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## Leisure and Amenities Service

**2020-2021**

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<b>Date</b>	30/10/2020
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<b>Date</b>	02/11/2020

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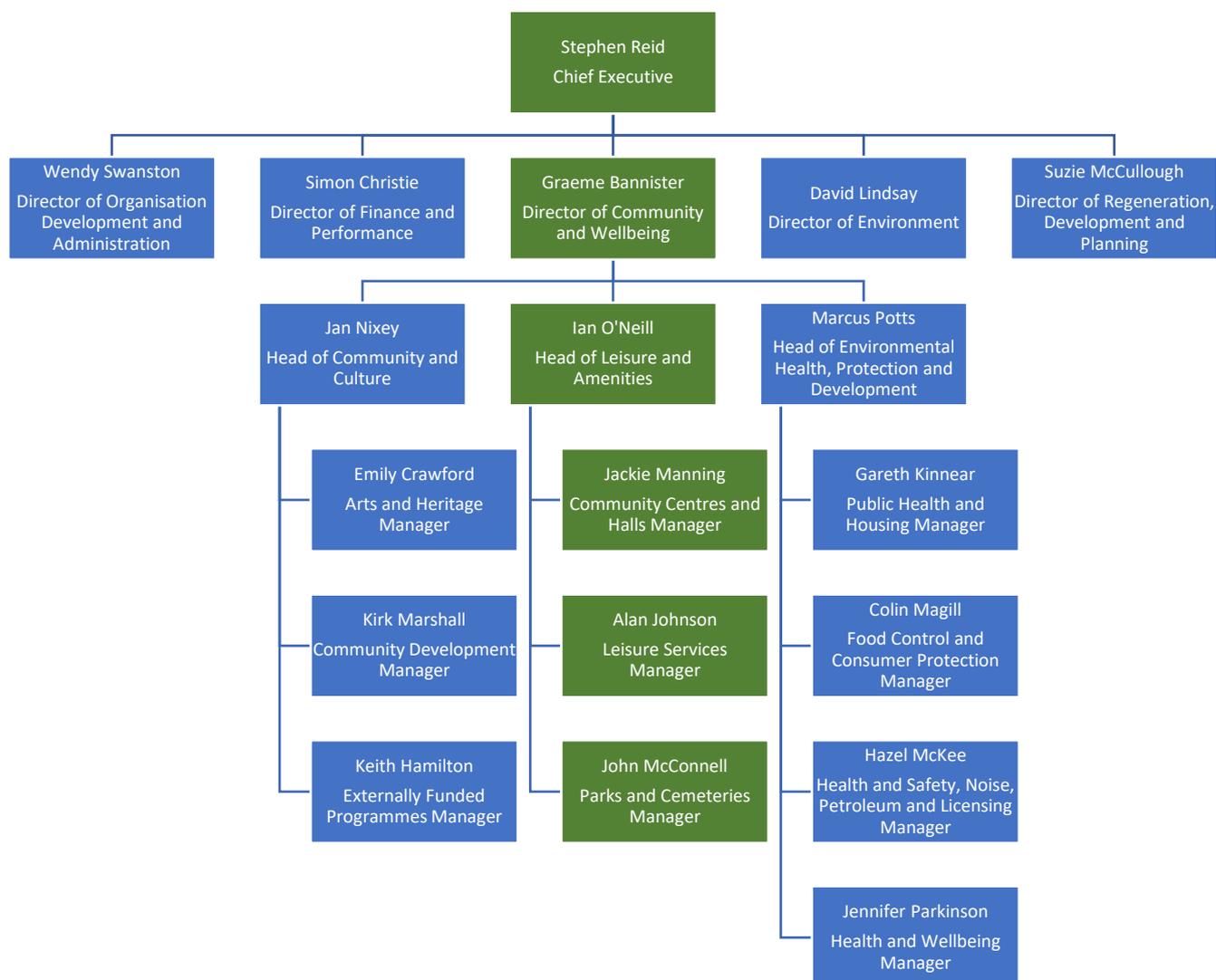
# 1. Introduction.

## 1.1 Section Profile:

The Leisure & Amenities Service Area comprises of:

Three distinct service units – Leisure Services, Community Centres & Halls and Parks and Cemeteries. The service area comprises of a Head of Service and a Service Unit Manager for each service unit. Within the three units there are 218 full time equivalent posts.

The chart below shows where Leisure and Amenities sits within the organisation, and in green the reporting relationship:



## Leisure Services

The Leisure Service is delivered through the provision of a range of indoor leisure centres, sports pitches and associated pavilions, parks, playgrounds, open spaces, tennis courts, bowling greens and a designated Sport Development Unit. The management and operation of the facilities is undertaken by a team of well qualified and skilled individuals all committed to ensuring facilities are fit for purpose and where the service is delivered the delivery is done to the highest standard and specification. The service also includes Countryside

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Recreation and an Outdoor Recreation service which were integrated into Leisure Services in 2019.

The service has been developed to offer opportunities for everyone, regardless of their age, ability or gender to gain maximum benefit from their activity whether it is undertaken for health benefits, sporting excellence or simply to make the most of their recreation time. Through direct and indirect support, we help individuals, clubs and associations to maximise their potential to participate in their chosen activity at whatever level they aspire to. This is achieved through, but not limited to, functions such as Sports Development who manage grants to individuals and clubs to fulfil their sporting potential, the leisure centres where everyone can participate in a wide range of sporting, leisure and recreational activities, parks, playgrounds and other outdoor recreational spaces that offer residents and visitors alike the chance to explore and enjoy the very beautiful area that is the Ards and North Down Borough. The appointment of an Outdoor Recreation Officer has created the opportunity to place more emphasis on play and recreation in our natural environment as well as more structured play in built environments such as playgrounds, skate parks and pump tracks. The growing popularity of these types of facilities with older children is likely to see a greater emphasis on their development.

### **Community Centres and Halls**

The Council has direct responsibility for the provision of twenty-one Community Centres and Halls across the borough. These facilities are managed by this section who are responsible for all aspects of the provision including staffing, customer service, budgets and marketing. The section provides a staffing resource for all bookings to ensure that all customers are provided with a quality service.

The Community Centres and Halls section maintain a directory of the users of the Council's community facilities which is available to the public and would encourage attendance at community organised groups or commercial enterprises using the facilities to increase bookings and usage. User Forums have been established in Redburn and Ballygowan to encourage discussion between user groups to improve their experience and drive bookings in these centres, these have been reviewed and there is an intention to expand the programme to include four User Forums over the next two years across the Borough to facilitate inclusion for all the users of Councils Community Centres and Halls.

### **Parks, Cemeteries & Amenities**

The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service has responsibility for the maintenance and development of approximately 292 hectares of open space including all sports surfaces, cemeteries and other burial grounds. The cleaning of designated soft sand amenity beaches and associated promenades along Council leased foreshore is also carried out by the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service. In addition, the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service helps to enhance the appearance of the Borough through floral displays and other plantings at selected high profile locations. The work of the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service also helps to raise the profile of the Borough through competitions such as Green Flag, Ulster In Bloom and Best Kept awards. In addition to the existing service elements listed above, additional functions have transferred to the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service. These include taking forward the Councils Biodiversity duty, provision of allotments, burial administration, and car park landscape maintenance. The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service carries out its activities on Council owned property and, in some cases, property owned by other agencies, for example DRD Roads roundabouts and verges.

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An important and integral part of the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service is to carry out earth burials and the interment of cremated remains in 13 of its 20 cemeteries within the Borough. The seven cemeteries which we do not allow burials in are old churchyards which the Council maintains.

All grounds maintenance and burial operations, including the cleaning of soft sand amenity beaches, promenades and paddling pools, are currently undertaken by “in-house” staff with selected specialist work undertaken by the private sector. The “in-house” team comprises of a three tier management structure, under which a well-trained, skilled workforce carry out multi-functional activities.

The Parks and Cemeteries service section has a service vision statement which underpins the Corporate vision;

“It is our vision that the Parks and Cemeteries service will deliver well maintained Parks, Cemeteries and Open Spaces across the Borough contributing to the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors while protecting and enhancing the natural environment.” Our service will be **Innovative, Inspirational and Inclusive** and our Staff will be **Visionary, Vibrant and Valued**.

## 1.2 Why do we deliver the service?

The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 requires Ards and North Down Borough Council to initiate, maintain, facilitate and participate in Community Planning for our district. As part of the Community Plan, Leisure & Amenities contributes to the wellbeing of our citizens by enabling participation and inclusion through many different means, including sport and leisure, parks and open spaces and offering facilities for communities to meet so improving the quality of life for our citizens.

The main statutory obligations for the Parks and Cemeteries service fall under:  
Burial Ground Regulations (NI)1992  
Food and Environment Protection Act 1985  
The Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994.  
Habitats Directive  
Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

Whilst there is no statutory requirement for Council to directly provide leisure facilities or community centres and halls the Council is still required under the Recreation and Youth Service Order (Northern Ireland) 1986. “Each district council shall secure the provision for its area of adequate facilities for recreational, social, physical and cultural activities”.

## 1.3 What is the purpose of the service?

Councils Corporate Plan - Vision – “Ards and North Down is a vibrant, connected, healthy, safe and prosperous place to be”.

The Leisure and Amenities section contributes towards several areas of the The Big Plan objectives due to the wide span of activities performed within the section:

**All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment. (Big Plan outcome 5)** – The Parks and Cemeteries service unit manage and maintain green spaces across the Borough and through the Biodiversity Officer,

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the service provides an understanding of how we protect our natural environment whilst enjoying sporting, recreational and leisure pursuits.  
In addition, the service provides a robust, inclusive and sensitive cemetery service across the Borough.

**All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing (Big Plan Outcome 2)** – The leisure service unit contributes to this objective by providing and facilitating a diverse and affordable range of quality sport, leisure and recreational opportunities to all our citizens in a safe friendly and vibrant fun environment so affording the opportunity for all to be healthier, happier and proud of the Borough in which they live.

Sport, leisure and recreation, both in structured and unstructured forms, provides our citizens with numerous physical health, psychological, economic and environmental benefits which are associated with a high quality of life through participation in sport, recreation and leisure. This affords the opportunity for a healthier lifestyle for all and facilitates greater cognitive development, self-esteem, social interaction, economic spending, conservation of natural lands and community vibrancy.

**All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential (Outcome 1)** – The Community Centres and Halls service unit provide bookable facilities for all members of the Community to avail of, with discounts for community groups across the Borough. The facilities act as venues for many activities aimed at elderly residents of the Borough.

Within the Leisure service unit, the Sports Development section contributes towards this objective by supporting the work of the Sports Forum to support local athletes and clubs to create pathways for athletic progression across the Borough.

## 2. Customers/Stakeholders

### 2.1 Who are your customers and what do you know about them?

Customers/Stakeholders	Profile / characteristics	Interest <i>How much does our work and our plans impact upon this stakeholder and vice versa? (Low, Medium or High)</i>	Power <i>How much influence does this stakeholder have over the success or failure of our work and our plans? (Low, Medium or High)</i>	Support <i>What is this stakeholder's current view of our work and our plans? (Supporter, Neutral or Critic)</i>
Residents	Population: approximately 160,000 residents 20% over 65 17.5% under 15 45% under 40 Life expectancy of 81, highest in Northern Ireland	H	M	N
Elected Members	40 Elected members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 14 DUP</li> <li>• 10 Alliance</li> <li>• 8 UUP</li> <li>• 3 Green</li> <li>• 1 SDLP</li> <li>• 1 TUV</li> <li>• 3 Independent</li> </ul>	H	H	S
Senior Council Officers	Stephen Reid, Chief Executive Graeme Bannister, Director of Community and Wellbeing,	H	H	S

<b>Customers/Stakeholders</b>	<b>Profile / characteristics</b>	<b>Interest</b> <i>How much does our work and our plans impact upon this stakeholder and vice versa? (Low, Medium or High)</i>	<b>Power</b> <i>How much influence does this stakeholder have over the success or failure of our work and our plans? (Low, Medium or High)</i>	<b>Support</b> <i>What is this stakeholder's current view of our work and our plans? (Supporter, Neutral or Critic)</i>
	Corporate Leadership Team			
Heads of Service,	Ian O'Neill, Head of Leisure and Amenities, other Heads of Service	H	H	S
Section Heads	Alan Johnson, Leisure Services Manager Jackie Manning, Community Centres and Halls Manager John McConnell, Parks and Cemeteries Manager	H	H	S
Staff	329 staff – 179 in Leisure, 109 in Parks and Cemeteries, 35 in Community Centres & Halls and 6 in Administration	H	H	S
Other Sections within Council	Over 900 employees across 5 directorates	H	M	S
Stormont Assembly/ Elected Members	MLAs and MPs active in constituency matters	L	L	N
Central Government including NIEA departments and DfCL	Civil Service departments with legislative and enforcement responsibilities	H	M	N

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Health Trusts	Partners in the Health Agenda	H	M	N
SEELB/Schools	Partners in the Education Agenda	H	M	N
Local Community Groups	Locally organised groups to support the Community plans	M	M	S
Sport NI	Provide partner support to Sports Development and funding for sporting activity	M	H	S
Governing Bodies	Provide advice and support to sports clubs	M	H	S
Sports Associations	Provide advice and support to sports clubs	H	H	S
Local Clubs/Leagues	Provide pathways for participation	H	H	S
Local Players	Facility users	H	H	S
Ratepayers of Borough	Fund services through rates	H	H	C
Facility Users	Provide income through paying for services and use the facilities	H	H	S
Facility Non Users	Potential customers, the inactive and disconnected	L	L	C

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Suppliers/Contractors	Private sector enterprises reliant upon income from services	M	L	S
Funeral Directors	Private enterprises working in partnership with the cemeteries service	H	M	S
Monumental Sculptors	Private enterprises working in partnership with the cemeteries service	H	M	S
NGOs (E.g National Trust, Woodland Trust)	Lobby/pressure groups for areas of specific interest	H	M	C

## 2.2 What are your customer's and stakeholder's needs/demand levels?

Customers/Stakeholders	Needs / demands from the service
Residents	Well managed leisure and recreational facilities that cater for a wide variety of sports and recreational activities and encourage health and wellbeing in residents whilst being competitively priced. Well managed community halls across the borough with affordable prices and equal access for all residents. Well managed parks and open spaces promoting biodiversity and encouraging use from all members of the community to promote health and wellbeing.
Elected Members	The effective implementation of Council decisions and a responsive and effective service to assist Members with constituency queries.
Senior Council Officers	A well-managed efficient service delivering on Member's expectations in accordance with principles of good governance.
Head of Service, Leisure and Amenities	Services that are well managed and delivered in accordance with principles of good governance.
Section Heads	Teams that are well managed and motivated to deliver high quality services.
Staff	Consistent employment, training and remuneration at appropriate rates. With clear direction and support to complete their jobs with pride.
Other Sections within Council	Reports or requests for information delivered on time and in an appropriate format.
Stormont Assembly/ Central Government	Activities that meet national activity requirements.
NIEA	Outdoor spaces that are managed sustainably.
Health Trusts	Activities that support healthy lifestyles and specifically management of referral programmes.
SEELB/Schools	Schools swimming programmes and other curricular and extra-curricular activities delivered cost effectively.
NCLT/Serco	Clear communication on shared priorities, alignment of pricing structures.
Local Community Groups	Facilities at reasonable prices.
DfCL	Activities that meet national activity requirements.
Sport NI	Activities that meet national activity requirements.
Governing Bodies	Time and space at agreeable price levels
Sports Associations	Time and space at agreeable price levels
Local Clubs/Leagues	Time and space at agreeable price levels
Local Players	Time and space at agreeable price levels
Facility Users	Clean and safe facilities set up on time at a reasonable price
Facility Non Users	Addition of new activities and marketing that may make them users in the future

Customers/Stakeholders	Needs / demands from the service
Suppliers	Awareness of purchasing procedures and payment in good time when goods have been delivered
Funeral Directors	Clear and consistent communication and accurate booking procedures
Monumental Sculptors	Clear and consistent communication and accurate booking procedures
Contractors	Clear tender/quotation documentation and timely payment of invoices
NGOs	Partnership approach based on engagement and involvement.
Volunteers	Assistance with facilitating their activities, communication about planned work to best target their activities.

### 2.3 Customer satisfaction / needs

Satisfaction surveys are regularly carried out with Leisure Centre users and Community Halls users to establish their satisfaction levels. Surveys are planned to be carried out with funeral directors and memorial masons who are the customers of the Cemeteries Service.

The main source of feedback from residents on the service is via the Residents Survey which Council conducts every four years. In the most recent survey conducted in 2018 the satisfaction levels with each service area were:

Community Centres/services: 98% satisfied, 2% unsatisfied

Play parks and open spaces: 96% satisfied, 3% unsatisfied, 1% neutral

Leisure Centres: 95% satisfied, 4% unsatisfied, 1% neutral

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## 3. Context, Challenges and Assumptions

### 3.1 Context

The creation of Ards and North Down Borough Council also saw the establishment of a number of new departments including the Department of Community and Wellbeing, within this department a new Leisure and Amenities section was created with the responsibility to manage the delivery of a Leisure Service, Community Centres and Halls and Parks, Cemeteries & Amenities on behalf of the Council.

Whilst there is no statutory requirement for Council to directly provide leisure facilities the Council is still required under the Recreation and Youth Service Order 1973 to secure adequate provision for leisure within the Council area. In 2013 North Down Borough Council became the first Council in Northern Ireland to outsource this requirement to an external provider; The Northern Community Leisure Trust (NCLT) and their management agents Serco. NCLT were appointed on a 10-year contract to manage the new state of the art facility, Aurora, and the Queens Leisure Centre in Holywood with the later addition of Ballykillaire and all outdoor pitches managed by North Down Borough Council. In June 2017 Council decided to continue to operate with the legacy Ards service being retained in house. The initial 10-year contract is due to end in 2023 and a decision on whether to extend the contract for a further 5 years, as allowed for in the original contract, or look at alternative delivery models will need to be agreed soon to allow officers of the Council and their counterparts in Serco to prepare for whatever the Council decides to do.

Leisure operates in a very competitive environment and the full range of leisure, sporting, play and recreational facilities and spaces operated by Ards and North Down Borough Council will compete for the discretionary leisure income, that residents and visitors to the area wish to spend on their chosen leisure activities, with private facility providers, other leisure activities such as cinemas, bars and restaurants, home entertainment and even schools and colleges who are now opening up their facilities for public use.

Community Centres and Halls operate in a very competitive market where facilities such as Church Halls, Community Houses, Community Owned Halls, Private Social Clubs and Private Hire Facilities are looking to offset running costs by offering their halls for hire at very competitive prices.

Although many of the groups making use of the Council's community centres and halls benefit from discounted rates for use of the facilities, many also benefit by receiving various grants, or have sought payment for hire of the facilities through other Council departments who have supported and assisted with set up and running of these groups.

In recent times Council has seen a reduction in the level of grants coming into these groups and this has resulted in a downturn in the quantity of bookings from these groups.

The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities services are generally delivered within clear statutory boundaries and with the intent on providing social and environmental benefits to the area.

The main statutory obligations for the service fall under:

Burial Ground Regulations (NI)1992

Food and Environment Protection Act 1985

The Litter (Northern Ireland) Order 1994.

Habitats Directive

Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011

The appointment of a Biodiversity Officer adds scope to the section to provide a greater understanding of the local environment both internally and externally.

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The Biodiversity Officer role within Local Authorities can broadly be described as protecting, managing and enhancing the local environment by promoting awareness and understanding of the natural environment among the general public and integrating biodiversity with planning, development and management.

This service plan was originally written prior to the Covid-19 outbreak which has added significant additional pressures to the Leisure and Amenities section as indeed it has across the whole Council. The particular methods for controlling transmission of the virus are in many ways antithetical to the Service such as maintaining distance from other people and not gathering in indoor spaces. In addition to this, many of the measures imposed by the Northern Ireland Executive to control the virus have had a direct impact, such as enforced closure of facilities and prevention of certain activities taking place. There has also been an impact on the workforce of the new restrictions in the office environments and an introduction of homeworking and virtual meetings necessitated by Council, as well as additional cleaning regimes and restrictions on numbers of staff in enclosed spaces. This situation is a developing one and the context may continue to change as we as a society combat the spread of the virus. The Service Plan has been updated in an attempt to take account of this ever changing situation.

### **Political**

This has been the 5<sup>th</sup> full operating year of the new Council and as such we are now starting to fully understand the needs and expectations of the Council towards the delivery of leisure and amenities. The Council was newly elected in 2019 and the makeup of different parties has shifted which may affect our plans.

The Stormont assembly has recently returned to sitting after a long period without ministers. The implications of this are unknown in terms of funding priorities

With Brexit incoming, we do not believe that there will be a major impact on the service whether there is a deal or no deal as we have little interaction with EU bodies and whilst we do employ workers from other EU countries, we are not overly reliant on them. The service also does not purchase significant goods from overseas other than pool chemicals and work has commenced to resolve this potential difficulty.

### **Economic**

Local Authority expenditure is under increasing pressure with reduced central grant and expected low increases in the level of domestic rates, this means that leisure will have to maximise income and minimise expenditure to achieve the highest possible levels of efficiency and effectiveness. Council as a whole will need to pursue external funding in order to fund service improvements.

Disposable income remains an issue for many families with stagnancy in pay meaning families have less to spend on leisure. Unemployment remains an issue in the Council geographic area and with fewer jobs being created there is a distinct possibility this will continue to increase into the future. Leisure will have to ensure that those spending their disposable income on leisure recognise the leisure opportunities provided by the Council as excellent value for money compared to other leisure providers in the area. This in turn presents both opportunities and challenges for our free to use outdoor amenity facilities as users move toward the less formal and more passive forms of outdoor activity.

Areas of deprivation have been identified in the new combined Borough and it is important that access to leisure is maintained in these areas and the leisure section will be required to identify cost effective appropriate methods of delivery to meet these needs.

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It is expected that costs of loans, principal and interest, may increase as interest rates from the Bank of England start to go up again.

The Belfast City Region Deal was approved in the 2018 autumn budget and a contractor has been appointed for the development of Bangor Waterfront. This proposed project will have an impact on Leisure facilities in the vicinity at Kingsland, as well as the development of Ballyholme Yacht Club and the proposed greenway route along the coastal path.

## **Social**

The provision of local authority leisure in the area does not exist in isolation and we need to take cognisance of national and local trends in leisure and reflect these through our own programmes. The use of the demographic modelling tools to help identify demographic trends in the area will allow the Leisure and Amenities section to develop programmes that reflect the needs of the community.

Reference will be made to appropriate central government health and sporting initiatives to take advantage of the interest stimulated by these initiatives.

The work of the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service provides enhanced social cohesion and civic pride through the provision and development of quality connected green space. The development of volunteer opportunities and the forming of 'Friends Groups' is aimed at increasing community involvement and social engagement. It is intended that such social engagement will have a beneficial impact upon social isolation within the Borough. Parks and Open Space are integral to supporting greater levels of health and wellbeing within the Borough and as such the Parks and Cemeteries section will be developing programmes to encourage a greater level of engagement with the natural environment.

In providing these services, the Leisure and Amenities section will be able to contribute to the Community and Wellbeing Directorate's objectives by applying the principles of the Five Ways to Wellbeing. These are a set of evidence-based actions, which promote health and wellbeing, they are; Connect, Give, Be Active, Take Notice and Keep Learning.

## **Technical**

The growing use of Social Networking sites by the public at large both represents an opportunity and a threat to the provision of facilities and activities undertaken by the Leisure and Amenities section.

Opportunities arise from the ability to contact large numbers of particular sections of society quickly and cheaply with promotional material whilst the threat arises from the uncontrolled publication of information from many sources about the organisation.

Electronic leisure also poses both a threat and an opportunity for the Leisure and Amenities section where many people using social media apps can partake in physical activities such as dance and fitness classes in the comfort of their own homes reducing the need to travel to facilities such as those provided by the Leisure and Amenities section while opportunity presents itself through the development of more sophisticated group activities that would benefit from the facilities available throughout the Borough.

Online booking has been added to some of the book and pay options available at some of our leisure facilities such as the Blacklight Adventure Zone at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing

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and Leisure Complex (ABMWLC). We are rolling out online booking for our Waves, learn to swim, programme as well as the ability to book and pay for the wide variety of classes available at all our centres. In addition, we have added a Kiosk system that allows members to check in for a wide range of activities at ABMWLC without having to queue at reception.

Fitness technology is improving all the time and with the opening of the Ards Blair Mayne Wellness and Leisure Complex, the Leisure and Amenities section are at the forefront of leisure technology and users of our facilities have access to the very best fitness and leisure facilities available. In addition to the innovations noted in the previous paragraph we have added the Technogym Wellness App to all our equipment in the fitness suite, this allows members to track their fitness across all items of the equipment in the gym and follow personalised programmes of activity through the App allowing gym staff to offer assistance to those that need it most.

The maintenance practices adopted by the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service are constantly subject to review following the introduction of new machinery, stricter safety limits, and advances in sports surfaces. The introduction of 3G and Synthetic surfaces has led to a need for new approaches to maintenance and the staff skills base. Additionally, new supply products on the market have an effect on how the service is delivered. A proactive replacement strategy has been approved for the replacement of plant and equipment across the service. This provides the scope to include the consideration of technical innovations in replacing aged equipment. This in turn will create better efficiencies across the service.

Currently, the cemetery software in place is outdated and it is intended to replace this with a more appropriate system with a view to moving towards a more efficient paperless administration system. In addition, this could provide the platform for online burial bookings. In order to achieve this, a business case has been submitted to secure the funding required.

The role of the Biodiversity office is under significant pressure to deliver on both internal and external projects which require advice and appropriate assessment processes ie. Habitat Regulation Assessments. In going forward, the section will advise on such matters and where appropriate signpost lead project officers toward external providers where appropriate.

## **Legal**

The leisure section is anticipating a decision on the assignment of VAT to Council leisure income imminently. This may lead to a significant impact on the direction of travel in regard to the benefits/limitations of the Trust model for leisure provision going forward. This may have particular relevance given the position of the current contract with the NCLT/Serco in regard to a possible five-year extension to the current contract which expires in 2023. Management must also be aware of the growing threat of litigation for any type of incident that leads to hurt or injury.

The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service operates under a number of statutory regulations with regard to service delivery. Given the many important national and European designations within the Borough, certain services elements require NIEA approval and robust Habitat Regulations Assessments. The Burial Ground Regulations (NI) 1992 present significant challenges to the burials service in terms of dealing with historical burial issues and potential future developments of public expectations.

Legislative changes in pest control products will have a significant bearing on the delivery of certain service elements including weed control and the use of insecticides. The service will

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need to take account of this and review practices to include alternative weed and pest control methods.

The Cemeteries service has a legal obligation to provide adequate burial provision within the Borough. The current cemetery facilities are in some cases approaching capacity which presents a future challenge with regard to satisfying customer demands and advance sale of graves. In the long term this will have significant impact on the service's ability to satisfy the legal obligations upon it. To this end a feasibility study has been commissioned to develop options on future cemetery provision.

## **Environmental**

The impact of changing environmental and climactic patterns will continue to be significant and the service will need to take consideration and have the ability to adapt as a result. A major challenge for the Borough as a whole is the impact of coastal erosion, with our coastline being the longest of any Council in Northern Ireland we expect this to have more of an impact than Councils with more limited coastline. For the service coastal erosion affects many areas which we have a direct stake in, for example amenity beaches or the coastal path. The Council can be a major partner in developing a strategy to combat and adapt to such issues.

In addition to the impact of the changing climate the Council will face increased pressure to change working practices to reduce carbon usage, for example through reduced use of pesticides or changing mowing regimes to greater enhance biodiversity. The Council has declared a climate emergency and it is likely that pressure from residents and elected members is only going to increase on this issue. The environmental impact of department activities will continue to be monitored through our involvement with the Council's Environmental Management System.

A Rewilding Initiative has commenced across selected areas within the Borough. This pertains to adapting mowing regimes to encourage a greater plant species mix across the sites which in turn attracts a diverse range of invertebrates and animal life. This approach assists in attaining targets set out in the All Ireland Pollinator Plan which the service has committed to contribute to.

A strategic approach is being developed with regard to tree care and future planting across the Borough. This strategy will run in tandem with the Big Plan timelines between 2012 and 2032. This will include ambitious tree planting targets aimed at increasing the amount of accessible woodland in the Borough, increasing tree density within our Parks and having a planned approach to tree maintenance across the Borough.

The Rewilding Initiative and Tree Strategy will contribute to increased carbon capture within the Borough.

### **3.2 What changes are you expecting in the next few years?**

Significant press interest in the running of the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre and on the Council's overall financial position is likely to put additional strain on key officers and possibly lead to a change in service direction.

We anticipate with tighter financial controls throughout the Council that there will be less flexibility to fund projects not in plans and greater internal governance demands placed on managers.

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As in previous years it is likely that public demands of the service will grow and we will be put in the position of having to deliver a greater level of service with less resources.

It is hoped that the spread of Covid-19 will reduce and the measures imposed to control it are removed once safe to do so to allow the service to resume operations at previous levels. We anticipate many temporary changes in legislation surrounding this as indeed there already has been over the past few months.

### **3.3 What are your future challenges?**

The ongoing workload issues are still to be addressed. The current structure places unsustainable and inappropriate strain on key personnel within the Section. This structure also results in an inability of Council to meet the needs of the Elected Members and their constituents across the breadth of the portfolio.

The Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre opened in December 2018, however many challenges with its operation remain. The Blacklight Adventure Zone needs to become more appealing in its offer to the targeted demographic. The golf is not challenging enough and does not offer enough to encourage repeat visits, the high ropes are very labour intensive and can only open at certain times which makes it very difficult to achieve the challenging income targets set for this area. The early successes of the fitness suite, spa and pools will need to be maintained to help keep income levels above expectation but this can only be achieved by ensuring an appropriate staffing structure is in place.

The service will need to develop and maintain an attractive and competitive pricing policy that will ensure appropriate levels of usage and the meeting of income targets agreed within this plan and budgetary proposals at the start of the year. This pricing policy will take into account the plan to align prices with NCLT and Serco and will seek to harmonise prices where possible.

The service will need to increase participation levels across minority groupings and minority sports to meet government targets in these areas and to meet the gender equality targets of the Council.

The service will seek to identify partners who can help raise awareness levels of the benefits of a healthy lifestyle throughout the Borough to encourage greater participation levels particularly amongst vulnerable groups.

The original contract with NCLT/Serco was for 10 years with the designated possibility of a 5 year extension. We are now in year 7 of the original contract and Council and NCLT/Serco will be giving serious consideration as to whether they wish to trigger the 5 year extension option. Whatever decision is taken will involve a serious amount of officer time as robust business cases for the various options available will be prepared ready for submission to Elected Members to make their decision.

The service will need to attract more 'e' business by promoting the new website for leisure which allows the use of online bookings and payments.

We will need to find ways to reduce the impact of anti-social behaviour around all of our leisure facilities, this behaviour not only damages the structure of the facilities but causes those that want to make proper use of the facilities think twice about using them for fear of being caught up in the bad behaviours of a few individuals.

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Budget retention and ongoing capital investment is critical to delivering the required level of service within the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service. In going forward, it is key that the unit investigates alternative methods of income generation in the form of private sector sponsorship or external service level agreements. The service will need to continue to identify ways of increasing income levels and reducing costs in an effort to reach a position of lowest possible cost to the ratepayer of the Borough

The service will need to identify possible partners that will help deliver opportunities to the wider community; these partners may come from the commercial community, the health community or even other government departments.

The Disability Discrimination Act will continue to ensure that access issues to facilities and activities for all users with a disability remain at the forefront of our thinking and planning in the delivery of services.

Leisure in the Borough must remain affordable to all which places a greater emphasis on the Council to ensure that they continue to be the main provider of leisure in the area and that it is not left to market forces and the private clubs who are profit driven without the social conscience of the Council.

Greater use should be made of our external leisure facilities such as our parks, playgrounds, pitches, open spaces, beaches, skate parks and country parks as well as our existing community facilities to deliver leisure, recreation and sporting opportunities to our community and visitors to the area.

The Community Centres and Halls section has recently completed a process of transformation. It was critical that this process was given support in order to harmonise two distinct workforces from each of the legacy Council areas. The transformation included retaining current staffing levels, resourcing additional functions, and redesigning working patterns to deliver service demands.

Whilst this has now been achieved and the delivery of service is at a much higher level, it also comes with challenges due to the nature of the unknowns of utilisation. This is a unique service which depends to some extent on communities receiving grants enabling them to fund usage of Councils Community Centres and Halls. Other challenging issues include groups obtaining their own premises and the competition of the many Community Houses and Church Halls either undercutting the cost of Councils hire charges or offering free use of their facilities to the community.

Our service will need to work hard to negate where possible the impact of the above. We will endeavour to achieve this by:

- Keeping our facilities attractive and fit for purpose
- Engaging with our customers through engagement forums
- Producing a marketing plan
- Working collaboratively with other stakeholders, both internal and external.

A full facility audit was completed to determine a refurbishment/modernisation capital programme across all Councils Community Centres in partnership with the Councils Estates team. Thirteen of the Councils 21 facilities were earmarked through the facility audit surveys to be brought up to an acceptable standard. Work was agreed and was completed in December 2019.

The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service has completed a process of transformation. The transformation included retaining current staffing levels, resourcing additional functions, aligning pay scales, and redesigning working patterns to deliver service demands. The

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transformation following completion is now under review with regard to service delivery across the Parks and Cemeteries Functions. This review has identified several areas for action to be taken in order to align the service with greater budget pressures. These include realignment of service provision to reduce a dependency on overtime and the use of agency staff without detriment to the service.

The issue of available burial space is a major challenge for the organisation. Currently there are a number of cemeteries where advance grave purchase is prohibited in order to prolong the useful life of the cemetery. The key challenge is to identify additional burial space across the Borough in order to meet the continuing demands for earth burial. A review of cemetery provision is underway and a consultant has been appointed to lead a stage 1 scoping study which will provide recommendations for a stage 2 detailed options appraisal.

Changing climatic factors are impacting upon service delivery with the Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service with regular longer autumns and wetter winters. This is in turn having an effect upon seasonal resources required to deliver the service.

If the current situation with Covid-19 continues it is a major threat to the service and its operations. In Leisure there has been a real drive to retain memberships by transitioning classes to online delivery and allowing memberships to be frozen to avoid cancellations and allow members to resume their activities once the restrictions lift or they feel safe to do so. The Parks and Cemeteries department continues to struggle to meet the demands placed upon the service due to the restrictions on transporting staff around sites. The Community Centres and Halls continue to operate with reduced room capacities and certain activities restricted, however a great loss of demand has occurred leading to a steep fall in the numbers of bookings in the sites. If this continues it will impact on the level of subsidy required from the rates to ensure viability of the Leisure and Amenities service.

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## 4. Opportunity for Improvement

### 4.1 Reflection of Service Performance

A success has been the continued quality service delivered despite very challenging demands in terms of workload and resources.

In this financial year the new Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex will undertake the two-day assessment programme in line with Aurora.

Staffing has been a struggle across the leisure estate and Council as a whole, as such, a moratorium on agency and overtime has been announced for any non-essential overtime. In order to address the current overspend on agency and overtime within the section an action plan has been developed to scale back some services and convert some agency posts to permanent staff.

The unrealistic expectations of members continue to have an impact on effective service delivery. Despite service plans and budgets being set and agreed on an annual basis it has become increasingly difficult to deliver against both criteria when significant pressure comes to absorb additional workload without appropriate resources. This places unacceptable levels of stress on key personnel who are, and have been for 5 years, working in an inappropriate structure which is unlike any other in terms of local government in Northern Ireland. The continued requirement to maintain non council properties from a parks and grass maintenance perspective continues to cause frustrations and concerns for staff as well as the impact on such limited resources.

With each year the estate that is maintained by the Parks and Cemeteries Service expands without equivalent increase to resources, with the expected addition of the greenways and the managed green spaces at the Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex being handed over to the Parks and Cemeteries service efficiencies will need to be identified within the section in order to meet this increased demand.

There has been an increasing burden of governance and back office tasks placed onto front line staff, reducing their capacity for service delivery. As an example Core must be completed by 12:00 on Monday morning, which for 7 days a week services creates issues when officers are trying to address serious problems that have arisen over the weekend and that require immediate attention. From finance we are required to review invoicing on a weekly basis and a significant issues report on a monthly basis. We will now have to produce business cases for all new expenditure which are significant in their content and time consuming in their completion. From HR there are a myriad of forms that must be filled in from starting employees, terminating employees, sick employees and the various stages this process has to go through all of which keep officers back from the main purpose of their jobs.

## 5. How Will the Leisure and Amenities Service Contribute to Corporate Objectives?

The Leisure and Amenities service can be expected to have a direct impact on the following:

Outcome/Objective	Service objectives
All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	The Leisure and Amenities service contributes to this objective by providing and facilitating a diverse and affordable range of quality sport, leisure and recreational opportunities to all our citizens in a safe friendly and vibrant fun environment so affording the opportunity for all to be healthier, happier and proud of the Borough in which they live.
All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment	The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service unit manage and maintain green spaces across the Borough and through the Biodiversity Officer, the service provides an understanding of how we protect our natural environment whilst enjoying sporting, recreational and leisure pursuits.
All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure	The Parks, Cemeteries and Amenities service unit provides a robust, inclusive and sensitive cemetery service across the Borough.
All People in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential	<p>Community Centres and Halls service unit provide bookable facilities for all members of the Community to avail of, with discounts for community groups across the Borough. The facilities act as venues for many activities aimed at more vulnerable residents of the Borough.</p> <p>Within the Leisure service unit, the Sports Development section contributes towards this objective by supporting the work of the Sports Forum to assist local athletes and clubs to create pathways for athletic progression across the Borough.</p>

## 6. Key activities for 2020/21

<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>Leisure and Amenities</b>
<b>Community Plan Outcome:</b>	All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment
<b>Corporate Objective:</b>	Growing a cleaner, greener local and global environment
<b>Service Objective:</b>	To provide open spaces and parks which are well maintained, managed in an environmentally sustainable manner, accessible to all and to improve biodiversity in the Borough.
<b>Underpinning strategies:</b>	All Ireland Pollinator Plan, Local Biodiversity Action Plan 2012 – 2017, Village Plans, Town Centre Masterplans

What are the Business as Usual activities we will deliver (actions)?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
We will maintain our pitches to ensure that our estate is fit for purpose	Sustained pitch availability and standard will encourage bookings from Clubs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of bookings on pitches</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson John McConnell	Assets and Property
Reduce landfill waste from leisure activities with associated increase in recycled waste	We will recycle more of our waste products and send less waste to landfill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase % sent to recycling rather than landfill for Community Centres</li> <li>Increase % sent to recycling rather than landfill for Leisure sites</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson Jackie Manning	Waste and Cleansing
We will continue to secure and maintain quality awards for open spaces such as Best Kept and Britain in Bloom, Green Flag	Increase the standard of our parks and open spaces and increase pride in the facilities we provide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Securing/maintaining Green Flag Awards</li> <li>Securing Ulster in Bloom awards</li> </ul>	John McConnell,	Local Community Groups All sections of Council

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2019/20?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)	Is a Business Case required?
We will expand the rewilding programme to include more of the Council's land	Rewilding encourages biodiversity by allowing a greater variety of plants and insects to thrive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total Hectares of Council maintained ground rewilded</li> </ul>	John McConnell		No
We will provide a more sustainable approach to seasonal floral display across the Borough.	Reduction in annual bedding numbers to enable an increase in the use of direct annual wildflower displays.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of managed ground with annual sowing</li> </ul>	John McConnell		No
We will develop a tree strategy aimed at increasing the number of trees across the Borough.	More trees planted within the Borough and have a positive impact on the percentage of accessible woodland across the Borough.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of trees planted</li> <li>Number of tree-planting projects supported</li> </ul>	John McConnell		Yes
We will reduce the amount of herbicide used by the service	Herbicides can have a great variety of negative environmental impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce the amount of herbicide used</li> </ul>	John McConnell		No

<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>Leisure and Amenities</b>
<b>Community Plan Outcome:</b>	All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential
<b>Corporate Objective:</b>	Growing the lifelong potential of our community
<b>Service Objective:</b>	We will facilitate all of our communities to achieve their desired potential at whatever sporting, leisure or recreational activity they choose
<b>Underpinning strategies:</b>	

What are the Business as Usual activities we will deliver (actions)?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
Continue to promote the Sports Directory across the Borough.	Clubs become more sustainable by attracting increased numbers of players, coaches and officials Public are more aware of the numbers and variety of sporting and recreational activities in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of locations in the Borough with a copy of the Sports Directory</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	Sports Forum NGBs Local Clubs Corporate Comms
Attract Clubs to affiliate with the Sports Forum	Increase the number of clubs affiliated with the Sports Forum and able to receive support from the Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of Clubs affiliated with the Sports Forum</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	Sports Forum Local Clubs Corporate Comms
We will continue to support Athletes through funding grants through the Sports Forum for travel to competitions	By supporting local athletes to compete in competitions we create a pathway for athletic progression in the Borough	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of grants awarded for travel</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	Sporting governing bodies, local athletes and clubs
We will continue to support local clubs affiliated with the Sports Forum through equipment, event, coaching and capital grants	By supporting local clubs to expand we enable athlete coaching across the Borough and create a pathway for athletic progression and pride in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of grants awarded to clubs</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	Sporting governing bodies, local athletes and clubs
We will provide modern, neutral facilities across the Borough for the use of the community	This will enable community groups to have meetings and facilitate bookings for a wide variety of clubs or activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Total hours booked across all Community Centres and Halls</li> </ul>	Jackie Manning	Community groups, Residents of the Borough
Deliver environmental and In Bloom projects in conjunction with community groups	Community Groups will become involved in decorating and caring for their local area.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of In Bloom Projects supported</li> </ul>	John McConnell	Community Groups Community Development

What are the Business as Usual activities we will deliver ( <b>actions</b> )?	What difference will it make ( <b>outputs/outcomes</b> )?	How will we know ( <b>measures</b> )?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
Continue financial assistance with In Bloom Funding	Community Groups will be supported by Council to participate.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Overall funding for In Bloom Projects awarded</li> </ul>	John McConnell	Community Groups Finance

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2019/20?	What difference will it make ( <b>outputs/outcomes</b> )?	How will we know ( <b>measures</b> )?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)	Is a Business Case required?
We will set up community user forums to encourage local community groups to make use of Community Centres	Local community will become more sustainable and help develop more active and involved communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The number of community user group forums set up</li> </ul>	Jackie Manning	Community Groups Community Development	No

<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>Leisure and Amenities</b>
<b>Community Plan Outcome:</b>	All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing
<b>Corporate Objective:</b>	Growing the health and wellbeing of our residents
<b>Service Objective:</b>	We will provide excellent facilities where opportunities for sporting, recreational and leisure activities can take place that improve the physical and mental health and wellbeing of all of our communities
<b>Underpinning strategies:</b>	

What are the Business as Usual activities we will deliver (actions)?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
We will provide health referral schemes in association with the local Trust such as the Physical Activity Referral Scheme	We will help people maintain a better quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of people who complete our referral programmes</li> <li>• % of people who take out a membership package at the end of the referral programme</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	Health Trust
We will maintain high levels of customer satisfaction in our leisure centres	Continued high usage and pride in our facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High levels of satisfaction expressed through customer satisfaction surveys</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	
We will strive to maintain Quest awards for all leisure sites which have it	It will allow us to ensure that we provide the highest standard of leisure facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quest awards maintained</li> <li>• Full Quest assessment achieved for ABMWLC</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	
We will continue to deliver a learn to swim program to teach children and adults to swim	By enabling swimming and teaching children and adults to swim we will encourage residents to be more active and healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number enrolled in Learn to Swim Programme</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	
We will continue to target residents over 60 to remain active	This will help residents remain active and encourage participation in programmes from a wider age group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of Active Aging Memberships</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2019/20?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)	Is a Business Case required?
We will increase the number of fitness classes	There will be more opportunities for people to partake in classes in response to customer feedback and reduce demand in gym	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of fitness classes across all sites in Leisure Ards</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson		No
We will increase the number of people who attend the staffed leisure facilities	Encourage more people to enjoy healthy active lifestyles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Footfall at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Centre</li> <li>Footfall at Comber Leisure Centre</li> <li>Footfall at Portaferry Sports Centre</li> <li>Footfall at Londonderry Park</li> <li>Footfall at Aurora</li> <li>Footfall at Queen's Leisure Centre</li> <li>Footfall at Bangor Sportsplex</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson	Marketing Section	No
We will encourage the formation of new sports clubs in the Borough	A greater variety of clubs will provide a diversity of choice for residents as to what sports they wish to take part in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of new clubs established</li> </ul>	Alan Johnson		
We will deliver well managed allotment facilities for the benefit of residents	Allotments provide a social and communal benefit to residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>% of available Council allotments utilised</li> </ul>	John McConnell	Allotment users	We will deliver well managed allotment facilities for the benefit of residents

<b>SERVICE:</b>	<b>Leisure and Amenities</b>
<b>Community Plan Outcome:</b>	
<b>Corporate Objective:</b>	Growing a high performing Council
<b>Service Objective:</b>	We will manage our resources effectively to deliver on our service objectives and wider corporate goals whilst delivering good value for money to the ratepayers
<b>Underpinning strategies:</b>	

What are the Business as Usual activities we will deliver (actions)?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
We will ensure that there are sufficient staff on duty to deliver the service	It will ensure that the services are fully operational with healthy, enthusiastic and effective workforce	% Staff Attendance	Ian O'Neill Jackie Manning John McConnell Alan Johnson Edward Gregson	HR & OD
We will ensure all staff have access to half yearly Pride in Performance conversations	Staff will clearly understand what is expected of them, what to expect of the Council and how we can improve together	% Staff completing Pride in Performance conversations	Ian O'Neill Jackie Manning Alan Johnson John McConnell Edward Gregson	HR & OD
Spend against Budget	We will retain strict financial control to adhere to Council set budgets for the service area	Spend against budget	Ian O'Neill Jackie Manning Alan Johnson John McConnell Edward Gregson	Finance

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2019/20?	What difference will it make (outputs/outcomes)?	How will we know (measures)?	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)	Is a Business Case required?

<b>Performance Measures</b> (should include those outlined above and relevant measures from Community, Corporate and Performance Improvement Plans plus those that are Statutory)	<b>Is the measure Statutory, Corporate, Existing or New?</b>	<b>2016/17 Actual</b>	<b>2017/18 Actual</b>	<b>2018/19 Actual</b>	<b>2019/20 Actual to date</b>	<b>2020/21 Target/ Standard</b>
Number of Clubs Affiliated with the Sports Forum	Existing	80	84	102	110	50
Increase in the number of clubs listed in the Sports Directory	Existing	105	120	135	78	78
Number of In Bloom Projects	Existing	15	14	14	16	16
Overall funding for In Bloom Projects	Existing	£12,776	£9,980	£10,617	£13,709	£15,000
The number of Friends Groups established	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	1	2
Number of Bookings on pitches	New	N/A	N/A	415	472	400
Increase % sent to recycling rather than landfill for Community Centres	Existing	N/A	N/A	N/A	42%	50%
Increase % sent to recycling rather than landfill for Leisure sites	Existing	60%	62%	70%	46%	50%
Securing/maintaining Green Flag awards	New	4	4	4	5	5
Securing Ulster in Bloom/ Best Kept awards (1 <sup>st</sup> , 2 <sup>nd</sup> or 3 <sup>rd</sup> in any category)	New	1	2	3	4	0
Maintain Quest Awards for all four Leisure Sites	Existing	N/A	N/A	4	4	4
Full Quest Assessment achieved for ABMWLC	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	No
% of available allotments utilised	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	31%	100%
% of people who complete the GP referral programme	Existing	56%	60%	60%		0
% of people who take out a membership package at the end of a referral programme	Existing	N/A	N/A	35%	63%	0
Number of locations in the Borough with a copy of the Sports Directory	New	No data	No data	No data	32	32
Number of Sports Forum Grants awarded for travel	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	156	20

<b>Performance Measures</b> (should include those outlined above and relevant measures from Community, Corporate and Performance Improvement Plans plus those that are Statutory)	<b>Is the measure Statutory, Corporate, Existing or New?</b>	<b>2016/17 Actual</b>	<b>2017/18 Actual</b>	<b>2018/19 Actual</b>	<b>2019/20 Actual to date</b>	<b>2020/21 Target/ Standard</b>
Number of Sports Forum Grants awarded to clubs	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	248	20
Footfall at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	603,666	300,000
Footfall at Comber Leisure Centre	New	138,371	147,893	145,552	108,573	65,000
Footfall at Portaferry Sports Centre	New	19,358	20,171	18,890	11,965	10,000
Footfall at Londonderry Park	New	45,000	46,000	38,375	51,339	40,000
Footfall at Aurora	New	N/A	N/A	1,398,422	738,287	Expect to be at least half
Footfall at Queen's Leisure Centre	New	N/A	N/A	120,086	78,408	
Footfall at Sportsplex	New	N/A	N/A	38,453	88,218	
Total hours booked in community centres	New	No data	No data	No data	20,946.5	5,000
Number of Fitness Classes per Week	Existing	No data	67	90	122	76
% Staff Attendance	Existing	94%	92%	93%	92%	95%
% Staff completing Pride in Performance conversations	Existing	N/A	N/A	91%	95%	0
Number of new clubs established	New	No data	No data	No data	4	0
Number enrolled in Learn to Swim programme	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	1283	900
Active Aging Memberships	New	N/A	N/A	N/A	373	200
Total Hectares of Council maintained ground rewilded (m <sup>2</sup> )	New	No data	No data	No data	21,000	21,000
Managed ground with annual sowing (m <sup>2</sup> )	New	No data	No data	No data	7600	8,500
Number of trees planted	New	No data	No data	No data	No data	0
Number of tree planting projects supported	New	No data	No data	No data	No data	0
Amount of herbicide used (litres)	New	No data	No data	No data	200	180

**Resources:**

**Are all actions resourced within the current (2020/21) budget plan?** Yes  No

**Will additional resources be required?** Yes  No

(If no please comment in Section A below how the actions will be funded, ie Staff Resources, Equipment, Revenue Budget, Capital Budget.)  
(If yes please detail additional resources in Section B below.)

**Section A:**

**Section B:** Business Cases have been submitted for the below activities:

**Staffing**

ABMWLC

- Receptionists
- Marketing Assistant
- Fitness and Leisure Associates (FLAs)
- Operations Officer
- Receptionists
- Coaches

CLC

- Admin Assistant (Post Exists)
- FLAs (Posts Exist)

Leisure

- Monitoring Support Officer (MSO) Submitted as part of transformation
- Sports Development transformation proposal submitted

**Projects**

- Balloo wetlands
- Cairn Wood
- Corrog Wood
- CLC Gym Equipment
- CLC Sports Hall Floor
- Sportsplex Athletics

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**Resources:**

Greyabbey trail  
Cemetery Software Upgrade  
Tree Planting Campaign  
Local Biodiversity Action Plan

**If the required additional resources are not available, please state:**

*What is the likely impact on performance?*

There will be a delay in progressing capital projects and a degrading effect on front line services at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex and Comber Leisure Centre. There will also be less scrutiny of the contract with the Northern Community Leisure Trust to provide Leisure services for the legacy North Down area. The cemeteries service will continue to use an antiquated system for cemeteries administration. Fewer trees will be planted by the Council.

*What is the likely impact on the public?*

The public will notice a reduction in service standards at Ards Blair Mayne Wellbeing and Leisure Complex and Comber Leisure Centre, with the possibility of class cancellations or reduced cleaning of the centres. The gym will continue with the current equipment which risks memberships declining in Comber. The athletics track in Bangor will not be levelled out resulting in a loss of support for the associated sports. Failure to deliver the tree planting campaign and the local biodiversity action plan will have a negative impact on public perception and Council's commitment to mitigating the climate emergency declaration. This will also have a detrimental impact upon Council's ability to support communities in environmental projects.

*What is the likely impact on staffing?*

The staffing business cases not being approved will result in fewer staff to deliver a frontline service, resulting in additional strain being placed on other members of staff.

## 7. Risks

Ref:	Risk Description	Gross Risk			Current controls	Residual Risk			Risk Status	Further Action Required	Action Due by	Risk Owner	Notes to explain rationale for scoring, etc.
		I	L	R		I	L	R	Tolerate / Action				
1	GP Referral and Cardiac rehab programmes no longer supported	Moderate	Possible	Med	Ongoing discussions with Trust	Moderate	Possible	Med	Tolerate	No	GP Referral and Cardiac rehab programmes no longer supported	AJ	
2	Schools swimming programme terminated	Major	Possible	Med	Competitive pricing policy and discussions with schools	Moderate	Possible	Med	Tolerate	No	Schools swimming programme terminated	AJ	
3	Major clubs withdraw bookings	Major	Possible	Med	Competitive pricing policy and discussions with clubs	Moderate	Possible	Med	Tolerate	No	Major clubs withdraw bookings	AJ	
4	Building infrastructure failure	Major	Remote	Med	Condition surveys carried out and PPM in place	Major	Remote	Med	Tolerate	No		ION	
5	Insufficient staff to deliver services	Major	Remote	Med	Regular staff training	Major	Remote	Med	Tolerate	No		ION	

Ref:	Risk Description	Gross Risk			Current controls	Residual Risk			Risk Status	Further Action Required	Action Due by	Risk Owner	Notes to explain rationale for scoring, etc.
		I	L	R		I	L	R	Tolerate / Action				
6	Major injury to user of facilities	Major	Probable	High	Regular staff training, inspections of facilities, internal and external audits	Major	Probable	High	Tolerate	No		ION	
7	Major injury to member of staff while on duty	Major	Remote	Med	Regular staff training, inspections of facilities, internal and external audits	Major	Remote	Med	Tolerate	No		ION	
8	Loss of STEM accreditation	Minor / insignificant	Remote	Low	Regular staff training, inspections of facilities, internal and external audits	Minor / insignificant	Remote	Low	Tolerate	No		ION	
9	Breach in legislation ie. FEPA H&SAW Waste Disposal Burial Regs EMS	Major	Possible	Med	Net Regs Training H&S Working Group. Cemeteries Working Group. Attend Seminars. Management meetings. Notification from Government depts. Technical and legal expertise.	Major	Remote	Med	Tolerate	No		ION, JMcC, JM, AJ, EG	Ensure current controls remain in place
10	Service delivery below accepted standards, resulting in :- Poor burial service.	Major	Possible	Med	Cemeteries working group meetings. SDIP Supervision. Visual Checks. Monitor complaints – verbal and written.	Major	Remote	Med	Tolerate	No		ION	Ensure current controls remain in place

Ref:	Risk Description	Gross Risk			Current controls	Residual Risk			Risk Status	Further Action Required	Action Due by	Risk Owner	Notes to explain rationale for scoring, etc.
		I	L	R		I	L	R	Tolerate / Action				
	Poor parks service. Poor profile. H&S Issues. Increased Insurance claims. Poor profile. User quality and visitor quality.				Monthly Management and Team Leader meetings								
11	Failure to meet provision of :-  Play Open space Cemetery	Major	Remote	Med	Forward planning – burial provision  Qualified estimate of costs  Continue to evaluate service	Major	Remote	Med	Tolerate	No		ION	Ensure current controls remain in place

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## **8. Resources**

### **8.1 Staffing**

The section continues to struggle to provide the level of service required, due, it is believed, to the current structure within the Department. The broad portfolio of front facing services compounded with significant investment projects continues to provide major challenges which regularly result in service delivery compromises and senior staff within the section being placed under significant and ongoing strain. This is still unsustainable and will need addressed as a priority. A structure in line with other Councils may be more appropriate.

Within leisure the focus on income generation in key service areas has highlighted a need for a more commercial focus. The growing number of leisure related capital projects and contract arrangements with health trusts, library boards, Sport NI, other funding bodies and Serco has highlighted a need for a monitoring officer to support the role of the Leisure Services Officer in the efficient execution of these key roles within the service.

Community Centre staffing has undergone stage 2 transformation and is now completed. This restructure resulted in an addition of 20 part-time staff, thus moving away from the dependency of casual staff resulting in a more stable part time contractual team. A smaller compliment of casual staff is still required for ad hoc bookings, sickness, annual leave etc. The new structure commenced in June – September 2019

The Parks and Cemeteries Section has completed the transformation of the legacy service areas and the structure has bedded in well. In the past year there have been significant challenges with staff absence, machinery downtime and extreme climatic conditions. This has resulted in an overspend in overtime payments and machinery repairs. In order to address these issues, there is currently a review of the additional hours profile which consider the service areas of weekend litter picking, grave digging and the opening and locking of play areas and cemeteries. To address the machinery issues, a capital expenditure and replacement plan will commence to ensure that the service has an up to date reliable fleet of machinery appropriate to the needs of the service.

### **8.2 Financial**

The service is provided with a revenue budget of £5,134,500. Additionally, the service has the responsibility to deliver on a significant capital investment programme.

## **9. Monitoring and Review**

The monitoring and review of this plan will be part of the performance reporting network undertaken on a quarterly basis and the regular reports that go to the Community and Wellbeing Committee of Council and indeed reports to the full council.

## **10. Conclusions**

Significant change across all areas of this section, 5 years after the amalgamation and all sections are still trying to create the structures that are needed to deliver a cohesive service. A growing portfolio of capital projects, including 3G pitches, sports hubs and cycle paths, will create added strains on not just the Leisure and Amenities section but on all other supporting sections of the Council. Failure to address the structural issues has resulted in work having to be prioritised and whilst deeply regrettable it is likely that this will still continue to affect both service delivery and staff welfare into 2020/21. Quality staff are leaving the

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organisation for similar roles with better conditions elsewhere and this creates further difficulties for those remaining. Budgets that are required to deliver a service to the stated level are not being made available and this will result in a detrimental impact to service provision. The focus for the leisure section over the next few years may have to be on the negotiations with NCLT/Serco in regard to the possible 5 year extension to the current contract but this also may be affected by the uncertainty around the VAT issues and its potential benefit for Council. Whilst focus of the senior staff in this section may be redirected to this aspect it will be important to resource any gaps or realign current commitments given the lack of senior staff who are spread too thinly. A potential review of the entire Parks and Cemeteries section is being considered as the need to create efficiencies across the section take priority but again staff are not resourced appropriately to facilitate the time needed for these major changes. The Community Centre transformation and refurbishment programme of the facilities has now been completed and the focus will shift to developing a marketing plan for these facilities in an attempt to encourage greater use by the local community.

The biggest challenge for this service will be in adapting to the new environment that we find ourselves working in due to Covid-19. With uncertainty about future government-led measures it will be increasingly difficult to both operate a reduced service and plan for a return to normality.