
PARKS & CEMETERIES SERVICE

1 April 2022 – 31 March 2023

Head of Service signature	 Stephen Daye
Date	22/02/2022
Peer Review signature	For Audit purposes please ensure this is signed.
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.
Director signature	For Audit purposes please ensure this is signed.
Date	Click or tap to enter a date.

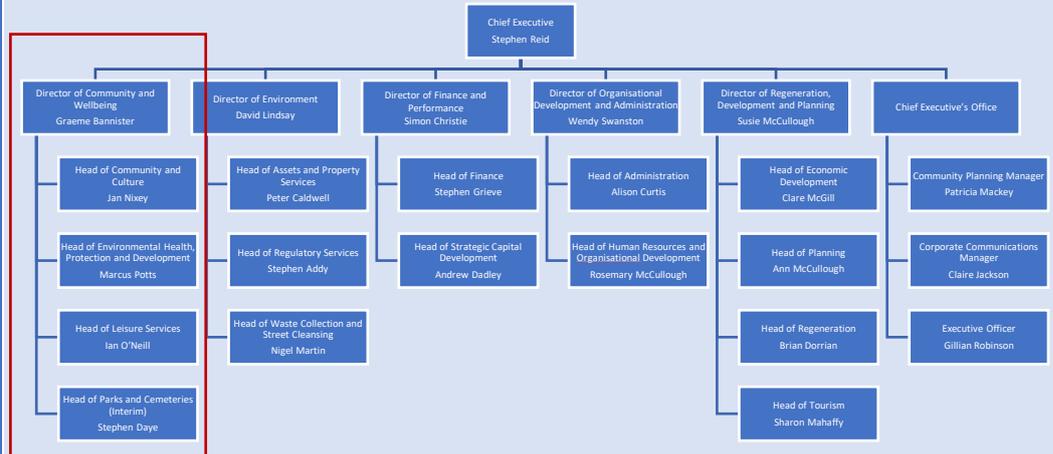
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1. Introduction

Name of Service	Parks and Cemeteries
Included Service Units	Parks and Cemeteries
Directorate	Community and Wellbeing
Purpose of Service	<p>The Parks and Cemeteries Service operates within the Community & Wellbeing Directorate. The service was created in 2022 following a structural review. The Service has responsibility for the maintenance and development of approximately 292 hectares of Parks and other open spaces including cemeteries and other burial grounds within the Borough. This also includes the maintenance of all outdoor sports facilities, car parks, amenity beaches and associated promenades along Council leased foreshore. In addition, the Parks and Cemeteries 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 and Cemeteries Service also helps to raise the profile of the Borough through competitions such as Green Flag, Ulster in Bloom and Best Kept Awards. The Service also has responsibility for the Council's statutory duty for Biodiversity, the provision of allotments, and Outdoor Recreation. The Parks and Cemeteries 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.</p>
Key customers/ stakeholders and their needs	See Appendix 1
Context, challenges & key assumptions	<p>The creation of Ards and North Down Borough Council in 2015 saw the establishment of several new departments including the Department of Community and Wellbeing, within this department a 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. In 2022 following a structural review the service was split in two and the Parks and Cemeteries Service was created.</p> <p>This new Service has responsibility for the maintenance and development of approximately 292 hectares of Parks and other open spaces including cemeteries and other burial grounds within the Borough. This also includes the maintenance of all outdoor sports facilities, car parks, amenity beaches and associated promenades along Council leased foreshore. In addition, the Parks and Cemeteries Service helps to enhance the appearance of the Borough through floral displays and other plantings at selected high-profile locations.</p> <p>The work of the Parks and Cemeteries Service also helps to raise the profile of the Borough through competitions such as Green Flag, Ulster in Bloom and Best Kept</p>

Awards. The Service also has responsibility for the Council's statutory duty for Biodiversity, the provision of allotments, and Outdoor Recreation. The Parks and Cemeteries 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. The chart below shows where Parks and Cemeteries sits within the organisation:



The Covid-19 global pandemic has added significant additional pressures to the Service as indeed it has across the whole Council. The measures imposed by the Northern Ireland Executive to control the virus have had a direct service impact and has prevented many activities taking place and increased footfall to many of our sites. There has also been an impact on the workforce of the Covid-19 restrictions particularly around maintaining distance within the workplace and travelling to facilities. Although our staff mainly work outdoors, we also have office staff, homeworking and virtual meetings have been 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.

PESTLE analysis is attached in Appendix 2

Reflection on previous performance – successes and lessons learned

1. The Parks & Cemeteries team have shown great resilience to ensure service was retained despite Covid-19 restrictions.
2. Green Flag awards for Ballymenoch Park, Kiltonga Nature Reserve, Londonderry Park, Castle Park and Linear Park.
3. Ulster in Bloom achievements at Donaghadee, Comber & Carnalea.
4. The introduction of the 'Tree and Woodland Strategy' & 'Let's Grow Together' (a Growing and Allotment) Strategy
5. The Parks & Cemeteries contribution towards the 'Roadmap to Sustainability' policy.
6. The growth in participation of Ards and North Down in Bloom in its second year.

2. How does our Service contribute to community planning outcomes and PEOPLE priorities?

The *Insert the name of your Service* can be expected to have a direct impact on the following:

Community Planning Outcome	PEOPLE priority	Our focus for 2022/2023
Outcome 1: All people in Ards and North Down fulfil their lifelong potential.	Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop local skills through our education and volunteering programmes. Investigate opportunities to start an apprenticeship scheme in association with Greenmount College.
Outcome 2: All people in Ards and North Down enjoy good health and wellbeing	Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To implement actions from the 'Lets Grow Together' strategy.
Outcome 3: All people in Ards and North Down live in communities where they are respected, are safe and feel secure	Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to organise and grow the Ards and North Down in Bloom Community Competitions. Continue to provide a robust, inclusive and sensitive cemetery service across the Borough.
Outcome 4: All people in Ards and North Down benefit from a prosperous economy	Opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to play our part in the implementation of the Sustainable Food Places membership.
Outcome 5: All people in Ards and North Down feel pride from having access to a well-managed sustainable environment	Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To implement the actions from the 'Tree & Woodland Strategy. To implement the actions from the 'Herbicide Reduction Strategy'. Reduce our reliance of annual bedding displays in favour of rewilding and sustainable planting initiatives. Publish a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan

3. Key activities for 2022/2023

SERVICE:	Parks and Cemeteries
Community Plan Outcome:	All people in Ards and North Down feel pride as they have access to a well-managed sustainable environment
Corporate Plan PEOPLE priority:	ENVIRONMENT: We will grow a clean, attractive, environmentally responsible place PRIDE: We will partner with our community to develop positive relationships, community pride, respect and safety LIFE: We will support the physical and emotional wellbeing of our residents through our services, facilities and partnerships
Council KPI(s):	£'s Investment in maintaining public spaces; Number of Environmental Improvements; Number of Environmental Accreditations
Service Objective:	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.
What difference will it make?	The provision of parks and open spaces is regularly scored highly by residents as one of the most important functions that Council provides. They provide an opportunity for residents to engage with Council on environmental issues and improve the local amenities for them.
Underpinning strategies:	Corporate & Community Plans, Roadmap to Sustainability.

Business as Usual activities we will deliver in 2022/2023 (actions)	Due Date	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
We will continue to secure and maintain quality awards for open spaces such as Best Kept and Britain in Bloom, Green Flag.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Community Groups
We will expand the rewilding programme to include more of the Council's land.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Community Groups
We will provide a more sustainable approach to seasonal floral display across the Borough.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Community Groups

Business as Usual activities we will deliver in 2022/2023 (actions)	Due Date	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
We will continue to implement the Tree and Woodland strategy by increasing the number of trees across the Borough.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Woodland Trust External funders
We will reduce the amount of herbicide used by the service and continue to implement the actions within the agreed council 'Herbicide Reduction Policy'.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Service teams
Deliver and support environmental and In Bloom projects in conjunction with community groups (covers financial assistance for In Bloom and In Bloom competitions, allotments).	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Community Groups
To implement actions from the 'Lets Grow Together' strategy including joining 'Sustainable Food Places'	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Sustainability Officer, Social Farms and Gardens & local groups

Key activities for 2022/2023 cont'd

SERVICE:	Parks and Cemeteries
Community Plan Outcome:	All
Corporate Plan PEOPLE priority:	EXCELLENCE: We will work to be a high-performing organisation, innovating and partnering to make a sustainable, positive difference for our Borough
Council KPI(s):	% Resident Satisfaction; Cost per head of population; IIP accreditation
Service Objective:	We will manage our resources effectively to deliver on our service objectives and wider corporate goals whilst delivering value for money to the ratepayers
What difference will it make?	The provision of parks and open spaces is regularly scored highly by residents as one of the most important functions that Council provides. They provide an opportunity for residents to engage with Council on environmental issues and improve the local amenities for them.
Underpinning strategies:	Corporate & Community Plans

Business as Usual activities we will deliver in 2022/2023 (actions)	Due Date	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	Ongoing	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	HR&OD
We will ensure all staff are offered annual Pride in Performance conversations and are kept informed and engaged	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	HR&OD
We will ensure we manage spend against budget effectively	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Finance

Service Objective:

What service development/improvement will we undertake in 2022/2023?	Which of the specified aspects will this improve?	Rationale	Due Date	Lead Officer(s)	Who do we need to help us? (Internal/External partners)
Investigate opportunities to start an apprenticeship scheme in association with Greenmount College.	Strategic Effectiveness Innovation	Provide opportunities for individuals to start a career in amenity horticulture and provide the organisation with trained staff for the future and take advantage of funding grants.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	HR & CAFRE
Publish and implement a new Local Biodiversity Action Plan	Strategic Effectiveness Innovation	This is a statutory obligation on the council to update its LBAP	March 2023	Stephen Daye & Noeleen Farry	NIEA, Local Groups
Set up a second 'Friends' group and carry out ten community events throughout the Borough	Strategic Effectiveness Innovation	Develop local skills through our education and volunteering programmes	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Communications
Investigate Sponsorship initiatives and present proposals to Council.	Strategic Effectiveness Innovation	Provide additions income	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Finance, Communications and local businesses.

SPECIFIED ASPECTS OF IMPROVEMENT	
What will this improve?	Definition
Strategic Effectiveness	<i>is key to linking the community plan, and the ongoing processes that underpin it, with a council's improvement processes. The Department would expect that a council's strategic community planning outcomes and objectives should be central to that council's improvement activity and clearly contribute to the strategic effectiveness aspect.</i>
Service Quality	<i>all relate to service provision by aiming to meet the needs of citizens and ensuring fair ease of access to the most suitable services that meet their needs. Clearly, all of these objectives can be demonstrated individually or collectively. Fairness can also be demonstrated by exercising non-service functions in ways which reduce disadvantage and improve social well-being, for instance by improving citizens' access to information or by addressing inequalities experienced by Section 75 groups.</i>
Service Availability	
Fairness	
Sustainability	<i>When carrying out its functions or providing services, a council may demonstrate improvement when it operates in a way that contributes towards the sustainability of its area, as required under the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006 and the associated Northern Ireland Executive Sustainable Development Strategy. on-going efficiency may also be shown if fewer resources are utilised while maintaining provision of substantially similar or better services. Should a council choose to alter the manner by which a service is provided and in so doing it uses fewer resources or more integrated services, it will not only be demonstrating efficiency, but may demonstrate improved sustainability as well</i>
Efficiency	
Innovation	<i>any changes to service design and delivery methods that are intended to yield improvement under any other aspect and are reasonably likely to do so. This allows councils to make changes which may not have tangible effects within the same reporting year, but are likely to in subsequent years, and still count them as improvements.</i>

Service Objective:

What service / activities will we be stopping / changing in 2022/2023	Reason for stopping / changing activity	Savings	Impact on Performance	Impact on the Public	Impact on staffing
Reduce our reliance of annual bedding displays in favour of rewilding and sustainable planning initiatives	More sustainable to plant permanent displays, lower maintenance costs, environmental advantages to wildlife and reduction on use of peat-based composts.	Staff hours can be redirected to other service priorities.	Greater focus on other service priorities.	Improved displays and promotion of environment that the public are interested in.	Staff can focus on other service priorities.
We will reduce the amount of herbicide used by the service and continue to implement the actions within the agreed council 'Herbicide Reduction Policy'.	Address the concerns and impact of herbicide use. Improve the environment and local biodiversity. Increase pollinator friendly areas within the borough.	Reduced chemical costs can be redirected to other service priorities.	Part of Parks commitment to the Council policy 'Roadmap to Sustainability'.	Answer concerns raised by public regarding chemical use.	Less exposure to chemicals. Staff can focus on other service priorities.

Performance Measures (should include those for the Business as Usual and Service Improvement actions outlined above and relevant measures from Community, Corporate and Statutory)	Is the measure Statutory, Corporate, Existing or New?	Reporting frequency	2015/16 Actual	2016/17 Actual	2017/18 Actual	2018/19 Actual	2019/20 Actual	2020/21 Actual	2021/22 YTD	2022/23 Target
Number of In Bloom Projects	Existing	Quarterly	15	15	14	14	16	16	20	22
£'s investment in funding for In Bloom Projects	Existing	Quarterly	£12,000	£12,776	£9,980	£10,617	£13,709	£8,395	£18,494	£18,500
Number of Friends Groups established	Existing	Quarterly	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	2
Number of Green Flag awards retained	Existing	Quarterly	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	5
% of available allotments utilised	Existing	Quarterly	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	31%	100%	100%	100%
Number of in Bloom/ Best Kept awards (1st, 2nd or 3rd in any category) retained	Existing	Quarterly	1	1	2	3	2	3	3	4
Total m2 of Council maintained ground rewilded	Existing	Quarterly	21,000	21,000	21,000	21,000	21,000	21,127	22,812	49,195
Managed ground with annual sowing (m2)	Existing	Quarterly	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	7,600	8,500	8,600	6,100
Number of trees planted	Existing	Quarterly	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	38	12,000	15,000
Number of tree planting projects supported	Existing	Quarterly	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	0	0	12	20
Amount of herbicide used (litres)	Existing	Annual	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	200	250	180	175
% Staff Attendance	Corporate	Quarterly	94%	94%	92%	93%	92%	96%	87%	95%
% Staff completing Pride in Performance conversations	Corporate	Annual	n/a	n/a	n/a	91%	95%	0	95%	100%

4. 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	Insufficient staff to deliver services	5	3	15	Regular staff training on different staff roles. For example parks staff able to work on cemetery burials.	5	2	10	Tolerate	During proposed service restructure increase number of generic job descriptions.	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place and action as proposed.
2/ CR6	Major injury to user of facilities	4	3	12	Regular staff training, inspections of facilities, internal and external audits	5	2	10	Tolerate	Investigate the introduction of PSSLive	March 2023	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place and action as proposed.
3/ CR6	Major injury to member of staff while on duty	5	3	15	Regular staff training, inspections of facilities, internal and external audits	5	2	10	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	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				
4/ CR7	Breach in legislation ie. FEPA H&SAW Waste Disposal Burial Regs EMS	5	3	15	Net Regs Training H&S Working Group. Cemeteries Working Group. Attend Seminars. Management meetings. Notification from Government depts. Technical and legal expertise.	5	2	10	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place
5	Service delivery below accepted standards, resulting in poor burial service.	5	3	15	Cemeteries working group meetings in place weekly and monthly. Visual Checks by Cemetery Supervisor. Monitor complaints – verbal and written.	5	3	15	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	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				
6/	Poor parks service. Poor profile. H&S Issues. Increased Insurance claims. Poor profile. User quality and visitor quality.	4	3	12	Monthly Management and Team Leader meetings	4	3	12	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place
7/	Failure to meet provision of Play, Open space & Cemetery Services	5	2	10	Continuous evaluation of service	5	2	10	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	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				
8 CR3	Insufficient burial plots to meet short/medium term demand	5	3	15	Creation of Cemeteries Provision Project Board to progress new cemetery	5	1	5	Tolerate	Capital Project agreed and actioned.	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place
9 CR3	Failure to invest in and maintain plant and equipment	4	3	12	A vehicle plant and machinery replacement strategy is now in place.	4	2	8	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place
10 CR4	Failure of cemetery software	5	3	15	A new software system is being implemented with cloud storage	5	1	5	Tolerate	No	n/a	Stephen Daye & John McConnell	Ensure current controls remain in place

5. Resources

Are all actions resourced within the current (2021/22) budget plan? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Will additional resources be required? Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (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:
Staff: The Parks and Cemeteries has demerged from the Leisure Service as of February 2022. A review of the structure is now underway and address concerns raised within previous reports. The service needs to refocus its vision for the future and realign with the new corporate strategy and its objectives.
Financial: The service is provided with a revenue budget of £3,215,300. Additionally, the service has the responsibility to deliver on a significant capital investment programme. The service needs to refocus its vision for the future and realign with the new corporate strategy and its objectives. Management believes that such a revisioning of the service will drive down the Net revenue budget and ultimately cost the public less to run.
Other: <Insert details of other resources required to deliver on objectives>
If the required additional resources are NOT available, please state:
What is the likely impact on performance? The service needs to refocus its vision for the future and realign with the new corporate strategy and its objectives. This will not be met without resources to change.
What is the likely impact on the public? The expectations of the public will not be met and the service will continue to underperform despite the public's admiration for the service.

What is the likely impact on staffing?

The proposed restructure of staff arrangements will bring challenges as well as opportunities, with proper planning and consultation, management believes this will ultimately bring positive rewards to all stakeholders within the Service including staff. The machinery issues previously reported is starting to breakthrough with an extensive capital expenditure and replacement plan will improve the service and staff morale with this up-to-date reliable fleet of machinery appropriate to the needs of the service.

6. 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

7. Conclusions

The biggest challenge for this service will be in adapting to the new environment that we find ourselves working in due to Covid-19 and the possible transition out of Covid-19 restriction. 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.

8. Appendices

APPENDIX 1: Customers/Stakeholders

APPENDIX 2 : PESTLE

APPENDIX 1: Customers/Stakeholders

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

Customers/Stakeholders	Profile / Characteristics	Needs / demands from the service
Residents	Population: approximately 160,000 residents	Residents fund our services through rates. Well managed parks and open spaces promoting biodiversity and encouraging use from all members of the community to promote health and wellbeing. Our service has a high impact upon our residents and vice versa.
Elected Members to Council	40 Elected members	The Service carries out effective implementation of Council decisions and a responsive and effective service to assist Members with constituency queries. The service has a high impact upon our Elected Members and vice versa.
Other Elected Members	MLAs and MPs active in constituency matters	Activities that meet national activity requirements. The Service provides a well-managed efficient service delivering on expectations in accordance with principles of good governance.
Senior Council Officers	Corporate Leadership Team which includes our Chief Executive, Directors and Heads of Service.	The Service provides a well-managed efficient service delivering on expectations in accordance with principles of good governance.
Staff within Service	104 staff within the section	Teams that are well managed and motivated to deliver high quality services. Consistent employment, training and remuneration at appropriate rates. With clear direction and support to complete their jobs with pride.
Other Council Employees	Over 900 employees across 5 directorates	Reports or requests for information delivered on time and in an appropriate format.

NIEA	Partners in the Environmental Agenda	Outdoor spaces that are managed sustainably.
Health Trusts	Partners in the Health Agenda	Activities that support healthy lifestyles and specifically management of referral programmes.
SEELB/Schools	Partners in the Education Agenda	Environmental education programmes that provide extra-curricular activities to pupils.
Local Community Groups	Locally organised groups to support the Community plans	Environmental education programmes that provide activities to deliver community needs.
Volunteers	Locally organised individuals to support the Community plans	Assistance with facilitating their activities, communication about planned work to best target their activities.
Suppliers/Contractors	Private sector enterprises reliant upon income from services	Awareness of purchasing procedures and payment in good time when goods have been delivered. Clear tender/quotation documentation and timely payment of invoices
Funeral Directors & Monumental Sculptors	Private enterprises working in partnership with the cemeteries service	Clear and consistent communication and accurate booking procedures.
NGOs including National Trust, Woodland Trust etc	Lobby/pressure groups for areas of specific interest	Partnership approach based on engagement and involvement.

APPENDIX 2 : PESTLE

Political: This has been the 6th full operating year of the Council and as such we are now starting to fully understand the needs and expectations of the Council towards the delivery of our service. The Council was newly elected in 2019 and the makeup of different parties has shifted with different expectations. The Stormont Assembly will be electing new members in 2022 and this comes after a period of instability within the elected chamber. The implications of this are unknown in terms of funding priorities. Brexit has now been in place for one year, and this has had an impact on the service with the purchase of plants and materials from the UK, we have attempted to resolve this difficulty by procuring directly from Europe.

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 our service will have to increase 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. Areas of deprivation and low disposable income remains an issue for many, meaning families have less to spend. However, this in turn presents both opportunities and challenges for our mostly free to use outdoor facilities as users move toward the less formal and more passive forms of outdoor activity.

Social: The work of our 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. To promote wider community participation, we launched Ards and North Down in Bloom in 2020. The Ards and North Down in Bloom initiative has been developed with three overlapping objectives which are: horticultural excellence, community participation and environmentally sustainable practices. The Ards and North Down in Bloom Community Competitions encourages everyone who lives or works in the Borough to think about their local environment and how attractive flowers, plants, trees and gardens can enhance it. By actively supporting this competition they will not only make their garden or business more attractive but also contribute to the Borough's entry to the Translink Ulster in Bloom Competition and other regional awards.

Technical: The maintenance practices adopted by our Service is constantly subject to review following the introduction of new machinery, stricter safety limits, and advances in sports surfaces such as 3G and other synthetic surfaces. Additionally, new supply products on the market have an effect on how the service is delivered. A proactive machinery replacement strategy is being implemented across the service. This provides the scope to include the consideration of technical innovations in replacing aged equipment including the use of more electric based equipment. This in turn will create better efficiencies across the service. In 2022 we will be implementing our new cemetery software and a move towards a more efficient paperless administration system and online burial bookings etc. The Biodiversity office is under significant pressure to deliver on both internal and external projects which require advice

and appropriate assessment processes i.e.. 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 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 need to take account of this and review practices to include alternative weed and pest control methods and this is reflected with an agreed policy change agreed by council in 2021. 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 completed 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.