growth. Physical infrastructure is an important part of our community, place shaping along with the property assets which the Council owns and leases contribute significantly to generating social and economic wellbeing.

As a result the Council has committed to critically examine the land and property assets it owns and leases on a recurring basis to ensure that they are aligned to our aspirations, optimised in terms resource efficiency and organised to support the needs of our community.

It is clear that moving forward our role in managing our land and property assets is changing from one of simple stewardship – providing and maintaining buildings – to one which is more outcomes focused, managing the value of the portfolio for the benefit of the community, thereby ensuring our assets are configured to serve both public and corporate priorities.

The Council owns and operates a significant portfolio of land and property assets. As well as presenting a visible image by which the public can perceive the Council and the area in which they live, they have the potential to have a beneficial effect on the communities in which they are situated. Functional, well used and well-designed buildings can act as a stimulus to draw in business and people, and so contribute to the prosperity and wellbeing of an area.

The key benefit for any organisation with complex land and property holdings in having such a strategy, is that it sets a broad direction for its estate and asset management activities over the medium to long term, enabling the land and property portfolio to be optimised to meet existing and emerging needs. This strategy is intended to support rational decision-making based on identified corporate priorities and to act as a practical tool for a number of key factors such as:-

- Making investment decisions
- Maintaining and improving the Council's land and property assets
- Increasing the cost effectiveness and value of the portfolio
- Promoting innovation
- Supporting modern active asset management

- Listening and responding to customers and property users

This document therefore describes the Council's strategic approach to realising the ambitions for its land and property assets, complimenting and aligning with the Ards and North Down Community Plan and the Council's Corporate Plan. It is subject to periodic review and updating, reflecting the need to continuously review and actively managed the Council's asset base thereby ensuring it supports the delivery of corporate and civic priorities.

However, and particularly in light of its role in terms of Community Planning, the approach promoted within this strategy is one of partnership, whereby the Council is challenged, not only to use its own assets to the maximum benefit of the community, but to act as facilitator in encouraging others, both within the public sector and private sector, to use their assets collaboratively, to the benefit of the community being served.

## **Part 1: Introduction:**

In 2018/19 Ards and North Down Borough Council took a decision to develop an Estate Strategy to support a more strategic approach to corporate resource planning.

Three overarching objectives for the development of the strategy were agreed at the outset:

- To support a refreshed focus on communities and people, economic regeneration and tourism, the quality of our environment and the core services provided by the Council, and its partners.
- To generate capital and revenue efficiencies to support the delivery of corporate objectives and improved social outcomes.
- To create linkage between capital receipts and revenue efficiencies and the process of developing and prioritising capital investment programmes.

This document describes the Council's strategic approach to realising the objectives described above.

This first Estate Strategy has been designed to align with the spirit of the Ards and North Down Community Plan (2017 to 2032) 'Creating Positive Outcomes for Everyone'. It has equally been designed to align with and support the Council's Corporate Plan which runs on a 4 year cycle and is due to be refreshed in 2019/20 and again in 2024/25.

On this basis the Ards and North Down Estate Strategy will run from 2020-2025 (subject to confirmation) at which point in time it will be refreshed and updated to align with the new Corporate Plan.

## **Part 2: Where we are:**

### **2.1 Overview of Ards and North Down's' land and property assets**

The Council has 760 property related assets, most of which are owned but some leased. However as a number of assets are linked to one location, the number of locations, or land assets is around 450.

The Council's asset portfolio includes; 164 parks & open spaces (over 90 sites); 86 car parks (including off street car parks); 47 play parks; 16 cemetery sites; 13 marinas and harbours; 9 offices; 20 community centres, 16 recycling centres & depots and 74 playing fields (over 35 sites). 13 assets are leased.

A summary table defining these categories more specifically is shown below;

Category of Asset	No of Sites	No of Assets
<b>Community &amp; People Assets</b>		
Community Centres	20	39
Leisure Centres	7	23
Parks & Open Spaces	90	164
Playgrounds	47	104
Sports Pavilions & Playing Fields	32	74
<b>Regeneration, Tourism &amp; Economic Development Assets</b>		
Car Parks	86	86
Museums & Arts Centres	4	8
Public Conveniences	16	35
Tourist Facilities & Offices	7	13
<b>Environmental Assets</b>		
Miscellaneous	9	9
Cemeteries	16	49
Coastal Paths	38	38
Marinas & Harbours	13	30
Waste Recycling Centres	10	18
Works Depots & Stores	4	5
<b>Admin &amp; Delivey</b>		
Admin Offices	5	9
Investment Properties	23	23
Assets held for sale	3	6
Assets under construction	7	7
Surplus Assets	20	20
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>457</b>	<b>760</b>

A full copy of the Council's asset register is available, but it is intended that a comprehensive version, detailing the future use of each asset, will be part of the Asset Management Plan, which follows this strategy.

In terms of financial information, the total 'net book' value of these assets sits at £200m within the Council's accounts. However, it should be noted that these valuations are for accounting purposes and as such they do not reflect current open market value, which can be very different.

The annual operating cost of the estate, based on the latest available data, is around £3.1m p.a

#### Management of the estate:

One aspect that is notable, is that there is a degree of separation in relation to the ownership of assets within the Council. In that the responsibility (ownership) of whole categories of assets are allocated to specific Directorates.

This is not untypical of public sector organisations but, like in all such cases, is an issue which should be addressed if the Asset Management Strategy is to be fully realised.

This is referred to in the 'recommendations' section (Part 5) below, highlighting the value of a centralised asset management function.

A starting point for this would be that the various strategies that are ongoing at present, are taken forward collaboratively, cutting across Directorates, as opposed to individual Directorates working in isolation, as is the case at present. A table defining these strategies and proposing how this cross-cutting approach can be taken forward is detailed in Part 5 below.

Another notable aspect of the current approach is that the overall planning and management of the Council's estate, is not centrally co-ordinated or facilitated, again an aspect which is fundamental to modern asset management. Whilst collating this Estate Strategy (and subsequent Asset Management Plan) is a good starting point, there should follow a fundamental adaptation of governance structures to allow the planning and management of assets to be centrally co-ordinated going forward. Again this is alluded to in Part 5 later, which sets out the best practice in this area. Addressing this issue represents a key enabling activity for this strategy.

## 2.2 Asset Performance and Benchmarking

Understanding and monitoring the functional and economic performance of the Council's asset base is important in terms of delivering value for money and good quality services.

At present the Council does not benchmark the performance of its assets against other local authorities however work is underway to develop a robust baseline position in terms of asset performance including lifecycle costing with a view to developing benchmarking capability in the longer-term. Typical benchmarks would relate to: cost (per sq m or FTE): space occupied per function: annual overall running costs: average energy costs: utilisation rates per function, remaining life, and each of these could be obtained from the Asset Information System data referred to later in this document.

In the first instance the most effective way of determining how the Council's assets are performing is to 'test' them against the Council's strategic objectives and the operational requirements which they should be supporting and serving.

Typical benchmarks and how they can be used to assist in the management of the Council's property assets are set out in the table below.

Outcome	Benchmark	Benchmark Aims
<b>Compliance</b>	% of buildings that are fully H&S compliant.  % of properties that are considered DDA compliant.	Demonstrating that property assets comply with statutory and regulatory requirements.

		Demonstrating that property is accessible for all service users and staff.
<b>Condition</b>	Percentage of properties in satisfactory or better condition. Percentage of gross internal floor area (m2) that is in satisfactory or better condition.	Demonstrating that property assets are maintained in satisfactory or better condition. Minimising the number of days that facilities are not available for service delivery.
<b>Suitability</b>	Percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of suitability.	Demonstrating that property assets are fit for purpose.
<b>Efficiency / Effectiveness</b>	Percentage of properties that are considered satisfactory or better in terms of sufficiency, utilisation and usage to support service delivery. Space Utilisation (% of time in use). Space Standards (m2/ staff member etc).	Demonstrating that property assets are sufficient for service delivery and utilised as efficiently and effectively. Underutilised properties being subject to review to determine if fit for purpose or surplus to requirements.
<b>Energy</b>	CO2 Emissions Electricity / Energy Consumption (key benchmark being kWh/ sq m / per annum) Overall energy consumption kWh.	Energy performance of property assets is monitored, and improvements undertaken where financially viable and technically feasible.
<b>Value for Money</b>	Maintenance cost per m2 Space (sq m) per person	Demonstrating that property maintenance costs are VfM.
<b>Social Return on Investment</b>	New data relating to the impact on social outcomes eg physical health; wellbeing ; crime ; mental health	New measures being developed eg The Data Hub :
<b>Affordability</b>	Backlog as a % of annual maintenance (capital and revenue) budget.	Demonstrate that overtime backlogs are not growing excessively indicating that the assets are affordable.

This type of benchmark data could be obtained from the Property Data & Asset Management System referred to later in this document. This benchmark data can be

compared to public sector property benchmarks identified by the National Property Performance Management Indicators (NaPPMI), the Federation of Property Services (FPS) and The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA).

As a result of comparisons with these benchmarks and in analysing how the estate meets the relevant strategic objectives, it will be possible to define which assets within the estate are either:

- (1) Fit for purpose;
- (2) In need of modification / adaptation or replacement;
- (3) No longer required, or
- (4) Areas where an asset is required that is not currently present

This information will then be used to populate an Asset Management Plan, which will follow on from this strategy.

It will therefore be a recommendation within this strategy that appropriate benchmarks are established over time for each category of assets and that these are recorded on the Asset Information System.

#### **Disposal process for any assets declared surplus:**

It must further be noted that if an asset is declared surplus by one Directorate within the council that there needs to be a defined and agreed process for this asset to be disposed of. This will involve a number of steps including:

- Discussing any alternative internal use of the asset within the Council – through the revised governance structures that will centralise such discussions
- Ensuring the marketable value of the asset is maximised through consultations with Planning and other key consultees (private sector included)
- Identifying all title issues within the asset database to ensure that the council's right to dispose is clear and unequivocal
- Agreeing whether it is policy to use the centralised public sector disposal process and giving other public sector organisations

At present there is no definitive policy in place, but in parallel with the adoption of this (Estates) Strategy and the following Asset Management Plan, it will be necessary to establish such a policy for clarity going forward. An option exists to utilise the Land and Property Services (LPS) Central Disposal Process which in the first instance makes a surplus asset available for alternative public sector use before offering it to the open market. Availing of this service merits consideration.

### **2.3 Underlying principles to the Estate Strategy:**

Taking all of the above in to account, and in order to achieve the objective of implementing a robust and meaningful strategy going forward, it is necessary to set down a number of principles, or pillars, that will underpin the strategy going forward, as well as all outputs arising from the strategy such as the capital programme and the divestment of assets. After consideration these principles can be stated as follows;

1. **Whole Borough Approach:** As the key stakeholder for borough-wide services, and using the Community Planning process as a forum, the council will adopt a 'whole borough approach' to the use of assets in relation to the objectives outlined this strategy. This will include providing support to 3<sup>rd</sup> parties (financially or through other facilitation) if this is the most effective and appropriate way to meet the objectives stated in this strategy.
2. **Partnering to unlock value:** As such it will look, as appropriate to use partnerships (with both the private and public sectors, as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector and volunteering community) in order to achieve the best outcomes for the community that the Council serves
3. **Maximise efficiency:** The council, will at all times, look to minimise its own spend and maximise efficiency in achieving its objectives. This will include the exploration and development of alternative models of delivery, including public / private partnerships: public sector partnerships (local and central) and joint ventures with other operators
4. **Sustainable investment:** The council will adopt a policy of 'sustainability' in that, all capital investment should be robustly challenged in advance through a staged business case process, which identifies proven need, demonstrates benefits in the context of the objectives set out in this strategy, and balances this against long term value for money. The ability to cater for changing demographics will also be fundamental to such proposals.
5. **Strategic investment:** The Council will prioritise potential asset investments/divestments on the basis of strategic alignment and greatest need, in the context of finite resources. As such, the approaches, criteria and weightings as identified in the current Capital Prioritisation process for the current capital programme will be used as a basis upon which to evaluate and rank each proposal.

## **Part 3 –Building a strategy for going forward:**

### **3.1 Methodology applied**

Overall the process of developing the Estate Strategy has combined bottom up analysis and top down analysis. Two separate methodologies have been applied to help test the performance of the current asset base.

A fundamental consideration at the outset will be to determine the role of the Council in relation to the delivery of services to the community – particularly in light of the obligations entailed with the Community Planning process. In other words, will the Council (a) focus on the use or acquisition of its own assets in the delivery of these services using direct funds available, or (b) should the Council act as the facilitator in the delivery of these services using wider public & private sector partners to the maximum effect. This is an aspect which needs initial consideration and once a direction has been agreed this will be factored in to the implementation of the strategy with regards to the use of assets.

The first methodology (top down) involves undertaking a 'gap analysis'. In simple terms this involved firstly identifying a set of 'strategic objectives' as a summary of those as set out in the draft Programme for Government, the Corporate Plan and the Community Plan. The standard that should be achieved against each objectives was quantified where appropriate. For example, 'to support people to be physically active more often', the appropriate standard was deemed to be the full quantum of sport and leisure provision as set out within with Sport England guidance. In this example the sports and leisure assets were then reviewed against the standard to understand if they are adequate or sufficient to meet the standard, or indeed a gap in provision exists.

The diagram below illustrates the suite of strategic objectives that have been adopted to support the 'gap analysis' and the 'asset challenge' processes.



Stakeholder Engagement: This was an integral part of developing the strategy as it was critical to capture ongoing thinking in relation to these objectives, in the context of the estate. This therefore involved extensive engagement with Directorates, Heads of Services and the appropriate teams within Directorates, on a number of occasions, in order to establish, and verify, the links between strategic objectives and the assets in question, and if necessary, identify where the gaps existed. This also involved gaining an understanding of the key strategies and ongoing studies that have been, or are being, undertaken that will help to link specific assets to strategic objectives. Some of this work is complete but a substantial volume (as detailed at the foot of this document) is still to be completed and therefore those links and identification of specific gaps will only be able to be ratified on completion of these studies.

As well as Council stakeholders, a number of the most relevant central government departments and Community Planning partners, were consulted to establish both their roles, and views, in the context of the strategic use of the wider public sector asset base. These included Department for Communities, Department for Infrastructure (Roads & Greenways), NIHE, Department of Education, Education Authority, Department of Finance, the Health Trusts, Sport NI, Tourism NI, Libraries NI and PSNI.

Use of current strategies and cross cutting benefits:

Again in order to capture current thinking and status (rather than going back to first principles), this study has picked up on, and utilised, the outcomes from a number of related strategies.

For example the: Sports Facilities & Pitches Strategy: the Greenways Strategy, the draft car park strategy, the Integrated Tourism Economic Development & Regeneration Strategy and the Play Strategies (albeit from legacy Councils).

However there are a number of strategies/ studies that will be integral to defining the future estate which are in development, and as such, some decision may need to be held back until these have been completed. These are being taken forward by specific Directorates, see below. In line with the recommendations included later, it will be important that these strategies 'cut across' all of the relevant Directorates that may be impacted.

These strategies, the lead Directorate and the Directorates that should be involved are shown in the table below:

<b>Strategy</b>	<b>Lead Directorate</b>	<b>Directorates impacted / involved</b>
<b>An updated (and possibly independent) Play Strategy</b>	Community & Wellbeing	Community & Wellbeing Regen , Dev & Planning Finance & Performance
<b>Action Plan from the ITRDS</b>	Regen , Dev & Planning	ALL DIRECTORATES
<b>A pitches &amp; MUGAs strategy</b>	Community & Wellbeing	Community & Wellbeing Environment Finance & Performance
<b>A car park study that analyses from the perspective of where car parks are situated and the alternative value of these</b>	Environment	Environment Regen , Dev & Planning Organisation Development
<b>A workplace / civic office strategy</b>	Organisation Development	ALL DIRECTORATES
<b>Further development of Greenways Strategies</b>	Community & Wellbeing	Community & Wellbeing Regen , Dev & Planning Finance & Performance

The second methodology (bottom up) involves 'asset challenge' whereby each individual asset is examined and challenged to justify its place within the Council's asset portfolio, in terms of whether or not it is delivering value to the community and the Council. An initial analysis in this regard was carried out during the strategy development process, however it is critical that this process is continued and developed as the maturity of data increases. This prioritisation process is being developed with the Assets Team and a detailed version will be included in the Asset Management Plan which follows this strategy.

### 3.2 High-level summary of strategic insights

The following table, colour coded to match the above diagram has been informed by the 'gap analysis' and the 'asset challenge' process to provide a high-level summary of 'where we are' and where we want to be'.

It should be noted that these are very initial insights and the process mentioned in 3.1 will be a further development of the asset challenge process, and the resultant information carefully incorporated in to the Asset Management Plan as it develops going forward. This should all be done within the governance structures as set up within the Council to manage assets in the future with the ultimate responsibility being with the Senior Responsible Officer for Asset Management (*to be confirmed*)

As identified in section 2.3 above, one underpinning aspect that has become apparent through this process is that the Council should not be responsible for the direct delivery of all of the community requirements, however it should act as the **facilitator** in delivering these objectives. In particular:

- The Community Planning process should be used to establish which of the Community Planning partners are most appropriate (either individually or collaboratively) to meet the specific objective or requirement
- The private sector can be engaged, as and when appropriate, and in line with public sector and EU procurement legislation, to deliver the specific objectives or requirements as deemed appropriate.

<b>Strategic Area</b>	<b>People &amp; Communities</b>
<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>1.1 People enjoy good health &amp; wellbeing - through (a) Outdoor Recreation</b>
<b>Assets involved</b>	<b>Parks &amp; Open Spaces: Amenity land: Play Parks: coastal paths; harbours &amp; marinas</b>
<b>Targets</b>	Increase (demonstrable) levels of Social Returns on Investment (SROI)  Increase the number of times people use walks, trails & cycle routes.
<b>Where we are</b>	The Council has a significant number of assets which support outdoor recreation. A potential oversupply of assets has been identified in terms of supporting outdoor recreation - creating inefficiency.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

A number of opportunities have been identified in relation to Greenways, quality and effectiveness of urban parks.

Addressing these gaps in asset provision will bring significant benefits in terms of this objective with clear links to other key objectives such as creating vibrant communities, and regeneration of towns & villages. The 'Castle to Castle' greenway is of particular note due to the benefits positively impacting adjacent areas.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

Some small pockets of park and open space might be better developed for alternative use or divested to best serve both the rates payer and the Council.

**Key Actions**

**These will be further defined through the use of the Asset Challenge process outlined in the Asset Management Plan, to follow.**

**Strategic Objective**

**1.1 (b) People enjoy good health & wellbeing – through access to appropriate Sport & Leisure provision**

**Assets involved**

**Sport & Leisure facilities; pitches / pavilions: MUGAs; Community Centres:**

**Targets :**

Increase levels of participation in any sports , leisure & wellbeing activities in all areas

**Where we are**

The Council has a significant number of assets which support sport and leisure activities. There is however scope for creating further efficiencies by focussing the areas of most need.

For example the new leisure & wellbeing provision being provided for the new Ards area, which was resultant from detailed community consultation, should be used as a template, on a pro-rata basis for other areas of the Borough.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

The Leisure & Sporting asset provision in North Down and Ards is in generally very good.

However there are still some gaps in provision in terms of the peninsula area. It is recommended that the nature and extent of the sport and leisure provision in the peninsula area merits further detailed analysis.

There are some sports assets including pitches that are in need of improvement or renewal. Options for partnering with the Education Authority – eg by providing 'additionality' to any of the new schools being provided in the borough

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

If the proposed projects go ahead.

A number of potential schemes for renewal of existing assets has been identified which will render a number of existing sites as surplus in the Newtownards, Holywood & Donaghadee areas.

There are also areas that currently sit within the council's sport & leisure estate, that are not fully utilised. These assets should be appraised for alternative use or divestment. Assets in coastal areas in particular fall in to this category.

**Key Actions**

**A more precise Pitches & MUGAs strategy in line with key partners such as the EA, to be developed as part of the integrated Play Strategy**

**Strategic Objective**

**1.1 (c) People enjoy good health & wellbeing – through access to appropriate & readily available health services**

**Assets involved**

**Community Centres: general Council facilities ; HSC**

**Targets :**

Increase numbers of locations where people can access advice for their Health & Wellbeing

**Where we are**

At present this is mainly provided through HSCB and the Health Trusts, however it is known from other examples that the Council, and others , can potentially have a significant role to play in this target objective.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

It is not known at this stage what the scope or extent of any gap in such provision looks like however this will become clearer through further engagement with the relevant partners

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

In particular the use of the community provision in this context would offer significant opportunities to provide a much more comprehensive (and available) service to the community

**Key Actions**

**A more precise engagement with HSCB and the Health Trusts as well as the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector partners within Community Planning**

**Strategic Area    Economy, Regeneration & Tourism**

**Strategic Objective**                      **2.1 Promote to attract investment (combined with Objective 2.3 – Equip with Skills & Places)**

**Assets involved**                      **Regeneration Sites: Tourism assets.: Museums & Culture; VICs, Exploris: Pickie: Economic Development assets: Signal**

**Targets:**                                      Attain targets as set out in the ITRDS strategy

**Where we are**                              A lot of the considerations as to how the Council can use its estate/assets to deliver against this objective are only now being considered through the ongoing 'Integrated Tourism and Development and Regeneration Strategy' (ITRDS) and the 'City Deals' proposals.

Until the actions within each of these strategies are sufficiently progressed a definitive analysis of the assets required, or in fact, how the Council will address demand, cannot be determined accurately.

Forecasting demand in this area can be difficult and as such the following three areas are normally used to establish demand vs provision;

- 1.Existing provision- such as the capacity in existing enterprise parks
- 2. Primary Evidence – such as demand from businesses coming in to the Council ED team
- 3.Secondary Evidence – such as robust forecasts from economic forecasters eg UU

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**                      The Economic Development team, have confirmed that there are currently gaps in the provision in the following areas:

Facilities for entrepreneurs to start-up businesses

Facilities for businesses that are expanding to 'grow' in to and stay within the Council area

Suitable locations for new investors –

Encouraging and facilitating new technology firms to set up/ expand into, the area

Whilst the extent of these gaps have yet been quantified to the locations and nature of accommodation can be defined. Further studies, such as the Accommodation Audit & Scoping Study, and completed studies such as the SL Access Audit, are useful in defining the exact use of specific assets, as will be the outcomes from the City Deals application, will detail these gaps more specifically in due course.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

At this stage there are no identified Areas where efficiency can be increased for this function until the above studies have been completed

**Key Actions**

**The development of the Action Plan within the ITRDS , in particular the Development Action Plan ( demand / supply study currently being taken forward in relation to commercial opportunities in the borough)**  
**Also, further opportunities will be identified through monitoring of the Queens Parade development**

**Strategic Objective**

**2.2 Connect our Places & People – (key assets related to infrastructure connections)**

**Assets involved**

**Town & Village assets: Car Parks: Tourism assets:**

**Targets:**

Attain targets as set out in the ITRDS strategy

**Where we are**

There are a number of ongoing actions that will determine the asset management actions relating to this objective, specifically;

A borough-wide strategy for towns and villages

Use of key links / corridors eg greenways , waterways to bring people in to towns / villages

The role of car parking in relation to the potential to develop towns.

The outputs from the ITRDS Strategy

Broadband connectivity in to and throughout the borough.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

In terms of tourism, offers the concept of a 'chain' with an emphasis on ensuring these are seen as the key destination points in the borough. All assets connected to these points will have ongoing needs as the demand becomes apparent.

There is a potential market gap in relation to improving the infrastructure between Belfast and the borough. – with particular emphasis on the Castle to Castle route,

The need to use car parks in a way that facilitates all of the objectives stated at the beginning of this strategy. The introduction of (a) more Park n Rides) both to Belfast and town centres(c) and the introduction of Park n Cycle areas to allow commuters to commute to towns and commercial centres in healthier means. Access to waterways through improved provision of harbours & marinas is essential.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

At this stage there are very little, or no, assets held by the Council in this category, as most of the provision is private sector owned. Therefore the opportunities to increase efficiency for this objective will come from completion of the analysis/ studies and the Council then adopting a role that provides the most efficient outcome. This could involve utilising Council land appropriately or forming a partnership with a private sector operator

**Key Actions**                      **Actions being taken forward as part of the ITRDS, in particular; the Digital connectivity (Full Fibre Consortium) : Transport (Road, Blueways & Greenways) and through a further examination of car parking strategies )**

**Strategic Objective**                      **2.3 Excel in Quality & Value**

**Assets involved**                      **Town & Village assets: Tourism assets: Museums & Culture**

**Targets:**                                      Attain targets as set out in the ITRDS strategy

**Where we are**                              As per a number of the objectives within this area there are a number of ongoing actions that will determine the approach taken moving forward. In relation to this objective the main activities relate to a number of specific actions;

- A borough-wide strategy within which to develop/ enhance towns and villages economy
- The use of car parks in relation to the potential to develop towns is critical.
- The ongoing development of the Village Renewal Programme
- The outputs from the ITRDS Strategy – particularly the future use of key assets
- The optimisation of the use of assets in coastal towns.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**                      There are gaps in the market in terms of overnight accommodation, ranging from camping to quality/luxury accommodation.  
 There is a potential gap in the market in terms of a water-based landing base / marina for larger tourist vessels.  
 There is a requirement to develop the borough proposition for visitor investor and place. Toilet requirements for projected growth and existing high demand peak season towns/villages need to be considered.(Portaferry)  
 There is also potential for this area, due (a) proximity to Belfast city centre and (b) strong transport links for Holywood / Bangor coast to become an area of high quality residential demand for staff who work in city centre but prefer to live on the outskirts.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**                      At this stage it is difficult to define specific efficiencies in this area until the further studies are completed, however there are assets that should be challenged further such as;  
 The Council own a high number of assets in key locations particularly coastal areas that could be utilised better to the benefit of the community.  
 The VICs(Visitor Information Centres)- may not be in the optimum location to optimise maximum engagement with visitors  
 Council should consider the location and use of all of the car parks in the Borough.(average utilisation of car parks in Bangor is around 40%- (implying over supply or a need to stimulate greater town centre footfall). A further work is required in this context- (eg (motorhome sector growth, possible event space and lack of coach parking all being potential uses for surplus provision)

**Key Actions**                      **Actions being taken forward as part of the ITRDS action plan in this area, particularly: Town & Village Renewal (through Village Renewal Programmes: Borough wide urban strategy: branding strategy and Coastal masterplan)**

**Strategic Objective**                      **2.4 Nurture our Assets**

**Assets involved**                      **Town & Village assets: Regeneration Sites:**

**Targets:**                                      Attain targets as set out in the ITRDS strategy

**Where we are**                              As can be seen there are strong links with the ITRDS Strategy and the objectives within the Community Plan. As such there is a strong link between this objective and the work of the Council's Environment Directorate. Town and Village Regeneration outputs to be determined via Borough Masterplan and Rural programme including Queens Parade.

A key issue in this context appears to be a number of issues around housing – in particular the optimum location of **new housing**; the links from housing to other key assets such as schools and towns and village centres.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**                      Initially there would appear to be no gaps in provision, however going forward, as Community Planning develops it is anticipated that there will be gaps in the following areas ;

- Areas, close to, or within communities, where assets could be used for the social economy
- Areas which could address any gaps in the provision of housing or links from housing to destination points
- As per the Arts & Heritage Strategy there is a gap for a ' One Stop Shop' for all arts & heritage information in town & village centres

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**                      TBC – potentially land within communities that it is never envisaged will be of use to the communities and could be better used by others(consideration of shared space with other services)

**Key actions**                                      **The appropriate actions within the ITRDS in particular: vacancy rates (and reasons) in town centres: use of tourism assets to maximum benefit: buildings at risk registers, and condition / suitability surveys of existing assets**

<b><u>Strategic Area</u></b>	<b><u>Environment:</u></b>
<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>3.1 Increase access to the natural environment</b>
<b>Assets involved</b>	<b>Nature Reserves ; 'Land': picnic areas; memorials: woodland; harbours , marinas</b>
<b>Targets:</b>	Increase numbers of visitors to natural environment assets as listed
<b>Where we are</b>	<p>The Council does have direct control and ownership of some built heritage assets and natural environment in the form of monuments and open spaces that it will be much easier to ensure that these are accessible</p> <p>The importance of key assets such as public toilets cannot be underestimated as these can provide locations where people can 'stop' in order to access the environment.</p> <p>DDA compliance across a number of facilities is important aspect and is being taken account of</p>
<b>Gaps in provision (areas for investment)</b>	<p>There would appear to be gaps in provision at key locations that provide 'gateways' to key natural assets – specifically; the coastal routes.</p> <p>A public toilet provision strategy is in place which defines the needs / requirements for each of these assets. In addition to this work it may be worth analysing these assets (due to their location in key areas) to establish if their use could be widened in order to enhance / facilitate access to the natural environment (eg through expansion to include changing facilities for walkers / cyclists etc?).</p>
<b>Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)</b>	<p>By the nature of this objective there would not be any apparent gaps at this stage as the assets in question are small in scale. However further to the analysis highlighted above these may become more apparent. There is however an opportunity to partner with the third sector and central government when it comes to maximising the benefits associated with built heritage and natural heritage.</p>
<b>Key Actions</b>	<b>Liaison and tracking of the outcomes from the Greenways and Blueways strategies (to define the key access locations where the public will obtain access to the environment)</b>
<b>Strategic Objective</b>	<b>3.2 Invest in, and promote, facilities, outdoor spaces and natural heritage</b>
<b>Assets involved</b>	<b>Cemeteries; Nature Reserves ; Public Toilets: 'Land': picnic areas; memorials: woodland</b>
<b>Targets</b>	Reduce maintenance costs associated with the relevant assets
<b>Where we are</b>	<p>Council does have direct control or ownership of certain aspects of the natural environment such as nature reserves, cemeteries, amenity spaces, public toilets / pavilions and general open space, including coastal areas</p> <p>The Council's Assets Team have a management plan in place for most of these assets at a cost of approx. £250K pa, but a longer term maintenance plan (based on longer term condition reports)</p>

would be a next step, and consistent with the approach taken within this document.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

The gaps would be specific to the particular assets – ie in terms of work required to maintain the asset to the appropriate standards There are gaps at present in the provision of cemeteries which require specific land – also for this reason it would be useful to devise a cemetery development strategy or plan from a longer term perspective.

A set of longer term (focussed) condition surveys on the ley assets involved, along with an accompanying longer term maintenance programme would be helpful in being able to provide focussed, prioritised investment in these assets.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

By the nature of this objective there would not be any ‘surplus’ assets at this stage as the assets in question are small in scale. However there will be opportunities to analyse certain assets, particularly in coastal areas , that will be of particular interest or value

**Key Actions**

**Long term condition / suitability surveys of key heritage assets**

**Strategic Objective**

**3.3 Reduce reliance on landfill and reduce energy**

**Assets involved**

**Waste recycling centres: Depots**

**Targets**

Exceed all NI targets in relation to landfill.  
Increase visits to HRCS

**Where we are**

Council does have direct ownership and therefore control of this objective.

The approach is on a number of fronts;

Rationalise the location of recycling centres to ensure they are in the most appropriate position and large and equipped enough to cater for all relevant recycling to allow maximum accessibility by the community  
Depots are positioned to allow the travel distances and costs to be reduced as much as possible  
The maximum use of alternative energy and reduction in energy costs to the Council.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

There are no apparent gaps in provision in relation to this objective. Renewable Energy is potentially an area that could be make good use of council assets to generate income but this is not as fruitful as it used to be. However an analysis of council sites to establish which land could be used for renewable energy, would be a useful exercise

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

Whilst there are no established benchmarks for locations of facilities and assets in relation to this area of functionality, comparisons can be made across other Councils.

In this context a quantum of 10 Council Recycling Centres for the population involved would appear high, particularly when it is

considered that there are additional CRCs in close proximity to the Council border area.

Similarly vehicle maintenance and travel times / costs could be improved through the optimum location of depots and stores in this area.

Whilst the assets in the 2 main towns appears to be robust and meeting needs, there is definite potential for an optimisation study to determine the most appropriate locations for CRCs and depots,

**Key Actions**

**An HRC/ depot / transfer station rationalisation study**

**Strategic Area**

**Administration & Core services**

**Strategic Objective**

**4.1 Maximise potential of staff to deliver outcomes**

**Assets involved**

**Offices: Civic Spaces:**

**Targets**

Improve staff satisfaction levels  
Improve workplace provision and levels of collaborative working

**Where we are**

This objective relates directly to how the Council's estate is aligned with its organisational structures and also how content and productive the Council staff are – both of which relate to the accommodation location and needs. At present the Council has administrative staff in 8 locations (including the VICs and Arts Centre, Community Development in South St and others) at an annual cost of approx. £800K

The costs of running these assets are a key indicator of how efficient the administration is.

As well as the cost of travel for staff between sites needs to be factored in.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**

The gaps in provision are all 'potential' but could be categorised as follows;

New administrative centre in the borough that will allow the Council admin services to function cohesively and collaboratively.

Ability of Council to meet all recognised workplace standards.

New or reconfigured administrative or satellite centre(s) in peripheral areas.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

Depending on how the gaps are filled above there will be potentially be surplus accommodation in the locations where existing administrative offices currently are situated.

Additional significant efficiencies can be gained from bringing the costs and space standards for office accommodation in line with recognised industry benchmarks

Further efficiencies are gained by locating office / communal spaces in central locations.

**Key Actions**                      **A Civic Office rationalisation strategy**

**Strategic Objective**                      **4.2 Enhance delivery of services to citizens**

**Assets involved**                      **Offices: Civic Spaces: Town Halls ; Town & Village assets**

**Targets**                                      Reduce numbers of locations that the citizen has to visit to receive public services

**Where we are**                              At present the Council uses its administrative buildings to deliver core services, such as registration (of births, deaths, marriages), Planning, Building Control, Environmental Health and Civic functions. The current issue is, that in the event of a re-organisation of assets, and increasing focus on digital services, will this continue to be the case or should some (or all) of these become separated from the admin functions.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**                              The potential to re-organise the assets in order to reflect the actual impact of digital services and rationalised estate, in the same context of providing a front of house service to citizens who need this. This may introduce the concept of a 'one-stop-shop' or hubs in certain towns (which could be combined with other public services) or an 'active ground floor' in admin buildings which are focussed towards citizen services.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**                              Depending on the outcome of analysis to determine how existing arrangements between admin functions and citizen facing services, and how much services are going to be delivered on line, there will be surplus space identified within existing assets. These will primarily be the existing Council offices in Newtownards and Bangor but also in those buildings which deliver services which are gradually translating to digital access.

**Key Actions**                              **Look at a number of options for the future delivery of core services As part of the civic office rationalisation study mentioned above.**

**Strategic Objective**                      **4.3 Managing people, money & assets effectively  
4.4 Financially responsibility for delivery of corporate objectives**

**Assets involved**                      **Leased assets: Undefined assets: Surplus assets**

**Targets**                                      Reduce overall operational cost of the estate  
Increase capital receipts from sale of surplus assets to help fund capital programme

**Where we are**                              This objective is possibly the one whereby the methodology outlined in this strategy will have most direct impact. The 'gap analysis' and 'asset challenge' processes adopted in developing n this strategy is key in achieving this objective. However there are a number of further actions that will considerably enhance the ability to achieve this objective in fully.

**Gaps in provision (areas for investment)**                              The 'gaps' are directly related to tightening up of the processes and principles related to asset management. The detail of these processes and potential assets involved will be detailed in the Asset Management Plan, to follow.

**Opportunities for efficiencies (divestment / performance)**

This is a key aspect for this objective as there could be quite a number of assets that could be declared surplus – or could bring value to the Council if released for alternative use. These are not clearly defined as yet, and won't be until the actions underway are completed. The assets that are relevant here are;

- The car parks are potentially valuable development assets, Some of the urban parks, amenity land (particularly in coastal areas) and playing fields have frontages on to main roads and as such have development potential
- All property that is currently leased by the Council
- Areas of land in potentially valuable locations that is not otherwise being used by the Council. --Property on the key link route between Belfast and North Down is critical in terms of potential value. Tracking the potential demand for these sort of uses is critical and should be carried out along with the ITRDS Action Plan and Local Development Plan as well as regular input from key professionals.

**Key Actions**

**The Asset Challenge/ Performance process outlined in 3.1, whereby each asset, particularly those of high marketable value, is subject to a robust challenge process.**

**Use of GIS to demonstrate the location of Council assets in the context of key factors eg : town centre boundaries: development limit boundaries: new housing developments : key zoned land etc**

## **Part 4 – How we plan to get there**

The process of developing the asset strategy has led to a number of Themes for delivery:

**Delivery Theme 1 - Active asset management:** Assets will be actively reviewed and appraised to consider their role in realising strategic priorities. In parallel the Council will develop the specialist skills and processes required to embed and progress modern public sector asset management practices.

**Delivery Theme 2 – Investing for strategic outcomes:** Investment activity will be targeted and aligned around four strategic priorities: (1) community and people, (2) economy, regeneration and tourism, (3) environment, (4) Admin and Core Services.

**Delivery Theme 3 – Release and recycle the value of surplus or underperforming assets:** inefficient or non-value adding assets will be divested so that receipts can be recycled to help support the delivery of strategic priorities.

**Delivery Theme 4 – Revenue management:** revenue generating assets will be actively reviewed to ensure that income is commensurate with the value offered.

**Delivery Theme 5 – Support service continuity and strengthen resilience:** assets will be organised or configured to support community outcomes, economic development, environmental objectives and Administrative demands and in doing so efforts will be taken to support service continuity and to strengthen resilience.

### **Delivery Theme 1: Active Asset Management:**

- Regularly challenge the asset base
- Adapt / reconfigure governance structures to centralise all asset related business with (a) an SRO (Asset Champion) (b) Assets Working Group, and (c) Leadership roles well defined.
- Implement a rolling programme of work to challenges the retention, use and value delivered by the Council's assets.
- Training and support for incumbent staff.
- Development and implementation of new processes.

- Implementation & population of a new Asset Information System.
- Use of GIS technologies to provide up to date, co-ordinated and relevant data to support evidence for outputs.

## **Delivery Theme 2: Investing for strategic outcomes**

**Investment will be targeted and aligned with the following areas:**

### **1) Community & People**

- Greenways
- Regional Park at Whitespots
- Parks and open spaces (both urban & destination parks)
- Gaps in Sport & Leisure provision as defined in Sports Facilities Strategy
- Investment opportunities emanating from the Bangor Waterfront Masterplan, the Coastal masterplan and Queens Parade developments
- Joint projects with education/ health or others as appropriate

### **2) Economic, Regeneration & Tourism**

- Facilities to encourage / facilitate entrepreneurship in all locations
- Facilities to allow businesses to grow and expand in the prioritised areas
- Assets for inward investors to utilise / acquire
- Regeneration of towns & villages through acquisition or redevelopment
- Regeneration initiatives (Queens Parade / Hollywood / Greenways)
- Land to facilitate fibre connectivity
- Facilities to encourage tourism (new and existing) on the East coast and other potential hubs
- Key areas e.g. peninsula - development of a 'chain' of stop-off or destination points

### **3) Environment**

Assets that provide 'gateways' to key areas of natural environment  
 Cemetery provision in Borough  
 Public Toilets / Pavilions / Centres of focus  
 New HRCs / Depot sites

### **4) Admin & Core Services**

New (rationalised) civic offices & workplace environments as part of a specific estate strategy for these functions  
 New (rationalised) facilities for providing core services to citizens - Hubs  
 Refurbishment of civic offices / spaces as identified to be retained

### **Delivery Theme 3: Release and recycle the value of surplus or underperforming assets:**

The value from underperforming or surplus assets will be released and recycled to support the delivery of strategic priorities, supporting the principles of value for money:

#### **5) Community**

- Small pockets of space that are of use to others
- Existing leisure provision in N'Ards
- Assets released as result of Sports Facilities & Pitches Strategies
- Specific parks or play parks that result from a robust analysis of provision based on quality criteria

#### **6) Economic**

- Identification of land that will be in demand by private sector investors / businesses in the area
- Land in town centres / development areas; eg car parks , VICs,
- Other land close to development boundaries (TBC after further analysis)
- Land that will be of use in meeting the housing needs in the area
- Potential acquisitions of key assets that will bring significant benefit ( land and buildings)

#### **7) Environment**

- A number of HRCs as a result of any capital investment / rationalisation
- Amenity land that may be of value
- Any land that is identified as being surplus further to the analysis outlined in the Asset Management Plan, to follow

#### **8) Admin and Core Services**

- Existing administrative accommodation
- Assets known to be of interest to others
- Civic accommodation released as part of the Civic Office reconfiguration
- Land / assets that are in key locations eg coastal route ; tourism areas – that is potentially of value to others
- Land that is of interest for residential opportunities

### **Delivery Theme 4 – Revenue management:**

Opportunities for optimising revenues and asset utilisation will be identified and implemented:

#### **1) Community**

- Improved information around room / space availability
- Improved booking & charging mechanisms for space in Council facilities

- Maximising the spaces available for use by community & private sector across ALL Council facilities

## **2) Economic**

- Improved mechanism for charging
- Establishing robust mechanism to track and monitor demand for assets in the borough
- Review the Visitor Information servicing
- Track all actions from the ITRDS at regular intervals to ensure maximum revenue opportunities
- Establish all available commercial space in Council's asset base and match against potential demand

## **3) Environment**

- Identify areas where car parking could be located to allow access to environment
- Ensure charging policies for outdoor spaces & heritage sites is appropriate
- Reduce cost of travel of waste vehicles by optimising the locations of depots
- Reduce cost of recycling centres by optimising the facilities
- Utilise specific Council assets for renewable forms of energy to reduce the cost of 'bought in' energy

## **4) Admin and Core Services**

- Reduce cost of travel & subsistence by Council staff through optimising the civic office locations
- Reduce energy costs across the council's asset base by targeting appropriate benchmarks
- Implementing an Estate Strategy and Asset Management Plan to ensure that the Council focuses and prioritises investment in areas of most need

### **Delivery Theme 5 – Support service continuity and strengthen resilience:**

#### **1) Community**

- Ensure condition reports obtained for all existing Community provision that is prioritised within the Asset Management Plan
- Ensure the operational processes in each are robust
- Maintenance programme in place for all assets that are fully functional

## **2) Economic**

- Ensure condition reports obtained for all existing assets(car parks, museums, cultural facilities, economic development and tourist facilities) as prioritised within the Asset Management Plan
- Ensure the operational processes in each are robust for tourism facilities and car parks
- Maintenance programme in place for all assets (car parks, museums, cultural facilities and tourist facilities) that are fully functional

## **3) Environment**

- Ensure condition reports obtained for all existing Cemetery provision that is prioritised within the Asset Management Plan
- Condition Reports and associated maintenance programmes for all HRCs and Depots in Council's ownership
- Ensure the operational processes in each are robust
- Instigate the maintenance programme in place for public toilet provision
- Collate a maintenance programme for all harbours & marinas as a consequence of an appropriate plan

## **4) Admin and Core Services**

- Ensure condition reports obtained for all existing Civic & Office provision within the Asset Management Plan
- Use the objectives within the civic offices programme to establish optimum arrangements for existing office locations
- Monitor the delivery of services to citizens and take account of necessary changes
- Maintenance programme in place for all administrative & civic assets

## Part 5; Recommendations

A series of detailed recommendations are contained in a working document that underpins this strategy. The overarching recommendations can however be summarised as follows;

1. A senior member of the Council staff should take ownership of, and responsibility for, delivery of the Council's Estate Strategy. Further, to create new, or adapt existing, governance arrangements to centralise all estate-related outputs and decisions. This could take the form of a committee, panel, forum, department or other structural arrangements. (**Annex A** provides further detail on a good practice governance model, which can be used as the basis for new structures, albeit adapted to suit the Council's existing Directorate structure). Further details, and how the Council can adapt governance structures accordingly, will be annexed to the Asset Management Plan which follows this strategy.
2. The agreed Capital Prioritisation Process, as approved by the council for the current capital programme, will also be used as the basis of the prioritisation process from this Estate Strategy
3. A step by step disposal process will be developed and implemented to support processing any assets that are potentially surplus. Give consideration to using the Land and Property Services (LPS) Central Disposal Process.
4. An Asset Management Plan that details the future plan for all assets should be developed over the next 3-4 months from the approval of this strategy.
5. A full Asset Information System should be procured and implemented over the 12 months following approval of this strategy.
6. Appropriate benchmarks for use across the estate to be developed for inclusion in this system.

7. A GIS resource be made available in order to assist with the collation of all relevant information in GIS format to support all of the outputs / proposals from the Asset Management Plan as it is being developed. All land and property assets should have a pointer reference or GIS Global Unique Identifier (GUID).
  
8. Establishment of a sub-group, to the Community Planning Strategic Partnership, that will take forward collaborative estates issues on a whole-public sector approach to estate planning in the borough. This group to be chaired / facilitated, by the Council